

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِيَبْلُوَنَّاكُمْ ءَللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهُ ءَايْدِيكُمْ
 وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ ءَللّٰهُ مَن يَخَافُهُ ءَبِالْغَيْبِ فَمَنۢ اَعْتَدَىۢ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فَلَهُ
 عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

Al-Ma'idah (The Table Spread) 5:94

O You Who Believe!

- Allah does but make a trial of you in a little matter of game well within reach of your hands and your lances.
- That He may test who fears Him unseen.
- Any who transgress thereafter, will have a grievous penalty.

Commentary

Allamah Tabai (AR)

The verses describe the law regarding the game of land sea when a man is in the state of sanctity, wearing the robe of pilgrims.

al-Bala (test, trial); *layabluwannakum* (will certainly try you); *la* is for oath, which together with the doubling of *n* connotes emphasis and intensity. The word “some game”, indicates insignificance, in order that it would help the audience to comply with the coming prohibition. The clause: ‘which your hands and your lances can reach’, indicates in its ambit game which can be caught easily by hand, like young birds, cubs of wild animals and eggs; or with difficulty like big game that usually cannot be hunted except with arms.

This verse apparently aims at paving the way for the severe law which follows in the next one; and that is the reason that this clause is followed by the words: that Allah might know who fears Him in secret; as it indicates that the ensuing law would be prohibitive; then comes the concluding statement; but whoever exceeds the limit after this he shall have a painful punishment.

It is not unlikely that the divine words: “Allah will certainly try you that He might know”, allude to the fact that He will certainly foreordain it in order to distinguish those of you who fear Allah in secret from those who do not fear Him. Obviously, Allah is not afflicted by ignorance, which should be removed by knowledge! A full explanation of the meaning of test has been given under the verse: Do you think that you will enter the garden (3:142), in the fourth volume of this book; and also another meaning of knowledge was given earlier.

As for the clause: “who fears Him in secret”, the adverb: “in secret”, is related to: “fears”; fearing in secret indicates that man fears his Lord and is cautious of the next world’s punishment and its sufferings which the Lord has warned him of; all those aspects are unseen for man, and he does not perceive any part of it with his five senses. Allah says: You can only warn him who follows the reminder and fears the Beneficent God in secret; (36:11); And the garden shall be brought near to those who guard (against evil), not far off: This is what you were promised, for every one who turns frequently (to Allah), keeps (his limits); who fears the Beneficent God in secret and comes with a patient heart (50:31-33); Those who fear their Lord in secret and they are fearful of the hour (21:49).

The clause: “but whoever exceeds the limit after this”, means: Whoever exceeds the limit which Allah fixes for him after the said test and trial, shall have a painful chastisement.

Mir Ahmed Ali (AR) and Aqa Mahdi Puya (AR)

To inculcate restraint, perseverance, sincerity and purity of intention, submission, and dedication to the service of Allah, a thorough discipline has been prescribed for performing hajj and umrah. [Please study "Hajj and Umrah guide" and "Supplications for Hajj and Umrah", published by the Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust, or any such publication published by the Shia publishing houses.

Hajj is a week of total loyalty. The body is denied all kinds of comforts. The mind and the heart are tuned to bask in the light of devotion. It enables man to rise to the glorious heights of spiritual bliss. The proud, rich and the egotistic celebrities are made to know and realise their true insignificance, otherwise, in any other situation, they would prefer to spend any amount to avoid association with the ordinary people and being brought to the level of the meek. No distinction of wealth, fame, birth, colour or nationality are of any use when the hajj begins. All are in the service of the Lord. It is a training ground to put the idea of the brotherhood of man into practice. Whoso fails to do in day-to-day life what he has experienced during the hajj, is not a true believer. There is no other religion which has such an institution to inspire effective voluntary control to curb brutality and pride, so easily acquired by the men of the world. Islam would have been labelled as an imperfect code of life if hajj has not been prescribed as an obligatory duty.

The criticism of the slaughter of animals by the opponents of Islam is unreasonable. Animals have been created by the creator to provide food for the human beings. There is "life" in everything man or animal eats or drinks. Therefore saving or sparing "life" is not possible. This is the law of nature. The very existence of life depends upon the proper consuming of life. Life in the lower stages of creation has been purposely created to be sacrificed to serve the survival of the species in the higher realm.

Similarly, man has been created to sacrifice his self which is dearest to him, to reach the higher realms of divinity or spiritual bliss. It is true that purposeless slaughter of animals is a waste of Allah's bounty when it is carried out in contravention to the laws of the author of nature. Even for those who hold animals sacred, the surest way to show their concern is to slaughter them at the proper time, because one day they will be eliminated by death. So, if an animal is to die anyway, it is better to use it for sustenance of human life, rather than letting it go waste. The merciful creator, therefore, has allowed slaughter of animals for the sustenance of human life.

