

Sūrah al-Ḥajj (2)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī

Section III: Verses (25-37)

The debate of monotheism and polytheism reaches its climax in this section. The reason that the Quraysh and their allies had taken to severe animosity was that they fully understood that the conflict between monotheism and polytheism was not merely ideological. It would have an impact on the political and religious leadership they had as custodians of the House of God. They had forcibly continued in this capacity because they claimed that they were the real inheritors of Abraham's legacy. The tribe of the Banū Hāshim also had the honour to be in possession of the keys of the of House of God. In those times, Abū Lahab was their leader. He had forcibly taken possession of the public treasury of Makkah and had full freedom to use it at will. It may be kept in mind that the Quraysh did not merely hold the reins of leadership in Makkah; since they were the custodians of the House of God, the whole of Arabia accepted their religious leadership. In these circumstances, how could they have easily put up with a new force that could deprive them of all those benefits within no time? Thus, they forcibly kept away the Muslims from visiting the House of God and let loose a wave of terror and oppression on them forcing them to leave Makkah. It is in these circumstances that these verses were revealed. Explained in them is the purpose for which Abraham (sws) built this House, the content of his message and teachings of God regarding its sacred places. It is as if a mirror has been placed before the Quraysh in which they can see themselves and decide whether they are worthy of Abraham's heritage or have proven utterly unworthy of it. During this discussion, the Muslims have also been encouraged and informed of the responsibilities of the rituals and sacred signs and places of this

Houses which will soon be imposed on them.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفِ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِالْحَادِ بِظُلْمٍ نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَإِذْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَبِيقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَةٍ عَلَى مَآرَزِهِمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ﴿٢٨﴾ ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُدْوَهُمْ وَلِيَطَّوِّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٢٩﴾ ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُشْتَلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ﴿٣٠﴾ حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ﴿٣١﴾ ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ﴿٣٢﴾ لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَآرَزِهِمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَإِنَّهُمْ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلَبُوا ۖ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَ الْمُتَّقِي الصَّلَاةَ وَمَآرَزَهُمْ يَنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالْبَذَنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ ۚ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعُوا الْقَنَاعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Indeed, those who disbelieved and they stop people from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it, [they have committed a grave oppression]. And those who intend something irreligious, some polytheistic practice in it, We shall make him taste a painful torment. (25)

And remember when We had made the place of this House an abode for Abraham with the directive: “Do not associate anyone with Me and keep my House pure for those who circumambulate,

stand, kneel and prostrate and proclaim *hajj* among the people; they will come to you on foot and also on very frail she-camels from far off deep mountain passes so that people also reach their places of benefit and in certain specific days pronounce the name of God on the beasts God has blessed them with.” Thus, eat from them yourselves and also feed the needy inflicted with hunger. Then people should clean themselves of their dirt, fulfil their vows and circumambulate the ancient House. (26-29)

Diligently follow these things and he who honours the sanctities ordained by God, then this is better for him in the eyes of his Lord. And the cattle have been allowed to you except those which have been recited out to you. So, abstain from the filth of the idols and from falsehoods and while being fully devoted to God do not associate partners with Him. And he who associates partners with God, his example is as if he falls from the sky and birds snatch him away or take him away and throw him at a far-off place. Diligently follow these things and he who reveres the symbols appointed by God, he should remember that this relates to the piety of the hearts. And there are various benefits in them for you until an appointed time. Then they have to be taken towards that ancient House of God for sacrifice. (30-33)

And for each community, We have regarded animal sacrifice a religious ritual so that the cattle God has given them, they pronounce God’s name on them. Thus, your God is One; so, surrender yourselves to Him alone and give glad tidings to those whose hearts are bent down before Him. They are those whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them. They are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with and are diligent in the prayer and who spend from whatever We have blessed them with. (34-35)

And We have included sacrificial camels also in the symbols of God for you. There is a lot of good for you in them. So, pronounce God’s name on them as well while you make them stand in rows. Thus, when they fall on their sides, eat from them yourselves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask. In this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you may be grateful. And neither does their flesh reach God nor their blood; in fact, only your piety reaches Him. In this way, God has put them to your service so that the guidance God has blessed you with, you exalt God on it. And give glad

tidings to those who are thorough. (36-37)

Explanation

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً
الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِالْحَادِ يَظْلِمِ نَفْسَهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ آلِيمٍ¹

Grammatically this verse can be interpreted in two ways. One is to regard the first part of the verse عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ to be introductory and the actual inchoative (*muḥtadā*) to begin from فِيهِ. The second is to regard an enunciative to the effect فَقَدْ ظَلَمُوا ظُلْمًا كَبِيرًا (then they committed a great injustice) suppressed. Both these interpretations are in line with linguistic interpretations. My mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī prefers the first of these and I am more inclined to the second, and my translation is in accordance with it. However, in both cases, the implication of the verse will not be much different.

The words refer عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ to the Quraysh who had rejected the message of the Prophet (sww) and were also trying to forcibly stop Muslims from the religion of God. As indicated earlier, they had also deprived the Muslims of visiting the House of God in those times.

