

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 208-210)

From the book, Introduction to the Tafseer of the Quran,
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﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ * فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْكُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَاذْكُرُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ * هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ﴾

“O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy (208). But if you deviate after clear proofs have come to you, then know that Allah is Exalted and Wise (209). Do they await but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds and the angels [as well] and the matter is [then] decided? And to Allah [all] matters are returned. (210).”

These noble verses clarify the following:

1- Some of the Jews who had newly become Muslims thought that if they kept believing in some of the Torah, it would not harm their Iman (belief) at all. Thus, Allah (swt) clarified to them that entering into Iman requires belief in all that He (swt) has revealed i.e. everything in Islam and abandoning the creeds of Kufr. He also clarified that retaining anything from Kufr, even if it is little, is following the paths of Shaytan, who is an enemy with open hostility towards the believers. There is an emphasis in this verse about the Obligation of believing all that Allah (swt) has revealed to the Messenger of Allah (saw), whilst abandoning what is in the religions of Kufr.

- ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا﴾ “O you who have believed,” it is an address to those who left Kufr and adopted Islam.

- ﴿ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً﴾ “Enter into (السِّلْمِ) Silm completely”. I.e. Enter into Islam completely.

- The word السِّلْمِ Silm here refers to Islam as interpreted by Ibn Abbas (ra) and the intended meaning (maqsood) is all that is in Islam i.e. believing in everything, without exception, and acting upon all of its Shariah, whilst leaving all other laws.

-The word كَافَّةً ‘Kafatan’- means “completely” and it is the state (حال -Haal) of the word (السِّلْمِ-silm), with the meaning of Islam as a whole. The root (uSl) of (كَافَتْ) is from the active participle (ism fa’il) (كَافَتْ) which means preventing, from the word (كَفَّ) prevention. When you say (هذا الشيء كاف - hadha shai’u Kaafun) ‘This thing is enough’ it means it is preventing its parts from becoming asunder. So it is as if you are saying metaphorically (مجاازاً) (هذا الشيء كافاً) - ‘this thing as a whole or in entirety,’ by relating to causation (sababiyyah). Then the particle “ة” is added to the active participle (ism fa’il) in order to convert it from the verbal form of the word (كَفَّ) to the noun (كَافَةً), with meaning of ‘all (kul) and everything (jamee’a).’

Ibn Abbas (ra) said that this verse was revealed about Abdullah bin Salam and his companions. When they believed in the Prophet (saw), they believed in the Prophet's Shariah, whilst persisting upon some of the Shariah of Musa (as). Thus, they observed Sabbath and hated the meat and milk of camels after they had become Muslims. When other Muslims rebuked them, they said: “We protect ourselves from these.” They beseeched Prophet (saw) to act upon some of their previous Shariah rulings. Thus Allah (swt) revealed the verse.

i.e. whoever enters into Islam, he must enter it completely, there is no Shariah persisting other than this. Thus Islam is abrogating (naasikh) of Shariah other than itself from the other Shariahs. Allah (swt) said, ﴿مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ﴾ **“(This Quran) confirms that which preceded it of the Scripture and dominates (مُهَيِّمًا) over it.”** [TMQ 5:48] i.e. abrogating. Thus, the persistence upon anything from the previous Shariah, which is not approved by Islam, is following the footsteps of Shaytan. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ﴾ **“Do not follow the footsteps of Shaytan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.”** [TMQ 2:208]

2- It is not correct to interpret the word (السَّلَامُ), here, in the noble verse with the meaning of ‘making peace’ (المسالمة) with the enemy. This is even though the word (السَّلَامُ) has both the meaning of 'Islam' and (المسالمة) 'making peace' i. e. the word (السَّلَامُ) has several meanings. Consequently, it is a polysemic (mushtarak) word, having more than one meaning, and so it is mutashabih (similar), subject to multiple interpretation. The intention is to determine which of those meanings that can be understood from the contextualizing (singular: qareenah, plural: qaraa'in) related to this in the verses that are muhkam (exact or with one meaning alone).