In the days of ignorance, man sacrificed man to please his man-made gods. Islam stopped this practice. Instead, to keep alive the spirit of the intended sacrifice of Ismail by Ibrahim, to show his obedience to his Lord, sacrifice of animals has been prescribed. On the other hand, Islam prohibits purposeless killing of animals. As long as a haji is in ihram he cannot kill even a mosquito. Hunting is not only forbidden during the hajj but also as a sport in ordinary life. Imam Ali, on his death bed, asked his children to take care of the birds he had domesticated, or else to set them free. Once a disciple of Imam Jafar al Sadiq killed some pigeons in exasperation. The Imam asked him to give one dinar in charity for every pigeon he had killed as an expiation.

The companions of Imam Hasan tried to make a dog run when the unclean animal came near them while they were having meals with the Imam. The Imam prevented them and began to eat one morsel himself and gave another to the dog. He said:

I should feel ashamed if a creature of Allah looks at my food and I turn it away.

At the call of duty a true believer must be ready to act as commanded, therefore, the impracticable and imaginary tenderness, which actually is not so, should not be allowed to take root. One must kill even a human being if proved guilty of murder and lawfully condemned to death. The misconceived feeling of tenderness is a moral weakness which can be removed by proper training.

If the holy Kabah is held in reverence, it is not idolatry. The spirit of holding in veneration things dedicated to Allah (or godliness) without any intention of worshipping them, even if it is the psyche of the idol-worshippers, is not idolatry. The holy edifice was built by Ibrahim and Ismail, the two distinguished friends of Allah, for the exclusive remembrance of the true Lord. The pagans appropriated it and used it as their temple. The two other friends of Allah, the Holy Prophet and Imam Ali, cleared the sacred house of the idols and restored it to its original purpose. They destroyed the false gods but retained the really venerable black stone used by Ibrahim in construction of the holy house, because this stone was sent down by Allah. Likewise the respect paid to Safa and Marwa, on account of its association with Ibrahim and Ismail, has been preserved.

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

Whoever profits by combining umrah with hajj means that after performing umrah, the pilgrim casts off ihram and puts it on again at the time of hajj, but by combining umrah with hajj he does not have to journey again for hajj after umrah, and also does not have to be in ihram all the time during the intervening period. The second caliph, nominated by the first caliph, who opposed this in the life time of the holy Prophet, issued orders to discontinue it and *muta ul nisa*, and *hayya ala khayril amal* from the azan. However, the later jurists did not follow his order for discontinuation of the *muta ul hajj* but the *muta ul nisa* and *hayya ala khayril amal* had been discontinued by the ignorant people in contravention of the divine commandments (Nisa: 24).

The pilgrimage is (performed in) the well-known months; so whoever determines the performance of the pilgrimage therein, there shall be no intercourse nor fornication nor quarrelling amongst one another; and whatever good you do, Allah knows it; and make provision, for surely the provision is the guarding of oneself, and be careful (of your duty) to Me, O men of understanding.

[Pooya/Ali Commentary 2:197]

Shawwal, Dhilqad and Dhilhajj are the well known months. One can start the pilgrimage in these months but the principal performance of hajj has been prescribed in the month of Dhilhajj. During these days the pilgrim enters the state of purity in which he is entirely absorbed with Allah. Taqwa is the best provision, because by resigning oneself to Allah and abstaining from all that which connects with worldly matters, devotion to Allah becomes total. Everything which pertains to rafas (sexual intercourse), fasaq (fornication), jidal (quarrelling with one another) are forbidden.

"Take provision" means to plan and carry sufficient provisions for the journey so as not to be a burden on others. Some people used to go for pilgrimage to Makkah without sufficient provisions, on the pretence that they trust in Allah's help, thus becoming a burden on their fellow travellers. Making provision may also mean making provision for the journey of life with piety and righteousness. Surely the best provision is taqwa - guarding against evil or safeguarding with full awareness of divine laws. If the men of understanding desire increase in provision, here and in the hereafter, then they should know the boundaries and fortify them.

Mathabatan and *amnan*, with reference to bayt, means a place of refuge, rest and peace where one earns ample recompense from Allah.

Ahdina (We took a promise or We enjoined) refers to Allah's covenant that the eternally blessed descendants of Ibrahim should keep the holy Kabah pure, and should remove the false gods whenever installed in it. In 7 Hijra the Holy Prophet, the promised prophet, for whose advent Ibrahim prays in verses 128 and 129 of this surah, after the fall of Makkah, visited the holy Kabah. There, Ali stood on the shoulders of the Holy Prophet and pulled down all the idols, firmly fixed in the walls, in order to purify the sacred house of Allah

Tahhira (to purify) implies that a house for the worship of Allah already existed there before Ibrahim, which like the Kabah in the times of the Holy Prophet, was despoiled with idols. It was in ruins. Ibrahim rebuilt it. As verse 127 of this surah suggests, after purification, the place was reserved for worship of Allah only. According to verse 96 of Ali Imran, the first house made for the worship of Allah was the Kabah in Makka, and in verse 29 of al Hajj it has been referred to as bayt ul atiq (the ancient house).