The words “which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it” indicate the equality of rights of all those who visit the House of God, whether they reside within the limits of the Ḥaram or outside it. This is a hit on the monopoly of the Quraysh and especially on the leaders of the Banū Hāshim: such was their despotic control of the House of God that they could deprive anyone from entering it and permit anyone to visit it. The Qur’ān has called it absolutely unlawful and illicit because no tribe has been given this authority. No one has the right to restrict the entry of any person who wants to visit it to worship God and offer its rituals, whether he belongs to the Banū Hāshim and the Quraysh or not, whether he belongs to Makkah or not and

1. Indeed, those who disbelieved and they stop people from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque which We have made equally for all people whether they live there or outside it, [they have committed a grave oppression]. And those who intend something irreligious, some polytheistic practice in it, We shall make him taste a painful torment.

whether he is an Arab or not. The only obligation of its residents is to keep it cleansed from the filth as Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had been directed to, the details of which are coming up. On the contrary, the Quraysh were guilty of stuffing the House of God with all the filth they had been asked to cleanse it from. Despite this, they claimed to be its custodians and stopped from entering it the servants of God who wanted to restore its Abrahamic glory and grandeur.

The words **الْعَاكِفُ** and **الْبَادِ** actually refer to those who reside within the limits of Ḥaram and those outside it, as referred to earlier. However, by using the word **الْعَاكِفُ** the real status of these residents is highlighted: their status is not of its rulers and monopoly-holders; they are in the capacity of those who do *i'tikāf* in it and serve all those who visit it. They are required to make it a centre of worship and pilgrimage for the rest of the world, as Ishmael (sws) had done. Moreover, they are to invite all the people to visit it and benefit from its blessings.

It is clearly evident from these words that as far as the Sacred Mosque is concerned no family or tribe can have its monopoly and control. Every single Muslim whether he belongs to the East or the West, is an Arab or a non-Arab has equal rights in it. As far as the people of Makkah or their government is concerned, they are not its rulers; their responsibility is to offer their services to maintain and protect it. It is their obligation to keep it cleansed from every semblance of polytheism and religious innovation and provide as many facilities as they can to those who visit it for worship. They do not have any authority whatsoever to deprive a Muslim residing in any part of the world to visit it except if it is proven that he is using the House of God against the objectives for which it has been built by Abraham (sws).

Just as all Muslims have equal rights regarding visiting the House of God, they also have equal responsibility in protecting it. If it is proven that those who are its custodians and protectors are guilty of impregnating it with the of filth with which they were directed to clean it, it is the responsibility of all the Muslims of the world to stop them from this excess. These custodians cannot say that this is an internal matter and that no one has the right to interfere in it.

Similarly, in case of an enemy attack, the responsibility of defending and protecting it is the right of every Muslim of the

world. In this matter, it is not permissible to give any national or international treaty or expediency any regard. If the government of a country stops people from participating in this *jihād* even if the government is of those who are Muslims by name, it will be obligatory upon the believers to wage *jihād* against it. This is because the responsibility of protecting the House of God does not merely rest with the people of Makkah or their government. Every person who claims to be a Muslim is liable for it. This cannot in any way be regarded as an external dispute. Every Muslim equally shares the rights and obligations of the House of God. It is the heart of the Muslim *ummah*. Its existence guarantees the existence of the *ummah* and any disorder in it will create disorder in the whole *ummah*.

Stated above are the obvious consequences of the words of the Qur'ān. Our jurists have also inferred from them that within the precincts of the Ḥaram none can own a house or receive rent from someone. I regard this inference to be unfounded. The *جَعَلْنَاهُ* لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ words occur as attributes of the House of God and do not qualify the whole of Makkah or the limits of Ḥaram. For this reason, I would give preference to view of the Shafītes who are not in favour of this restriction.

The preposition *بِ* after *مَنْ يُرِدْ* in *مَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِإِلْحَادٍ بِظُلْمٍ نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ* shows that this verb encompasses the meaning of *هَمْ* (intention). The word *إِلْحَادٍ* means deviation and being irreligious. The word *بِظُلْمٍ* is a permutative (*badal*) from *بِإِلْحَادٍ* and it is commonly used for polytheism in the Qur'ān.

The meaning of the verse is that such is this House that if a person intends to do something irreligious in it and that too as grave as polytheism, God will make him taste a painful torment. It may be kept in mind that there is a subtle difference between *يُرِدْ* and *هَمْ*. The former refers to the intention that has a whole thought process behind it while the latter to an intention that may be impulsive, as is evident from verse 74 of Sūrah Tawbah (وَهُمْؤَا) and verse 24 of Sūrah Yūsuf (وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهَا وَهَمْ بِهَا).

The implication is that the etiquette of this House of God is very strict. Even impulsive and transient intentions are held accountable.

By adding the word *بِظُلْمٍ* to *بِإِلْحَادٍ*, it has been explained that when even a slight deviation will be punished, how can polytheism which is the greatest oppression – which the Quraysh were guilty

of – be permissible?

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ²

From here begins a mention of Abraham's history and that of the House of God so that it becomes fully evident to the Quraysh that they had totally ruined all the objectives for which Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) had built it. Thus, they now deserve to be displaced from it, and the House of God entrusted to those are worthy of it.

The verbal noun تَبْيِهُ means "to make someone inhabit or reside or populate a place." The preposition ل after it shows that this place was not just reserved as an abode for Abraham (sws). It was also meant to be the place of residence of Ishmael (sws) and the rest of his progeny. The Arabs were broadly aware of this history and used to feel proud that they were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and the inheritors of his religion. However, even before the arrival of Prophet Muḥammad (sws), the Jews had conspired to alter or obliterate from the Torah its verses which bore testimony to the relationship of Abraham (sws) with the House of God. The purpose was to disprove the advent of the last Prophet from the Ishmaelites. They fabricated historical facts that showed that after migration Abraham (sws) chose Syria as his place of residence and not Makkah and that the son offered for sacrifice was Isaac (sws) and not Ishmael (sws). After that they tried to alter facts about Marwah, Makkah and the House God and of all those things related to these. However, how could they succeed in hiding the actual history that was more radiant than the sun? Even now, there exist such testimonies in the Torah that are sufficient to expose this conspiracy. My mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has done precisely this in his book *Al-Rā'ī al-ṣaḥīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ* (The Actual Son offered for Sacrifice), and this exegesis too has been doing so at relevant instances. Readers may look what I have written while explaining verses 141-142 of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

2. And remember when We had made the place of this House an abode for Abraham with the directive: "Do not associate anyone with Me and keep my House pure for those who circumbambulate, stand, kneel and prostrate."

