

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا تَخُوْنُوْا اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ وَتَخُوْنُوْا اٰمَنَاتِكُمْ
وَ اَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

Al-Anfal (The Spoils of War) 8:27

O You Who Believe!

- Betray not the trust of Allah and the Messenger.
- Nor knowingly misappropriate things entrusted to you.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

The view of another commentator is that the meaning of this verse is that since God is the owner of the hearts he can change their condition from one to another. Since the Muslims were afraid of battle God says, " Because God has the authority to stand in between" to change their thoughts of fear to serenity by standing in between the Muslims and the thoughts that instill fear in them.

There is a tradition from the Imams of the Ahlulbait that the meaning of this verse is that He does not abandon the people to let them think of truth as evil and evil as truth. This issue will be dealt very soon in our discourse.

The Imams Ali and Baqir and others have explained this verse. This verse is the admonishment about mischief that is related to the Muslims and is not related to the disbelievers and the polytheists. The entire Muslims are addressed because they are also affected by this evil. We have no proof to say that the words " know that God is severe in punishment." Is the punishment in this world due to the internecine wars among the Muslims or their disputes that result from the absence of peace? Though the mischief is related to a certain specific group of Muslims the entire community should guard against it and through " Amr bil Maruf and Nahi Anal Munkar" restrict the spread of this mischief.

This is the reason that the aim of this verse is to scare the people who are lax in the face of internal disputes. These disputes may divide them into various groups and sects. The fact that is clear is that the victorious group will have the command but this command will not be the supremacy that is granted by God to the adherents of Islam for this gain a temporary supremacy through evil and chaos. We can say in short that the mischief is connected with a particular group who are the oppressors but the signs are prevalent in all and it is due to mischief that they fall victim to hardships. They are all held responsible in the eyes of God for He is " severe in punishment".

Though God has not given this mischief a particular name, instead has chosen to keep in vague, but in the very next sentence in which He says, "not in particular those of you who do wrong", and " " know that God is severe in punishment." He has also clarified that some groups have disputes with others on things about which they all know. But, there is one group which hesitates in accepting the truth and take to untruth and oppression while there is another that has accepted the truth but does not follow the rule of " Do good and keep others from doing evil." And because of this negligence the entire Ummah is afflicted.

It is an established reality that all oppression is not of this kind because they do not have these ingredients. God has warned and admonished us about the mischief that is prevalent in society. This mischief is of the kind where a government is bent on destroying the Islamic values or when the government takes unlawful control and then destroys the practice of the Sunnah and the adherence to the Holy Qur'an. Any thing that is a mischief is discerned in the social structure of the early days of Islam and so this verse fully addresses those people.

This is the kind of mischief wherein they try to destroy the very concept of "Wahdat" or the Unity of God as preached by Islam, destroyed the social fabric of the community's glory through schism, shed innocent blood and insulted the women and the protected ones, and they reneged from both the book and the Sunnah. The Messenger amply clarifies this when he said, *Verily my people deserted this Qur'an*. The later Ummah who had become aware of their misgivings and evil deeds could not save themselves from the dire consequence of severe punishments. " The angels take away the souls of those who disbelieve, they smite their faces and their backs saying, " Taste the punishment of the blazing fire."

Some commentators are unhappy and upset over my interpretation of this verse and they say that this verse means to admonish and warn the Islamic Ummah about the mischief that has destroyed its unity and made it a victim of schism and they will be subjected to a severe punishment if they do not heed the warning. But these commentators have taken all the pains to describe this punishment as separate from the worldly punishment and thereby restrict the vast implication of this verse, but how can it be authentic after the words " But how can they [hope to] attain [to salvation] from so far away " they are trying to interpret it with some far fetched ideas and then raise the question, "why?".

I would like to draw the attention of those who study to the meaning of the words " those who believe" as explained by me when I said that the verse is addressed to those who lived in the early days of Islam to create a respect for the believer and to becalm him from all apprehensions. You may also remember that the climax of all mischief was advent at the Battle of Badr.

This verse admonishes those people about the mischief they create for they will be affected by the dangerous consequences even if they are not directly involved. Some linguists may argue that the Nahi in this verse is not the Nahi in the words " La Tasibun" e.g. it is often said, " Avoid so and so lest he harms you" but the real sentence would be, " Save your self from him, for if you do so then he will not be able to harm you." It is possible as some commentators say that the word " La" is an addenda and the verse would actually mean, " Protect yourselves from these mischief that will only harm those who have resorted to injustice."

Some other commentators say that the word " La Tasibun" was actually " Litasibun" and the 'l' has been changed by Alif and this is common in Arabic language. Even then the meaning of the verse reverts to the meaning as explained by the Ahlulbait.

You have read that the verse has a commonality that encompasses all and this reaffirms my view that the words" O you who believe, respond to the invitation of God and the Messenger", also address the people in general. This is about that news, which rekindles their lives, that leads to unity, that adherence by all which establishes the religion and guide all to save them from disunity.

