

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا
وَاللَّكَفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Al-Baqara (The Cow) 2:104

O You Who Believe!

- Say not (to the Messenger) words of ambiguous import, but words of respect; and hearken (to him).
- To those without faith is a grievous punishment.

Commentary

Allamah Taba Tabai (AR)

O you who believe! It is the first place in the Qur'an where the believers have been addressed in this way, *O you who believe!* This mode of address has been used in some eighty-five places in the Qur'an.

Addressing the believers as *O you who believe!* or describing them as *those who believe*, is a special distinction accorded to this ummah. Otherwise, the previous nations are variously described as *the people* (e.g., the People of Nuh, and, the People of Hud).

The epithet, *those who believe*, is, therefore, a mark of honor awarded to the believers of this ummah.

All the believers are united, one of them being from another; all of them are of one rank; none has any excellence over the others; nor has an earlier believer any superiority over the later ones; their main qualification is the true belief, and all of them, are equal in it. Such a meaning would not fit the wording of the verse, which clearly shows that the preceding believers have a sort of superiority over their offspring, who would be raised to the rank of their progenitor as a token of honor to the latter.

Abu Nu'aym has narrated in Hilyat al-Awliya from Ibn Abbas that he said - The Apostle of Allah (S) said:

Allah has not revealed any verse (beginning) with, *O you who believe!* but that Ali is its head and leader.
(al-Dur al-Manthur)

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

This verse shows how much the Jews disliked the Holy Prophet. It also prohibits use of any word bearing sinister meaning with reference to him.

The Jews and the idol-worshippers did not like that *khayr* (good), the Qur'an, should be revealed to the Holy Prophet. As *the mercy unto the worlds*, the Holy Prophet himself was *khayr* because *khayr* (good) is *rahmah* (mercy). He, the last law-giver messenger of Allah, was a descendant of prophet Ismail, the younger son of prophet Ibrahim, therefore, the Jews, who were the descendants of prophet Ishaq, the elder son of prophet Ibrahim, did not like the advent of the promised prophet in the progeny of prophet Ismail.

Qur'an - Chapter 2, Verse 90-91 - They knew that the ministry of the Holy Prophet was genuine and Islam was the true religion of Allah, but their prejudice and envy led them astray. The same prejudice and envy created the venomous group of the hypocrites (*munafiqin*) who opposed the Holy Prophet in his lifetime, and, after him, persecuted, murdered and tried to destroy completely his Ahlul-Bayt. The hatred of the Israelites against the non-Israelites was reflected in the hatred of the non-Hashimites against the Hashimites. Allah chooses whom He pleases for His mercy and grace.

Evil is that for which they have sold their souls-- that they should deny what Allah has revealed, out of envy that Allah should send down of His grace on whomsoever of His servants He pleases; so they have made themselves deserving of wrath upon wrath, and there is a disgraceful punishment for the unbelievers.

And when it is said to them, Believe in what Allah has revealed, they say: We believe in that which was revealed to us; and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. Say: Why then did you kill Allah's Prophets before if you were indeed believers?

(Qur'an – Chapter 2, Verse 90-91)

These verses are in reply to the arrogance of the Jews. The Jews, out of envy, denied that Allah had sent down *Injil* on the prophet Isa and the Qur'an on the Holy Prophet. Although they said that they only believed in what was revealed to the Israelite prophets, despite the prophecy of the promised prophet in their book, they still killed their own prophets.

Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

The honorific and enlivening sentence *O you who have faith*, addressed to the believers, has occurred 80 times in the Qur'an. The above verse is the first one, which contains this phrase.

It is interesting that this phrase has occurred only in the verses that have been revealed in Madina, viz. it is not seen in the Makkan verses. It may be for the reason that with the emigration of the Prophet (S) to Medina, Muslims gathered together and it was then that the situation of Muslims became stabilized, especially when they formed a strong, powerful government. Hence, Allah (SWT) addressed them with this phrase:

O you who have faith!

This phrase conveys another meaning, too. It indicates that now that you have faith and have submitted to the truth, i.e. you have taken a covenant with Allah; you should obey Him according to the commandments that have come along with it. In other words, your faith necessitates that you follow these instructions accordingly.

Ibn Abbas, the leading commentator, is narrated to have said that the early Muslims, when the Prophet (S) was speaking and teaching them the divine verses and commandments, often asked him to speak slowly so that they could comprehend the material well and could have opportunity enough to ask their questions.

For this purpose, then, they applied the phrase */ra'ina/* derived from the root */arra'a/* to give respite, which means: *give us respite, wait for us*. But the Jews took the same word from the Arabic root */ar-ra'unah /* used with the meaning of *foolhardiness, thoughtlessness, foolishness*, which means: *make foolish of us and suggests an insult*.

It is well understood from this verse that the Muslims, should be careful to avoid giving their enemies any pretext, because they may misuse even one short sentence against them. The Qur'an advises the Muslims to avoid uttering even the smallest common word, which they might transform into a term of reproach in order to weaken the spirits of the Muslims. They should be careful not to select words which have multiple or ambiguous meanings that may be misused by the enemies to mock them thereby but rather should choose appropriate, unambiguous words. They must guard themselves against the cynical trick of using words, which sound complimentary to the ear but have a hidden barb in them.

When Islam is so meticulous that it does not let Muslims give their enemies pretext for these little things, the duty of Muslims is clear for greater and more important subjects, both concerning their interior affairs and international matters.

It is also notable that in many references of Islamic literature, including the ones of the Sunnite, the Holy Prophet (S) is narrated to have said:

No verse has Allah revealed with *O you who have faith* save that Ali is at its top and is its chief.