What is stated in **وَأَن لَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهَّرَ بَيْتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ** is almost the same as what is mentioned in the following verse:

وَعَهْدَنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنَّ طَهَّرَ أَبْيَتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ
(١٢٥ : ٢)

And We bound Abraham and Ishmael: “Cleanse My House for those who do *ṭawāf*, observe *i'tikāf* and to kneel and prostrate [in it].” (2:125)

It has been pointed out earlier that the section of verses under discussion are meant to explain to the Quraysh the objective for which God had deputed Abraham (sws) to build the House as well as other directives related to it and what they had ended up doing. In spite of this, they have a tyrannical control of this House and are stopping those who want to once again revive this real objective.

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ³

The word **رِجَالًا** is the plural of **رَجُلًا** and refers to pedestrians. **ضَامِرٍ** means a camel or a horse that has become frail because of journeying for a long distance. It is used equally for both the male and the female gender. The word **كل** is meant to emphasize it. For example, it is said **هو عالم كل العالم** (he is a brilliant scholar). The word **فَجٍّ** refers to the path between mountains, and the attribute **عَمِيقٍ** qualifies it. Mountain passes which are narrow become deep if they are continually treaded upon.

In other words, while the first directive regarding the House of God given to Abraham (sws) was mentioned earlier, this verse mentions the second directive: he should proclaim among people that they are to come for the pilgrimage of this House so that they come from near and distant places to earn its blessings. Here too the purpose was to point to the Quraysh that they should also have invited all mankind to come to visit this House; however, instead of doing this, they have done the exact opposite and have assumed dictatorial control of the House; when the real

3. And proclaim *hajj* among the people; they will come to you on foot and also on very frail she-camels from far off deep mountain passes.

heirs of Abraham's religion want to visit it, they fiercely resist it.

The words ... يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا are actually the answer to the command clause (*jawāb amr*). For this reason, they form glad tidings for Abraham (sws): as soon as he proclaims this invitation among people, they will come on foot and on the backs of camels to do the pilgrimage of the House. Because of continuous travel, these animals will become weak and the paths and passes of Makkah will deepen because of continuous influx of people.

The abundance of pilgrims and their immense passion and zeal that is evident from these metaphors is borne out by history as well. Even after the passage of thousands of years, the roads of Makkah and Madīnah and the fields of Minā and 'Arafāt bear witness how the glad tidings given to Abraham (sws) materialized and how people have continued to grow during these times. Earlier, only camels used to painstakingly help their riders for this purpose. Now with new advancements, buses, lorries, cars, aeroplanes and ships too have become part of this sacred fleet. The context of these verses shows that it is the will and liking of God that His servants have an ever-increasing passion for visiting His House. However, restrictions like visas, quotas and balloting which various Muslim governments have imposed to earn foreign exchange are absolutely uncalled for and in my opinion amount to stopping people from going to the House of God (صد عن المسجد الحرام). Even a non-Muslim government does not have the right to impose such restrictions. In fact, it will become evident from succeeding verses that this would amount to persecution. Muslims can wage *jihād* to curb this if they have the means.

لَيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَةٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ
فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ⁴

It has been explained in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah that the months of *hajj* were also very profitable for the Arabs with regard to trade and business. It was during this time that all the merchandise needed by them reached their markets from other

4. "So that people also reach their places of benefit and in certain specific days pronounce the name of God on the beasts God has blessed them with." Thus, eat from them yourselves and also feed the needy inflicted with hunger.

parts of the world. On the other hand, local goods too got a chance to reach outside markets. If, during the *hajj* period, such economically beneficial activities take place, it is not against the temperament of the upright religion preached by Abraham (sws). In fact, this is a testimony to the fact that this religion, which is so close to human nature, is devoid of any speck of monasticism. So much so, even in the ritual of *hajj* – which is the closest to forsaking the pleasures of life – it maintains a balance between the spiritual and mundane affairs. Thus, the real thing is to maintain balance lest this ritual only become a means of business or political activities.

The section وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ has been explained under verse 1 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

The expression أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ refers to the specific days prescribed for animal sacrifice during *hajj*. It has been explained at other instances of this exegesis that in the various activities of this world the time and season chosen for them carry significance and if these are not given due regard the required results cannot be achieved. Similarly in worship rituals too, place, time and part of the year hold importance. If they are not fully kept in consideration, they are deprived of their real benefit. The days of animal sacrifice have been fixed by God and His messenger, and they commemorate the sacrifice offered by Abraham (sws). Both these authorities have given certain expediencies too in these for the benefit of the people. To take advantage of these is not against piety. However, giving due regard to these days is essential in religion and this is entirely in harmony with the nature of this universe.