The Holy Books says, " Hold fast all of you, to the rope of God and be not divided among yourselves." (Al-Imran-103) and then reiterates, " You should establish religion and make no divisions" (Shura-13). The book further says, " And verily this is My straight Path"(Anam-153) . These verses confirm the explanation of the words I have given earlier. Therefore, continuing the verse in its actual sense related to different causes we can still say that if we widen the horizon we will see that it covers a vast spectrum. We all know that the wise and the learned are not inept in discerning the meaning of the verse for God is the guiding light.

And God says (in verse 26) " *And remember when you were few and were reckoned weak in the land, and were afraid that men might kidnap you...*"

We understand that this verse refers to those days when the Muslims were weak in strength and numbers. This refers to the days before the Hijra or the exodus from Makkah when the non-believers surrounded the Muslims like prisoners. The words " al Nas" refers to the Arab idolaters or the well to do people of the Bani Quraysh. " Fawakum" means the shelter in Madina with all the help, and gave you the best amenities. And, the help given is the help at the Battle of Badr. Clean sustenance is the war booty, which God bestowed upon the Muslims and made it Halal for them.

God in this verse has recollected the conditions in which he had helped, especially the Muhajirs, though the Ansars are not directly related here. Both are included because His benevolence includes both. Both of them belong to the united Ummah and are the followers of the single religion. There is a reminder of the pure sustenance that both the groups had enjoyed. This is the interpretation when we translate and interpret according to the situation at the time of Badr and then it will include the entire Muslim Ummah, not just the Ansars and Muhajirin. Because, Islam has included all the adherents who were the fore runners in this chain. The story behind this verse refers to the early ummah and it was the time when they had no strength or numbers. They were mortally afraid that the idolaters might annihilate them in just one attack in Makkah. God gave them shelter in aedina and increased their numbers after they had started believing. God also helped them at Badr and other battles, and gave them the bounty of war so that they may be thankful.

God says, "*O you who believe! Betray not God and His Messenger, nor betray knowingly the Amanat (trust) that God has ordained for you.*"

The next two verses are about the betrayal of trust, its impropriety and its destruction. The description of Amanat or the trust is that whatever is entrusted to anyone through a will or a promise should be given total protection. Raghib has recorded in his book Mafrudat that treachery and hypocrisy have the same meaning; the only difference is that the

- Amanat is so named because it is willed or entrusted in a material form by some one to someone.
- Hypocrisy is called hypocrisy due to its betrayal of religion. Both the terms are used alternatively in their meanings.

We may conclude that Khiyanat or embezzlement is the inner-opposition of truth and is the breaking of a promise e.g. "I have betrayed the trust of Mr. So and So" which means I have silently broken the trust and promise that I had been entrusted with. This was Raghib's view about the verse and the betrayal of trust.

Betrayal of trust is condemned when the keeper of the trust is aware of the facts; but if he is unaware then he cannot be accused of anything. No order is complete or punishment implementable if you are in absence of complete knowledge about the conditions. In such a condition it was not imperative to use the words "and you have knowledge" but there is another issue at stake and that is that the knowledge was not made available and this was the betrayal of trust. It is not as some commentators have said, "This order deals with the issue of the ill effects of betrayal of trust, and the losses in the hereafter." Because this is not evident or proven from the words themselves or from its continuity (background). It is sure that there is something unrevealed in this sentence and the verse should actually read as "*Wa In Takhunu Amanatikum*".

Both the verses joined together form a "refutation or a No" and is connected to a kind of betrayal that is linked to God and His Messenger. This is like a betrayal of trust of the Ummah or the muminin because some trusts are related exclusively to God.

- Some trusts are related with the Messenger in the sense that he has been entrusted with the Shariah Laws and his own personified character.
- Some trusts are related to the people when they entrust somebody with something precious for safekeeping or entrust somebody with a secret.
- There are some trusts that are related to God, His Messenger and the common people.
- Then there are those commandments that are entrusted to the Messenger who spreads them and the people obey and benefit by them like the political orders, Jihad and those secrets which if revealed will inflict the spread of religion and the efforts of the Islamic government will come to naught. The result will be the truth about God and His Messenger will be trampled and lead to the suffering of the common Muslims and Mominins.

Any betrayal of trust is a betrayal with God, His Messenger and the believers. Any mumin who commits this breach knows that he has betrayed God, His Messenger, himself but also all others like himself. Normally no one is willing to betray oneself because each person within himself abhors this act and how can he do so after all the bounties that God bestows upon him?

So now we understand that the verse, "O you who believe! Betray not God and His Messenger, nor betray knowingly the Amanat (trust) that God has ordained for you", means that when a person betrays the trust of God and His Messenger, he actually betrays himself because the trust of God and His Messenger in reality is his own trust. Which is an intelligent person, who betrays his own trust and endangers his own morality when he knows that ultimately he will be the one to bear the losses?

After commanding the people not to betray the trusts made with them God says, "if you had knowledge" but this was just to rekindle the sense of responsibility and shame and it was not that He was explaining any divine law or its condition. What we learn here is that there were some Muslims who used to betray the political secrets of the Messenger to the idolaters. God termed this as a "betrayal of Trust", and while asking all to desist from it has declared it to be a betrayal of God, His Messenger and the believers.

