

Al-Baqara (The Cow) [2:208]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا

خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

O you who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one (Shaytan); for he is to you an avowed enemy.

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

(On verses 208-218) These three verses, together with the four that follow them, guide us as how to preserve religious unity in human society: To enter into total submission, to limit oneself to the word spoken by Allah and to that deed whose path is shown by Allah. They declare that religious unity was never disintegrated, nor was the happiness of both worlds turned into misery with disaster visited upon the territory of a people, except when they left submission, manipulated the signs of Allah by altering them and putting them into the wrong place. This had happened to the children of Israel and other people, and will surely happen to this ummah also. But in the end Allah promises them His help, Surely the help of Allah is near.

Again, as the hearers are already believers, the submission called for means total submission to Allah after believing in Him. Hence the word wholly in the translation. It follows that believers must submit all their affairs to Allah, they should not decide themselves what was good for them and what was not, they should not prepare or select any path for themselves without the guidance of Allah and His Apostle. They must remember that no people were destroyed except that they followed their own views and desires, and talked without true knowledge; and no people forfeited the right of life and happiness except that they became disunited.

It is clear from the above that following the footsteps of Satan does not mean following him in all the falsehood which he invites to, because a believer cannot follow Satan in all satanic schemes. Rather, it means to follow him in the matters of religion. Satan furnishes some paths of untruth with the signposts of truth; in this way, he puts into religion what is not from religion. Thus, a believer is deceived into following that path without realizing his error.

One way of becoming aware of such an interpolation is to find out whether Allah and His Apostle have ever mentioned it in their teachings of the religion.

Abdul Rahman says - I asked Abu Abdillah about a man who vowed to slaughter his child. He said: That is from the footsteps of the Satan. (at-Tahdhib)

Mansfir ibn Hazim said:

Abu Abdillah (AS) said to me: 'Have you not heard about Tariq? Verily, Tariq was a cattle-dealer in Madina. He came to Abu Ja'far and said: "O Abu Ja'far! I have taken an oath by divorce (of my wives), emancipation (of my slaves) and vow." Thereupon, (Abu Ja'far, AS) said to Him: "O Tariq! verily this is from the footsteps of the Satan."

Abu Ja'far (AS) said:

Every oath taken in the name of other than Allah, is from the footsteps of the Satan.
(al-Ayyashi)

As-Sadiq (AS) said:

When a man takes oath for not doing a thing while what he has sworn against, its doing is better than its leaving then he should do that which is better; and there is no penalty on him; surely it (i.e., such oath) is only from the footsteps of the Satan.
(al-Kafi)

The traditions, as you see, interpret the footsteps of the Satan as the deeds supposed to bring one nearer to Allah, while in fact they are not so, because the shari'ah does not recognize them as we have explained above. Of course, as for the divorce, etc. (mentioned in the second tradition), there is an additional reason for the invalidity of such oaths; and that is making it conditional on some contingency in future; and it is against the principle of immediate and unconditional effecting of such transactions. (It is a topic of jurisprudence.) Oath in the name of other than Allah refers to an oath which has no validity in the shari'ah, and to swearing by what Allah has not sworn by and to which He has given no excellence.

Al-Baqir (AS) said about the words of Allah, And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out...

That is, their likeness when you call them to the faith is like the caller who calls out to the cattle which understands nothing other than hearing a voice.

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

Silm means iman, the inner core or depth of the faith. The use of this word in this verse points out that "you who believe" are those who know and believe in the religion but are unaware of the scope and extent of the depth of iman, so they are invited to surrender and submit with perfect belief and thorough conviction; then alone they will not follow the footsteps of Shaytan, who is an open enemy.

As reported by Ayyashi, Imam Muhammad bin Ali al-Baqir (AS) had also explained this verse as above and added that it also means that all Muslims are enjoined to believe in imamat and follow its divine guidance after the risalat, which ended with the Holy Prophet.

By not following the imamat of Ali, after the Holy Prophet, the Muslim ummah was easily deceived by the whims and fancies of incompetent and selfish leaders, and by not paying attention to the command of Allah to submit, as given in this verse, the ignorant Muslims were caught in the web of sects, sub-sects, and many schismatic schools of thought. The safest way to enter into submission is to follow the Holy Prophet and the holy Imams of his Ahlul-Bayt.

AYATULLAH KAMAL FAQIH IMANI AND SEVERAL SCHOLARS

It is narrated from Akramah that this verse was revealed about the Jews who had converted to Islam, such as: Abdullah ibn Salam, Thabat ibn Salam, Ibni-Yamin, Asad and Asid (the sons of Ka'b), Shu'bat ibn Amr, Bahira Rahib, Sa'id ibn Amr, and Ghays ibn Zayd. They went to the Messenger of Allah (S) and asked him to allow them to glorify Saturday and recite the Torah; and, similar to the custom in the Age of Ignorance, to avoid consuming the milk and meat of camel.

The worldly peace is possible only under the Shadow of Faith. The Qur'anic words /silm/ and /salam/ in lexicon mean 'peace' and 'quietness'. So, this verse invites all the believers to peace, and in view of the fact that it addresses the believers, the verse means that peace can come into existence only with the existence of Faith. Thus, war and anxiety cannot be removed only by relying on mere human made rules and laws based on material affairs. Then, it is only by the use of the spiritual power of Faith that human beings, in spite of all their differences, can live peacefully and in fellowship together when they, consequently, may form a worldly government.

"O' you who have Faith! enter you all into submission (to Allah in being in peace), ..."

It is evident that material affair such as: language, race, wealth, geographical region, and social classes are totally the origin of separation and dispersion. They cannot provide the real worldly peace which needs a firm circle of connection between the hearts of human beings in the world. This linking circle is only Faith in Allah which is beyond those differences. Therefore, a certain worldly peace without Faith is impossible; the same manner that the inner peace and tranquility in the unity of a person and in his spiritual environment, without having a true Faith, is impossible.

"...and follow not the footsteps of Satan, ..."

As it was formerly mentioned, the Satanic temptations and deviations usually come forth gradually and, according to the meanings of the Qur'an, each of them is counted as the following of a step of Satan. Here, this fact is stated again that deviation from the right and following the stimuli of enmity, hypocrisy, fighting and blood-shedding usually begin from slight and simple stages. Believing people should be aware of their advent in order to stop them. There is a proverb common among Arab people which say: Verily, a destructive fight begins with a slap.

"... for he is a manifest foe for you..."

The enmity of Satan against human kind is not something hidden or unknown. Satan has decided and sworn to behave inimically towards man since the beginning of the creation of Adam, and does his best to settle this enmity among the human race. Yet, as it has been described before, this opposition and hostility can not harm the true believers but it is a secret alongside the path of spiritual development. onymous with complete peace.