

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 28: The Red Line of Friendship

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوهُمْ ۗ وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

Allah does not forbid you from dealing with kindness and justice with those [polytheists] who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes. Indeed Allah loves the just. Allah forbids you only in regard to those who made war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported to expel you, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them—it is they who are the wrongdoers. (Mumtaḥanah 60:8-9)

Reflections:

Knowing who to befriend and who not to is an important question for everyone. It has an impact both in this world and the Next. Allah quotes the unjust on the Day of Qiyāmah as saying: “Woe to me! I wish I had not taken so and so as a friend!”¹

When dealing with other communities and nations, Islam envisions three groups. The first are those who are in alignment in terms of their faith and their commitment to the truth, both in word and in action: “They are friends of one another”² even if there be ethnic, linguistic, or minor doctrinal differences between them. As for those who do not belong to the faith, they are of two types and the above verses define the criteria to be used to determine the limits of friendship. It is not their *kufr* that is the determining factor; rather it is their attitude to the Muslims. If they do not cause difficulty for the Muslims, they are to be treated with justice and goodness. If, on the other hand, they show antagonism and commit oppression against them, befriending such individuals or normalizing relations with them has been forbidden. This is because “indeed, they have no [commitment to] pledges.”³ To befriend the unjust is an act of injustice.

Surah Mumtaḥanah mentions the example of P. Ibrāhīm (‘a) and his companions as a good example to follow when they said, “Indeed we repudiate you and whatever you worship besides Allah.” The Qur’ānic teachings and the stories of the prophets of the past, are not just to theorize about. They are meant to be put into practice. In his commentary on Surah Mumtaḥanah, Āyatullah Jawādī clearly encapsulates this idea as a responsibility for all Abrahamic faiths:

“Whether it is the suffering of the oppressed Palestinians, who are being ‘driven out of their homes’ [*those who were expelled from their homes unjustly*]⁴ or the plight of the innocent Yemenis, who are being slaughtered along with their children and women in their own land [*and slaughtered your sons*]⁵, there is no difference. Yes, what is presented as international Qur’ānic conferences—which include recitation, tajwīd, and conceptual interpretation of the Qur’ān—is of course a source of blessing. However, the most important aspect is *acting upon the Qur’ān’s message*, which calls upon Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike to care about Yemen and Palestine.”⁶

On this last Friday of the blessed month of Ramaḍān, let us make a commitment to learn the relevance of the Qur’ān in our lives and in our times, and to stand against oppression and injustice wherever it may be.

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Durūs Tafsīr* (Sūrah Mumtaḥanah)

¹ 25:28-29

³ 9:12

⁵ 2:49

² 8:72

⁴ 22:40

⁶ *Durūs Tafsīr*, 4th March, 2018