In this verse and in the next ones too, *dhibh* and *naḥr* are referred to as “pronouncing the name of God.” This expression carries great significance: in the times of *jāhiliyyah*, the idolaters dedicated all their sacrifices to their idols. In order to circumvent this wrong practice, God regarded His own name to be compulsorily pronounced while slaughtering beasts. Without this pronouncement, taking the life of animal was regarded to be prohibited. The words عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ state the reason for necessarily slaughtering animals in the name of God: it is God Who has blessed human beings with animals; hence pronouncing someone other's name while slaughtering them is ingratitude and is also tantamount to humiliating the animals. This style exhorts people to express gratitude to God. In other words, it is their duty

to dedicate the animals to God as an expression of their gratitude because it is He Who has blessed them with this favour.

The words فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْبَاسِ الْفَقِيرِ point to the fact that the animal sacrifice people are being ordered to carry out is not because God receives any benefit from them. Neither their blood nor their meat reaches God. What people dedicate to God is in fact returned to them: they themselves can eat from them and also those who are needy. The example of animal sacrifice is just as if a person places his crown at the feet of the real king and the king after revering it through his feet places it back on the head of that person. Here it may be kept in mind that polytheistic nations believed that their idols ate and benefitted from the food of the animals sacrificed for them. Even the Jews had the belief that there were certain sacrifices whose aroma pleased God very much. The Qur'ān has refuted these beliefs in this verse and in the succeeding ones.

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نَذْرَهُمْ وَلِيُطَوِّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ٥

The word means “filth.” The expression قَضَى تَفَثُهُ would mean “he cleansed himself from his dirt.” This is a reference to the observance of the last rituals of the *hajj*. Because of *ihrām* restrictions and observance of *hajj* rituals, dirt and filth accumulates in the body and it is a liking of the Almighty too that during these days people remain in this state of uncleanliness. However, right after *hajj*, a pilgrim is required to trim his hair, bathe, and wear fresh clothes and if he has made a vow to sacrifice an animal, he should proceed to do it. After that he should do the *tawāf* and with it finish all the rituals.

The House of God is called عَتِيقٌ in this verse. The word means “real and ancient.” I have already explained under verse 125 of Sūrah al-Baqarah the reason for using this adjective: it is the house built by Abraham (sws) that is the real and ancient House of God and not the Bayt al-Maqdis as claimed by the Jews. In the first place, it was built much later by Solomon (sws) and in the second, it was built in a way that its place of sacrifice actually faced the House of God built by Abraham (sws) because it was the real direction towards which his progeny was required to turn for the relevant

5. Then people should clean themselves of their dirt, fulfil their vows and circumambulate the ancient House.

worship rituals. Though the Jews have tried to hide all these facts but testimonies which point to them are still found in the Torah, and I have explained them in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

ذٰلِكَ ۖ وَمَنْ يُعِظَّمِ اللّٰهُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُثْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ
فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ ﴿٦﴾

When the word ذٰلِكَ occurs in this way, it actually is a substitute for a whole sentence. Here it means: “These are the things which Abraham (sws) was informed of regarding the *hajj* and its rituals and people must attentively hear them out.” This, in fact, is a word of warning.

The directives given to Abraham (sws) end on this sentence. From the next one, directives are given to those who claimed to be the heirs of Abraham’s legacy but were totally unaware of its responsibilities.

The expression حُرِّمَتْ اللّٰهُ means all those things which God has asked people to revere and respect. Examples include, the Hāram, the Mosque of God, the sacred months, sacrificial animals and their yokes etc. The tradition of revering all these has been handed down from Abraham (sws). The particular reason one has been told to show reverence to these sacred entities is that the Idolaters had altered all the sacred traditions of Abraham (sws) to suit their worldly interests. Consider, for example, the sacred months. They had invented a regulation called Nasī which aligned the lunar calendar with the solar one. This was beneficial for their trade activities. The verse directs the attention of its addressees to an important fact: it may well be that giving due regard to sacred entities may result in some loss of worldly benefits.

The words فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ refer to the fact that people who respect these sacred entities in all circumstances in order to reap the blessings of the hereafter should remember that this attitude will be a source of great good for them.

The words وَاُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْاَنْعَامُ اِلَّا مَا يُثْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ with reference to the words عَلَى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْاَنْعَامِ of verse 28 allude to the fact that totally

6. Diligently follow these things and he who honours the sanctities ordained by God, then this is better for him in the eyes of his Lord. And the cattle have been allowed to you except those which have been recited out to you. So, abstain from the filth of the idols and from falsehoods.

baseless are the verdicts which the Idolaters have pronounced regarding various animals: they regard some animals to be permissible and some to be prohibited, some to be permissible for men and some for women, some are allowed as a means of transport and some are not. All this does not have any foundation in the religion of Abraham (sws). In this religion, the only beasts prohibited are those recited out in the Qur'ān.

Consider next the words فَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ. This is a reference to the details that have been mentioned in Sūrah al-An'ām (126-154). Since all their prohibition and allowance is based on polytheistic beliefs, it has been stated that they must cleanse themselves of the filth that has incriminated their beliefs because of worshipping idols and must also abstain from ascribing falsehoods to God. In other words, they themselves prohibit or allow something and in order to give their actions religious sanctity, then ascribe it to God. This is a grave lie and an imputation of falsehood to God (إِفْتَرَاءَ عَلَى اللَّهِ), as mentioned in verse 140 of Sūrah al-An'ām. They must abstain from this.

حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ
الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ۚ

The second clause of the verse mentions a parable about polytheism: a person who perpetrates it, severs his connection from his real place. When this happens, it may well be that some devil get hold of him. He becomes like a ship without anchor that may hit any rocky surface or like a wasp that can be blown away by the wind wherever it wants to. A person plunges from the height he has climbed to because of his belief in monotheism if he deprives himself of this belief.

