

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 174-176)

From the Book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,

by the Ameer of Hizb ut Tahrir, the eminent jurist and statesman, Ata Bin Khalil Abu Al-Rashtah:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ * أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ * ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ﴾ [البقرة: 174-176]

“Indeed, they who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and exchange it for a small price - those consume not into their bellies except the Fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment. (174) Those are the ones who have exchanged guidance for error and forgiveness for punishment. How patient they are in pursuit of the Fire! (175) That is [deserved by them] because Allah has sent down the Book in truth. And indeed, those who differ over the Book are in extreme dissension. (176)” [Surah Al Baqarah 2: 174-176]

Allah (swt) clarifies in these Ayaat the following:

1. In these verses, there is confirmation of what has been stated in the previous verses about the consequences of the concealment of knowledge and the concealment by those People of the Book of their knowledge of RasulAllah (saaw) in their books, but in these verses there is a new meaning. In the previous verse, it is stated, ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ﴾ “Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse.” [Surah al-Baqarah 2:159]. This verse is a statement of the situation of those who conceal all that Allah (swt) has revealed in general, whether it is to achieve the worldly benefits for them or for others, such as their concealing the revealed punishment of status so they do not apply on them, or they deny that they really know him (saaw), so that they do not follow him. This is on one hand. On the other hand, there are the concealers that are in the state of correct Repentance, such as before death, for example, or in according to what is in its ruling. That is, the possibility of Repentance is given and so Allah (swt) said after that ﴿إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنَّوْا﴾ “Except for those who repent and correct themselves and make evident [what they concealed]” [Surah al-Baqarah 2:160]

As for the verse that we are discussing now, ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ * أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَالْعَذَابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَمَا أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ * ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ نَزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِي الْكِتَابِ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ﴾

﴿بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا﴾ **“they who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and exchange it for a small price,”** it’s a statement of the situation of those who conceal what Allah has revealed for the benefit of others, in exchange for compensation. Therefore, Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا﴾ **“and [they] exchange it for a small price”** in this respect. The concealers are in a state where Repentance is not valid, i.e. the possibility of repentance is not given. It is as if they are dying upon their kufr, whilst concealing what Allah has revealed in the Book. Therefore, Allah (swt) said after that: ﴿أُولَٰئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾ **“those consume not into their bellies except the Fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment.”**

2. ﴿وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا﴾ **“and exchange it for a small price”** This is the Literal Meaning (منطوق), with no Contrary Understanding (مفهوم مخالف) for it, because it is drawn out of the most likely outcome. Those who have been concealing Truth, usually do not get from their superiors, for whom they conceal, except a little compensation, with respect to the enormity of the crime they commit.

Thus, there is no Contrary Understanding for it, i.e., it cannot be said that if they conceal that which Allah has revealed for a great price, then there will be no sin on them. Instead concealing that which Allah revealed is a great crime, regardless of whether there was a great or small price for it.

﴿مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ﴾ **“[they] consume not into their bellies except the Fire”** i.e. they consume in their bellies as a result of their concealing of what Allah (swt) revealed is nothing but Haraam (Prohibited) wealth, which will be the reason for their entry into the Fire of Hell on the Day of Resurrection. So, Fire here is in the metaphorical (مجازي) sense, instead of Haraam wealth, because it is caused by it.

﴿وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾ **“And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection”** i.e. by words that please them, since Allah (swt) said in another verse that He will speak to them by that which grieves them, ﴿قَالَ احْسِنُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُون﴾ **“He will say, “Remain despised therein and do not speak to Me.”** [Surah Al-Mu’minoos 23:108].

﴿وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾ **“nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment.”** He does not purify them with the forgiveness of their sins or praise them, but rather He punishes them with a painful punishment.

3. Allah shows their status.