If the (السَّلَامُ) here meant ‘making peace,’ then the meaning would be ‘enter into peace with the enemy completely.’ The command (amr) would be with obliging (wujoob), due to the contextualizing (qareenah) by the verse, ﴿وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ﴾ **“Do not follow the footsteps of Shaytan.”** Consequently, making complete peace with the enemy would be an obligation (fard) for the believers. However, this meaning contradicts with the muhkam (exact) verses related to fighting that oblige the believers to fight disbelievers, until the Deen completely belongs to Allah (swt), either by the entering of the people into Islam, or by the paying Jizya in submission to the Ahkam of Islam. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ﴾ **“And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah”** [TMQ 8:39]. And Allah (swt) said, ﴿قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ﴾ **“Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled.”** [TMQ 9:29]. And the hadith, «الجهاد ماض إلى يوم القيامة» **“Jihad is continuous until the day of judgement”** [Bukhari 3/1048; Abu Dawud: 2532; Bayhaqi: 9/156]. All these contextualize the continuation of fighting against disbelievers until the raising of the Word of Allah (swt) as the highest, by submission of the disbelievers to the rulings of of Islam. This clarifies that the word (السَّلَامُ) in the noble verse comes with the meaning of Islam and not as making peace (Musalama) with the enemy, due to its contradiction with Muhkam verses of fighting the enemy. The Muhkam (exact) overpowers the Muthashabih (similar) and so the meaning of the verse must be ‘Islam’ i.e. enter into Islam completely.

3- As for the word (السَّلَامُ) Silm that comes in the Quran with the meaning of ‘making peace’ (Musalama المسالمة), it appears in two verses: Once in Surah al-Anfal and then again in Surah Muhammed. Upon scrutinising these two verses, it establishes the state (حال Haal) of the word (السَّلَامُ) as being with the meaning of ‘making peace’:

a- The verse in Surah Anfal, ﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ﴾ **“And if they incline to peace (سَلَامٌ), then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.”** [TMQ Surah Anfal: 61]. This verse gives the meaning that ‘if the disbelievers incline and offer to make peace, then accept it from them and rely upon Allah (swt) in all of that’. The conjugation of having Tawakkul and reliance upon Allah, with the acceptance of peace when they offer, is a Qareenah (contextualization) that Muslims should accept it from the position of strength. This is apparent in the previous verses: ﴿الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتَ مِنْهُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ فِي كُلِّ مَرَّةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَتَّقُونَ * فِيمَا تَنَافَقْتَهُمْ فِي الْحَرْبِ فَشَرَدَ بِهِمْ مِّنْ خَلْفِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ * وَإِذَا

تَخَافَنَّ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَانْبِذْ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ * وَلَا يَحْسِبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَيَقُولُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَجْعِلُوا * وَأَعْدُوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِ الْأَرْضِ إِذَا أَثَارَتِ ثَمَرَاتُهَا فَنَافِلُهَا إِلَيْكُمُ إِنَّكُمْ لَشَاكِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

The ones with whom you made a treaty but then they break their pledge every time, and they do not fear Allah. (56). So if you, [O Muhammad], gain dominance over them in war, disperse by [means of] them those behind them that perhaps they will be reminded. (57). If you [have reason to] fear from a people betrayal, throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms. Indeed, Allah does not like traitors (58). And let not those who disbelieve think they will escape. Indeed, they will not cause failure [to Allah] (59). And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged (60)” [TMQ Surah al-Anfal: 56-60]

I.e. fight the disbelievers with severity such that fear and dread should strike the hearts of the enemies who even hear of it, until they flee from the horror of that fighting before it reaches them. All this comes with striking fear into the hearts of the enemies who are visible and hidden, through the strength of preparation.

After all these immense blows against the enemy, if the enemy offers you to make peace due to what has befallen him of decline and collapse, then accept it from him, as he has actually surrendered to you and his weapons were broken.

b- As for the other verse, it is in Surah Muhammad, ﴿فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَبْرِكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ﴾ **“So do not weaken and call for peace (السَّلَامِ) while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds.” [TMQ Surah Muhammed: 35]**

This verse indicates the prohibition (taHreem) of calling for making peace with the enemy, as it is shame and humiliation and because Muslims are superior. Thus Allah (swt) is with them and He (swt) will not reduce any of their rewards, due to their steadfastness in fighting the enemy, without making peace with them.