It is evident from this that a person who adheres to polytheism does not harm God; he actually harms his own self. He deprives himself of the security and protection which God has blessed him through the belief in monotheism. Then he becomes susceptible to the deceptions and conspiracies of Satan.

7. And while being fully devoted to God do not associate partners with Him. And he who associates partners with God, his example is as if he falls from the sky and birds snatch him away or take him away and throw him at a far off place.

ذِكِّكَ ۖ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمَ شَعَائِرُ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ ۚ⁸

This ذِكِّكَ is of the same sort as the one in verse 32. In other words, they are told that they should be fully mindful of the things that have been stated above and further fully keep in mind that the symbols appointed by God do not merely require outward respect: the piety of the hearts is also needed. These symbols or *sha'ā'ir* are appointed to portray some grand reality. Their real purpose is to remind people of that reality. If this reality is not understood, mere outward adherence to them will not fulfil one's obligation of reverence towards them. Only when a person is mindful of the reality that what is actually required of him stands carried out. In verse 37 ahead, the reality behind the grand symbol of animal sacrifice is stated thus: لَنْ يَنَالِ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَائُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنْكُمْ (neither will the meat of these sacrifices reach God nor their blood; only your piety will reach them).

About animal sacrifice, it is known that it commemorates the sacrifice of his dear son Ishmael (sws) offered by Abraham (sws). By doing so he showed that a Muslim should always be prepared to sacrifice the dearest of his possessions to submit to the will of God. If this essence of animal sacrifice is not kept in mind, by slaughtering the animal, one may have apparently carried out the ritual of animal sacrifice, but remained unaware of its essence. Needless to say, it is the essence of this ritual that connects us with God and not the meat or the blood of the animal.

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَىٰ الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ⁹

The preposition إِلَىٰ after word محل shows that there is a word suppressed after it which means that these animals should be then taken near the ancient house for sacrifice.

When the Idolaters dedicated an animal for sacrifice, they regarded using it in any way to be prohibited. The Qur'ān has explained that this is not essential for revering these symbols: these animals can be reared and made use of until the time of sacrifice

8. Diligently follow these things and he who reveres the symbols appointed by God, he should remember that this relates to the piety of the hearts.

9. And there are various benefits in them for you until an appointed time. Then they have to be taken towards that ancient House of God for sacrifice.

arrives. This use will not in any way lessen their reverence; however, when the time comes, it is essential that they be taken to the ancient house of God and sacrificed in His name only. If they are sacrificed at the altars of some others and in their names, it will violate their sanctity. The word **فُئ** here refers to sequence of events and for this reason I regard this use to be permissible until the sacrificial animals reach the place of sacrifice.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَلِلَّهِمُ اللَّهُ
وَإِحْدَ فَلَہٗٓ أَسْلِمُوا ۖ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

Amongst the various meanings of the word **مَنَسَك** (as discussed under verse 200 of Sūrah al-Baqarah), here it means “animal sacrifice.” The implication is that in the religions given by God, animal sacrifice is the most ancient worship ritual. It may be kept in mind that the sacrifice offered by Adam’s sons Abel and Cain is mentioned both in the Bible and in the Qur’ān.

The words **فَلِلَّهِمُ اللَّهُ** refer to the nature of the animal sacrifice stipulated by the Almighty: to express gratitude to Him by dedicating to Him the animals given by Him. In other words, this was the essence of animal sacrifice in all the religions. If someone other was dedicated its share, it amounted to deviation from the true path connived by religious innovators.

The words **وَإِحْدَ فَلَہٗٓ أَسْلِمُوا** point to the real essence of animal sacrifice: fully devoting oneself to the one and only God without associating partners with Him.

Consider next the expression: **وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ**. The word **مُخْبِت** means “a low-lying land.” The word **اُخْبَات** originates from it and means an expression of humility and meekness. It refers precisely to what is alluded to by the word **أَسْلِمُوا**. The real spirit of Islam is humility. In other words, not only should a person outwardly submit to God, he should also inwardly show this compliance. Those who have this trait are in fact true believers and the glad tidings of God being happy with them and of Paradise are meant for them.

10. And for each community, We have regarded animal sacrifice a religious ritual so that the cattle God has given them, they pronounce God’s name on them. Thus, your God is One; so, surrender yourselves to Him alone and give glad tidings to those whose hearts are bent down before Him.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ۝ ١١

This verse refers to some qualities of the *مُخْتَبَرِينَ* just mentioned. The first of these “whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them” is in contrast with the traits of the arrogant mentioned in verse 72 ahead. The second “they are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with” is in contrast with what is stated about those in verse 11 who laid claim to faith but were not prepared to face adversities that may come as a result.

The expression *وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ* is an annexure (*muḍāf ilayh*). The link between perseverance and prayer has been discussed at some instances earlier in this exegesis. The expression does not merely mean that they pray; it means that they are very persistent in doing so.

The words “who spend from whatever We have blessed them with” not only urge the believers to spend for the cause of God but also point to the link between the prayer and this spending. It is essential to understand these linkages between individual components to understand the wisdom in religious directives.

وَالْبُدُنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا حَيَرٌ ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ ۚ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ۚ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ۝ ١٢

The word *بُدُن* is the plural of *بُدنة* and means a camel. However, here it specially refers to sacrificial camels and specifically the ones marked for sacrifice by making them wear collars. The words “symbols of God” which are mentioned as attributes of these camels point to this interpretation. Obviously, every camel does

11. They are those whose hearts tremble when the name of God is mentioned before them. They are steadfast on any calamity they are afflicted with and are diligent in the prayer and who spend from whatever We have blessed them with.