This is reaffirmed by the words, "And know you that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial", which comes after the verse being discussed, but the appearance tells us that this verse may be connected with the verse being discussed and is not separate from it.

Here we learn that the advice about wealth and children, in this instance, is about a person, who despite having been told not to betray the trust of God and His Messenger used to betray all that he learnt to the idolaters; so as to be a person they could trust; and so that he could save his children and wealth in case of attack.

The purpose of this person was to save his wealth and children and one such person was Abi Labana who betrayed the secrets of the Messenger to the tribe of Bani Qaritha.

These words reaffirm the tradition that has occurred about the background of this verse. The tradition says, that Abu Sufi left Makkah with a great amount of goods for trading. The Archangel Gabriel informed the Messenger about the same and requested the Messenger to move in the same direction but without disclosing this to his companions. Some Muslims however, became aware of this fact and they sent a letter secretly to Abu Sufyan informing him of the Messenger's intention to confront him. This was the reason for the revelation of the verse, *"O you that believe! Betray not the trust of Allah and the Apostle, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you."* There is another tradition regarding the background of this verse and will be discussed shortly.

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

OCCASION OF REVELATION

It is reported that after 21 days siege of Bani Qurayza they agreed to make a settlement. They would leave Madina and go to Syria. The Holy Prophet appointed Sad bin Ma-adh as an arbitrator, but the Jews wanted to consult Abu Lababa who was their old friend and relative, before accepting the arbitration of Sad bin Ma-adh.

When they sought Abu Lababa's advice, he pointed his finger to his throat, to indicate that it would be as if cutting their own throats. The Holy Prophet came to know about the treachery of Abu Lababa through Jibra-il. Abu Lababa at once realised what he had done-he had knowingly defrauded Allah and His prophet. Then he tied himself to a pillar of the masjid al nabawiyy and avowed that he would neither drink nor eat until he was forgiven by Allah and His prophet. The Holy Prophet went to him and told him that he had been forgiven.

Another narration of treachery had been reported by Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari that when Jibra-il informed the Holy Prophet that Abu Sufyan is secretly planning to attack very soon, the Holy Prophet asked his close companions to make urgent preparation for the expected confrontation. One of the hypocrites wrote a secret letter to Abu Sufyan, informing him about the defensive readiness of the Muslims.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars
OCCASION OF REVELATION

In the commentary books recorded by both great sects of Islam upon the occasion of revelation of this verse, it has been cited as follows:

When the Jewish tribe named Bani-Qurayzah were surrounded by the Muslim strivers under the command of the Prophet (S) , the Jews suggested peace and started moving toward Syria. But the Prophet (S) did not accept it, and he ordered Sa'd-ibn-Ma'adh to judge over their circumstance. The Jews consulted with Abul-Babah, one of the Muslims who had the background of friendship with them, about that judgment.

When, Abul-Babah, by pointing to his throat, signed them that they would be killed totally if they accepted the arbitration of Sa'd-ibn-Ma'adh, Gabriel informed this signal to the Prophet (S) . Abul-Babah, who was ashamed of this treachery, roped himself to the pillar of the mosque and avoided eating anything for seven days and nights. Finally, Allah accepted his repentance.
(Majmaul-Bayan, and Tafsirus-Safi)

There has also been cited another occasion of revelation upon this verse as follows.

In the Battle of Badr, one of the Muslims wrote a letter to Abu-Sufyan and informed him of the Prophet's plan. Then, Abu-Sufyan asked for help from the pagans of Makkah, and they sent one thousand fighters to fight in the Battle of Badr.
(Al-Mizan, and Majmaul-Bayan)

Commentary

Now Allah commands the believers not to approach treachery. The holy verse, addressing the believing people, implies that they should not betray Allah (SWT) by means of abandoning His ordinances and His Messenger (S) by leaving his rules, because whoever leaves or spoils anything of the religion, he has betrayed Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (S) . The verse says:
“*O you who have Faith! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, ...*”

Also, the believers should not be treacherous to the affairs upon which Allah (SWT) has trusted them, and has given them the fulfilment of them that they accomplish them without any deficiency. Thus, he who is treacherous to Allah (SWT) and the Messenger of Islam (S) , has been treacherous to his own deposits.

And you know that treachery is an ugly action which incurs punishment.

The verse says:

“... and do not betray your trusts knowingly.”

Therefore, treachery is basically ugly and condemned, especially those treacheries which are performed knowingly, and the manifestation of military secrets are uglier and more dangerous, for which, of course, the sinful person must repent very soon.

However, the spoils of war, alms, Khums (one fifth levy) , and all properties of others, which are with you, are deposits. Similarly, other bounties, such as: the school of religion, leadership, the Qur'an, children, and territorial of the country are the deposits of Allah. And, according to the tradition which Shawahid-ut-Tanzil, by Hakim Huskani, vol. 1, p. 205 has narrated from Ihqaq-ul-Haqq, vol. 14, p. 564 the progeny of the Prophet (S) are also the Divine deposits.

By obeying them and following them, we must protect these deposits.