

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 10: Striving in the Way of Allah

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۗ لَا يَسْتَوْنَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

"Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of Al-Masjid Al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people." (Al-Tawbah: 19)

Reflections:

Exegetes have mentioned various causes of revelation for this verse, but the most widely accepted explanation relates to a conversation between Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet (s), and a man named Shaybah. Abbas provided water to the pilgrims, while Shaybah was the caretaker of the Ka'bah. As they boasted about their roles, Imam Ali (a) told them that he possessed an honor greater than theirs—he had fought in the way of Allah (swt) until they both accepted Islam. When this matter was brought to the Prophet (s), this verse was revealed.

The verse compares philanthropy to struggling in the way of Allah (s). The act of giving water to the pilgrims was life-giving in the harsh desert of Arabia. Similarly, the act of maintaining and taking care of the Ka'bah sustained the history, identity and beliefs of the monotheists of Arabia. Whilst both these actions are worthy if done for the sake of Allah (swt), they cannot be compared to faith and the act of striving against falsehood and oppression. Since the Qur'an is also a book of exhortation, it compares the doer of the actions and not just their actions. The following verse states that those who have migrated and struggled with their lives and their wealth have a greater status in the eyes of Allah (swt).

In Islamic tradition, the struggle to remove oppression is considered more valuable than merely helping the oppressed. Imam Ali (a) says in a famous statement, "Be an enemy to the oppressor and a helper to the oppressed."¹ The instruction to oppose oppression precedes the instruction to help the oppressed. This is because struggling against oppression restores the dignity and freedom of those who are suffering under it. Instead of merely addressing the symptoms, it seeks to remove the root cause.

In Dua al-Iftitah we read, "O Allah, honor him and strengthen [others] through him, support him and grant him victory. Grant him a mighty triumph, and open for him an easy conquest, and bestow upon him, from Yourself, a powerful authority and aid." This section of the dua reflects the role of Imam al-Mahdi (a) in rooting out oppression.

To ponder: What role does iman (faith) play in our social and political struggles?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*.

¹ Nahjul Balagha, Letter 47.