12. And We have included sacrificial camels also in the symbols of God for you. There is a lot of good for you in them. So, pronounce God’s name on them as well while you make them stand in rows. Thus, when they fall on their sides, eat from them yourselves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask. In this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you may be grateful.

not have this status and only those dedicated for sacrifice can be called so.

In verse 28 earlier, all four-legged beasts that are sanctioned for sacrifice are mentioned. After this, camels were not needed to be mentioned; however, a specific reason occasioned their mention: camels were the most cherished animals for the Arabs. However, the Jews due to a dubious tradition that I have already indicated under the exegesis of verse 93 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān had regarded it to be prohibited. In fact, they worked a vicious propaganda against Islam for regarding camel sacrifice to be permissible. They alleged that the new religion could not be the one prescribed by Abraham (sws) because it regarded an animal prohibited by all prophets of God a means of procuring His nearness. The Qur'ān has refuted this claim of the Jews in verse 93 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān and has demanded the Jews to present the proof of the fact that Abraham (sws) had proscribed the camel, if they have it.

The reason for the camel being regarded to be *sha'ā'irullāh* (symbol of God) is stated as “there is a lot of good for you in them.” In other words, they were very beneficial and favourable for the Arabs. I have explained under verse 92 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān that God likes the sacrifice of the most endeared animal. The camel was understandably the most cherished animal to the Arabs. It was their ship of the desert, companion of their stays and journeys and the sole means of their trade activities. They would try to gain the most benefit from its milk, meat and hide. The Qur'ān has repeatedly directed the attention of the Arabs towards this great favour with reference to these blessings and benefits it has. Obviously if the Arabs sacrifice something for the pleasure of their Lord which is so advantageous for their worldly benefits, it can also be a great source of attaining the nearness of God.

The words “So pronounce God’s name on them as well while you make them stand in rows; thus, when they fall on their sides, eat from them yourselves and feed those also who are needy but show content and those also who ask” point to the way of sacrificing the camels. Making them stand in rows is like making them stand to pray before God and when they fall after the slaughter, it is as if they have prostrated before Him. Some historical narratives show that the Idolaters would regard it prohibited to benefit from animal sacrifice. This religious innovation has been set right here by the Qur'ān.

Those worthy of this meat are classified as “needy but show content and those also who ask.” Verse 28 has referred to the real needy who are worthy of it but these words describe two types. The type mentioned first are the needy who are content and do not ask for their needs. They must be taken care of first. It is the duty of others to reach them because they cannot be expected to reach out to others. I have explained this under verse 273 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and also indicated that the attitude of the poor and needy liked by God is that of self-respect; nonetheless, in case of any compulsion, they can ask for help.

The words “in this manner, We have put these animals into your service so that you may be grateful” imply that it is a great favour of God that He has made a huge animal as the camel subservient to their wishes: they can benefit from it while travelling and also while residing, and whenever they want they can slaughter it. Had it not been God’s will, they could not have made even the smallest of animals subservient to themselves. A natural obligation towards this favour of God is to show gratitude to Him, fulfill His rights and not associate anyone else in these.

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَآؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا
اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْحَسَنِينَ ¹³

The reality that was referred to in verse 31 earlier is reminded of in this verse from another aspect. In other words, if piety is not engendered in oneself, slaughtering animals would merely amount to shedding their blood.

The words كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ once again point to what is stated in كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ of the previous verse. However, here it is pointed out that the way to show gratitude to God is express His oneness; in other words, while slaughtering the animals dedicated to God, only His name should be pronounced and none other besides Him. It is for this reason that while slaughtering animals, they are made to lie down in the direction of the House of God and His name pronounced

13. And neither does their flesh reach God nor their blood; in fact, only your piety reaches Him. In this way, God has put them to your service so that the guidance God has blessed you with, you exalt God on it. And give glad tidings to those who are thorough.

acknowledging that the animal is purely dedicated to Him. Moreover, this verse also indicates the real motive of showing gratitude: receiving God's guidance on religion which Abraham acknowledged by offering His only son for sacrifice.

Consider next the words: *وَبَشِّرِ الصَّالِحِينَ*. *صَالِح* refers to a person who is thorough and obeys every directive of God in letter and in spirit. Right before these words a part of the discourse is suppressed to the effect: "Those who slaughter animals keeping in view these conditions are the real thorough." After this suppression, it is stated that glad tidings of God being pleased with them and of Paradise should be given to such thorough individuals.

Section IV: Verses (38-41)

These verses were revealed in Madīnah and since, as specified in the beginning of the *sūrah*, they explain what is stated in earlier verses, they were placed here.

Readers may once again take a look at verse 25 where, while referring to the Quraysh, it was stated that those who stop people from Islam and the Sacred Mosque, even though none has any dictatorial rights on it, are very unjust and God will make such unjust people taste a painful torment. After this, in the light of the history of House of God and its rituals, it is shown that the Quraysh have totally violated its sanctity and hence have no right to remain its occupiers.

Those verses obviously insinuated that the real custodians of the House of God were the Muslims and not the Quraysh. However, in Makkah, they were utterly helpless and were in no position to procure this right for themselves. After migrating to Madīnah when they assumed the form of a collectivity, the thought naturally arose in their minds that they should not be deprived of the blessings of the House; however, they were not aware how to go about it. It was obvious that when the Quraysh had so mercilessly expelled them, they would not easily give them permission for *hajj* or *'umrah*. So had Muslims endeavoured to offer these rituals, war would definitely have ensued and that too within the precincts of the Ḥaram in the sacred months, something regarded to be forbidden both in the *jāhiliyyah* customs and in Islam. The Quraysh and their allies – the People of the Book –

also made this basis to stir propaganda against Islam and the Muslims alleging that they were violating the sanctity of those entities – something unheard of hitherto. All these issues were being faced by the Muslims at that time.