Muir, Burton, Rodwel and Fretyag have tried to mislead the Christians by stating that Ibrahim had never gone to Arabia to build the Holy Kabah.

These are the names of the sons of Ishmael named in order of their birth; Nebaioth, Ishmael's eldest son, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam." (Genesis 25: 13)

It is a fact that Kedar has been connected with Arabia in the Old Testament.

Hard is my lot, exiled in Meshech, dwelling by the tents of
Kedar.
(PSALMS 120: 5)

Also refer to Isaiah 42: 11 and 60: 7. In Genesis 21: 14 to 21 Hajirah's wandering in the wilderness of Beersheba with her son Ismail, the appearance of the well (Zamzam) and Allah's promise to make of Ismail a great nation have been clearly mentioned.

The events concerning Ibrahim, Hajirah and Ismail, which actually took place, are given below:

- Ibrahim's wife Sarah had borne him no children.
- She had a handmaid whose name was Hajirah.
- She gave her to Ibrahim as a wife.
- Hajirah bore Ibrahim a son.
- Ibrahim named the child Ismail.
- After his birth, the peace and harmony of the family was disturbed.
- Sarah ill-treated Hajirah.
- Ibrahim was vexed on Ismail's account.
- He sought Allah's help.

- Allah, in view of Sarah's past goodness, directed Ibrahim to send away Hajirah and Ismail to a place now called Makkah.
- Ibrahim, with the help of Jibrail, took Hajirah and Ismail out of the native land and reached Arabia.
- They stopped at the place where *Hajar Aswad* or the black stone is stationed.
- Jibrail informed Ibrahim that it was a land full of Allah's blessings and bounties, and there used to be a house (known as *Baytul Mamur*) in that place, which was held sacred and venerated by mankind in ancient times, and that it was Allah's will that Ibrahim and Ismail should rebuild the ruined house again.
- A shelter was made for Hajirah and Ismail so that they could live there in Ibrahim's absence because Allah had commanded Ibrahim to go back to his native land. At the time of his departure Hajirah said:

O Ibrahim, the devotee of Allah, in whose care are you leaving us here?

Ibrahim said:

I leave you in the care of Allah who saved me from the fire in which Namrud threw me, and gave me all that which I needed and desired.

Hajirah said:

I rely upon Allah. He is sufficient for me and my child.

When Ibrahim reached the mount Zi-Tavi, he stopped and turned towards the place where he left Hajirah and Ismail and prayed:

Our Lord! Verily I have settled a part of my progeny in a barren valley near to Your holy house, our Lord. so that they may establish prayer; so incline some hearts of men that they yearn towards them, and provide them with fruits in order that they may be grateful.

(IBRAHIM: 37)

- When the water in the waterskin, Ibrahim left for them, was finished, there was no water any where near them to quench their thirst.
- There was no milk in her breasts.
- The heat in the desert had dried it.
- The scorching sun brought the situation from bad to worse.
- The child was restless.
- He cried, cried and cried.
- The mother ran hither and thither, between Safa and Marwa.

- From Safa to Marwa and Marwa to Safa she ran seven times because when she was on the mount of Safa she heard a voice from the mount of Marwa, and when she reached Marwa she heard a voice from Safa.
- There was no one in sight.
- Unable to see her son dying, she left him where he was lying and stood alone on the mount of Marwa.
- Dejected, helpless, yet worried for her son she came back.
- There she saw a spring of fresh and sweet water gushing forth from the earth under the feet of Ismail.
- In her absence Jibrail, under the command of Allah, came and produced a well full of water (known as Zamzam) - also recorded in Genesis 21: 14 to 21. She heard a voice (saying):
- *Fear not. The Lord has produced this well for you and your son, but it will also serve the pilgrims who will visit His holy house which your husband and son shall build.*
- The flow of water increased day by day and the surrounding land became fertile.
- People began to come and settle there. Soon it became a flourishing town.
- Trade and commerce developed. When Ibrahim returned he found the wasteland in the desert a busy trade centre.
- The running of Hajirah between Safa and Marwa has been prescribed as one of the essential rites of hajj.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

During the time when a pilgrim to Mecca is in pilgrim garment and is performing the pilgrimage rites, the one has not the right of hunting. During the same time, occasionally it happens that a hunt approaches a person so nigh that he can catch it by a simple jump, but the trial of Allah is in this fact that we should not touch the hunt. So, if we hunt it, the punishment of Allah includes us.

Hunting itself brings forth no painful chastisement, but chastisement is for the breaking law. In the land where Abraham overlooked Ishmael, you would overlook the hunts either.

The verse says:

" O you who have Faith! Allah will surely try you with something of the game which your hands and your spears can reach, so that Allah may ascertain who fears Him in secret. So whoever transgresses after that for him there is a painful punishment."