In the following verses, these questions have been answered.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ اذِّنْ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتُلُونَ
بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ظُلْمًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا
رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَّ مَتَّ صَوَامِعُ وَيَبِيعُ ۖ وَصَلُّوتٌ وَمَسْجِدٌ يُذَكِّرُ
فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَرُوا بِالْبَعْرِوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤١﴾

Indeed, God shall defend those who have accepted faith. God never likes deceitful ingrates. Those against whom war is waged are granted permission of war because they have been oppressed and God indeed has the power to help them. The oppressed who were turned out of their houses without any justification only because they were guilty of saying: “God is our Lord.” And if God did not continue to drive away people through one another, all monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is abundantly taken all would have been razed down. And indeed, God shall help those who will strive to help Him. Undoubtedly, God is powerful, dominant over all. These are people if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone. (38-41)

Explanation

١٤ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

At the very start of this discussion, God has given glad tidings to the oppressed Muslims: the time has now arrived when

14. Indeed, God shall defend those who have accepted faith. God never likes deceitful ingrates. Those against whom war is waged are granted permission of war because they have been oppressed and God indeed has the power to help them.

Muslims should protect and defend their rights; God will be with them and will help them at every step.

In *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ* the word *كُلَّ* is to emphasize the attributes mentioned and *خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ* refers to the Quraysh. The attribute *خَوَّانٍ* means a person who is utterly dishonest, is a traitor and who does not honour his promise. It alludes to the fact that these people had broken all their promises and commitments on the basis of which they had been granted the custodianship of the House of God. They had totally dishonoured the purpose for which the House of God had been built by Abraham (sws). They had also completely thrown into oblivion the responsibilities that had been imposed by Abraham (sws) on his progeny regarding this House. For this reason, they no longer deserved to be its custodians and God never likes such deceitful ingrates.

The attribute *خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ* with *خَوَّانٍ* expresses their ingratitude. It has been explained in the exegesis of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* that the status of religious and political leadership acquired by the Quraysh over all of Arabia was entirely because of the House of God. However, instead of duly valuing the favour and being grateful to their Lord, they assumed a dictatorial role in its custodianship: they enjoyed all the rights ensuing from it but totally forgot their own obligations towards it. In fact, by taking opposite measures, they were guilty of showing utter disrespect to the House. Thus, the verse asks as to what relationship can God have with such traitors and ingrates. He never likes such deceitful and ungrateful people. The expression “never likes” in fact means that God hates such devious individuals. The respite that was ordained for them has now expired; the time has come when God will cleanse His House from their filth and consign its custodianship to those who will duly discharge their responsibilities towards this House of God built by Abraham (sws).

15. *أُوذُنَ الَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا ۖ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ*¹⁵

What exactly were the Muslims allowed to do as a result of this permission (أُوذُنَ) is suppressed here. The implication is that the Muslims have been permitted to wage war against those who

15. The oppressed who were turned out of their houses without any justification only because they were guilty of saying: “God is our Lord.”

wage war against them. Since till that time Muslims were not organized as a collectivity, they were not allowed to wage war in spite of enduring all kinds of oppression; they had, in fact, been directed to show patience. This is because in the absence of a collectivity, war waged by individuals cannot curb disorder and create justice. It is known that in Islam, war can only be waged for the establishment of a system of justice and truth. Once the Muslims migrated to Madīnah, circumstances changed. For this reason, they were allowed to take up arms in defence. This permission was also necessary because the matter related to the Ḥaram and its boundaries. The Muslims could not have taken any step regarding the Ḥaram unless they were given permission by God and His messenger. It may be noted that only permission for defensive warfare is given here because until that time Muslims could not bear any burden beyond it. As far as the question of the permission for offensive warfare is concerned, readers can look up my exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah.

The words *بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا* express another reason for this permission: in the first place, every individual or group has the right to defend itself; moreover, Muslims had been a target of oppression. The details of this oppression are mentioned in the next verse.

The words *وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ* further reinforce the above mentioned promise of God to help the Muslims in defending themselves, and at the same time warn the disbelievers of the Quraysh. In other words, no one is to think that the few Muslims are helpless and there is none to help them: God is fully capable of helping them; once He starts helping them, no force in the world can defeat them.

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ
بِبَعْضٍ لَّهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۚ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ
مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿١٦﴾

The words *الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ* explain the oppression that

16. And if God did not continue to drive away people through one another, all monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of God is abundantly taken all would have been razed down. And, indeed, God shall help those who will strive to help Him. Undoubtedly, God is powerful, dominant over all.

the Muslims were facing referred to in the previous verse: they were expelled from their homes without any crime. This style encompasses all the hardships and afflictions they had gone through: no one leaves his house and homeland unless he is utterly compelled.

The sentence *إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ* is very eloquent in nature. It means that the only offence committed by the oppressed people, is their declaration that God is their Lord. In other words, their greatest virtue and the greatest truth they preached became their greatest sin. They have been cornered so much in this that they were forced to leave their homes.

Some people have interpreted this last sentence to refer to the fact that here the Qur'ān is presenting this declaration of monotheism to imply that it is not something to show aversion to and the disbelievers of the Quraysh are needlessly showing it and as a result trying to harass the Muslims; what difference does it make if someone believes in one God only? Those who have interpreted this verse thus are perhaps a little naïve. The Quraysh were not foolish like them to not understand the implications of these words. They knew its far-reaching consequences and hence they were its enemies. In this way, they actually became the enemies of the greatest truth. The Qur'ān has directed their attention to this foolishness of theirs in a very subtle way.

The word *صَوَامِعَ* is the plural of *صومعة*. It is primarily used for the lofty mountains and buildings in which Christian monks lived in seclusion. Hence if it is translated as monasteries, it would be very apt.

The word *بَيْعَ* is the plural of *بيعة*. It is used for the worship places of the both the Jews and the Christians. However, since a separate word *صَلَوَاتُ* is used ahead for the worship places of the Jews, hence this word must be considered specific to Christian places of worship. Because of their system of *Raḥbāniyyah*, both churches and monasteries held equal importance to them.

The word *صَلَوَاتُ* is the plural of *صلوة*. It refers to places in which the Jews offered the prayer. The Jews called their prayer *صلوتا* which is an Aramaic word.

The word *مَسْجِدُ* is commonly used for the mosques of Muslims.

Now the wisdom for allowing the believers to take up arms—even if they are attacked in the Ḥaram and within its boundaries —

is being mentioned. They have the right to defend themselves and can hope that God will help them. For reasons stated in this verse, God has always allowed His prophets and messengers to wage *jihād* and they have waged it to protect their religious values and symbols. Similarly, at the time of revelation of this verse, this permission was granted to Muslims so they could get ready to protect the Ḥaram and their religious symbols. If its current deceitful and fraudulent claimants to custodianship impede them in any way, they should be paid back in their own coin.

It may be noted that the Quraysh, seeing the enthusiasm of the Muslims, already had an inkling of what was to come. Thus they launched a propaganda that the proponents of the new religion did not even care about the sanctity of the Ḥaram and its boundaries. The Jews and Christians too joined them in this vicious campaign and regarded the attitude of the Muslims to be against sentiments of religiosity. At other instances, the Qur'ān has answered these claimants of religiosity and here too it has done so. It is said that if waging *jihād* for the cause of God is against this sentiment, it would mean that evil is given full freedom to wreak havoc and obliterate religion itself.

It may be noted, as referred to earlier, that first of all the monasteries and churches of the Christians have been mentioned. The reason for this foremost mention is that they were the most critical of the Muslim spirit of *jihād*, as will become evident from the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd. Even though there were other reasons for their opposition (as will be discussed at an appropriate instance), their concept of *raḥbāniyyah* had a great role in it. The Qur'ān has criticized this concept here: those, who in their frenzy of enmity against Islam, regard the spirit of *jihād* to be against religiosity should not disregard the fact that if this concept pre-existed, none of God's worship places on earth would have survived.

It may also be noted here that the worship places of the Jews and the Christians mentioned here primarily had the same status as the mosques of the Muslims. Deviance resulted in them when the People of the Book got incriminated with polytheism and religious innovation.

The words **وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ**^ط further emphasize the promise of divine help referred to earlier. At the same time, some new important aspects are pointed out as well:

Firstly, those who strive to protect the symbols of God, in fact help their Lord. Hence, it is essential for God to help them in return.

Secondly, only those are worthy of God's help who fulfil their own obligation regarding the cause of the truth. He does not help those who, like the Israelites, demand that God should provide them with a bed of roses without any effort from their own side.

There are several aspects worthy of attention in the sentence:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

– Since God is mighty and powerful, He does not need the help of anyone. Those who help Him in fact open the doors for God's help for themselves.

– The Muslims should not feel scared because of their small number and the large number of their enemies. The majestic God Who is promising to help them is mighty and dominant.

– The disbelievers, after witnessing the current situation of the Muslims, must not be led to think that these few people cannot achieve anything. These drops will now become a storm because God is behind them and God is mighty and powerful.

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ
الْبُغْيِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ۝١٧

Just as the word “land” means Makkah in verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ra'd and verse 44 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', concomitant indications show that here too it refers to the land of Makkah because the *jihād* of which permission has been granted here primarily relates to the liberation of the Ḥaram. The verse implies that the current deceitful and tyrannical occupants of the House of God have totally dishonoured the objectives for which Abraham (sws) made his progeny inhabit this land. So, now if God grants political authority to His servants through His help, they will carry out the obligations stated in it. Readers may take a look at verses 124-148 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It was precisely these obligations for which God had made this land a central place for Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). The style of the verse shows

17. These are people if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone.

that the Quraysh had totally ignored these obligations.

This verse forms the first glad tidings of political authority for Muslims in this world. It begins with the land of God's House – which is like the heart of the Muslim community. If it is in order, there is order among the rest of the Muslims. The same obligations are imposed on Muslims wherever God gives them political authority. If they do not fulfil them, then just as to God the political authority of others is illegal in such a land, same is the case with that of the Muslims.

The prayer and the *zakāh* are the binding forces of the *sharī'ah*. If they are mentioned, it is as if the whole of the *sharī'ah* has been mentioned.

The words معروف (good) and منك (evil) have also been discussed in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Some simpletons argue that when the Qur'ān has allowed people to follow the *ma'rūf* (معروف), it means that every group and nation can follow its own *ma'rūf*. Such people should know that in the spheres of life in which God and His messenger have ascertained *ma'rūf* and *munkar*, no one has any discretion. However, while remaining within the limits of the *sharī'ah*, people of every nation can follow their own *ma'rūf*.