This is what the Quran brings together in these two verses, ﴿وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ﴾ **“And if they incline to peace...” [TMQ 8:61]**, and the verse ﴿فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلَامِ﴾ **“So do not weaken and call for peace” [TMQ 47:35]**. The ruling on making peace with the enemy is allowed if:

Firstly: If the enemy offers to make peace, as a result of his weakness and destruction with the strength of Muslims and their victory.

Second: if it favours the glory of Muslims and paves the way for their victory, while humiliating the enemy and paves the way for their defeat.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) has clarified this summary in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah:

A- Before going out for Umrah, the Messenger of Allah (saw) knew that the Jews of Quraish were trying to make an alliance with Quraish to fight the Noble Messenger (saw). Thus, neutralising the Quraish was a victory for the Messenger of Allah (saw).

Therefore the earliest action, which the Messenger of Allah (saw) carried out after returning to Madina, was to invade Khaybar and eliminate them, after he (saw) had neutralized the Quraish from joining Khaybar under the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

While he (saw) was returning from Hudaibiyah to Madinah on his way, the following verse was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (saw) ﴿إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا﴾ **“Indeed, we have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear Victory.” [TMQ Surah Fatah 48: 1]**. The Treaty of Hudaibiya, followed by the victory of Khaybar, was a clear victory to the Messenger of Allah (saw). There was huge glory for the Muslims and huge weakness for the disbelievers in the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

B- Through fear of the Quraysh, the Arab tribes feared entry into the Deen of Muhammed (saw) and his covenant. Thus, the Messenger of Allah (saw) was able to remove this fear of entering Islam from the Arab tribes through this treaty. Thus Khuza'a [Arab tribe] came under the covenant of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and many became Muslims, both individually and as entire tribes, without fearing the attack of the Quraish. This was a strength for Muslims and glory for the Deen of Allah (swt).

C- This treaty i.e. making peace (Musalama) with the enemy was temporary because suspending or aborting Jihad is prohibited in Islam. Moreover, it is a great sin as indicated by the divine texts which we have mentioned.

D- Also, this temporary treaty was concluded with warring disbelievers, who were rulers over their own land. It was not concluded with the entity who occupied the lands of Muslims, such that the treaty would endorse their occupation. This is because the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was concluded with the Quraish disbelievers. Their entity at that time was on the land which had yet to be conquered by Muslims. Instead, the land was under their authority before the conquest of the Muslims. As for concluding a treaty with an entity which is occupying the lands of Muslims, like the Jewish entity in Palestine, it is not correct as this would endorse the authority of disbelievers over the lands of Muslims. It is contradictory to the verses of making peace in Surah al-Anfal and Surah Muhammed and it is also contradictory to the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

Hence it is not permissible to make peace with the enemy absolutely, without the conditions that were clarified in the Book of Allah (swt) and Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (saw).

It is noteworthy to consider that this treaty was to neutralise the Quraish from the Jews of Khaybar, so that the Messenger of Allah (swt) would devote himself to fight the Jews of Khaybar, whereas the government scholars are quoting evidence of this treaty to make peace with Jews and to end the state of war with them!!

Thus, it is clarified here that the word (السِّلْمُ) comes in Quran with the meaning of 'making peace' with the enemy, which is forbidden except when it favours the glory of Islam and Muslims and when the enemy is weak and his weapons are broken. Making peace must be temporary and it can only be concluded with the enemy who does not establish his entity on the land usurped from Muslims, such that the treaty is endorsing his occupation. This is what the verses of Surah al-Anfal and Surah Muhammed establish as the reality of Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

4- Then Allah (swt) clarified that if they do not enter into Islam completely, retaining anything from previous Shariah which is not approved by Islam, in that case they plunge into the Wrath of Allah (swt) and His punishment, particularly after the apparent evidences, indicating that Islam is the Truth and that the previous religions were corrupted and altered, were clarified to them.

Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾ **“And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.”** [TMQ Surah Al-e Imran: 85]. No other Shariah is accepted after Islam.

﴿فَإِنْ زَلَلْتُمْ﴾ **“But if you deviate”** i.e. if you step aside from entering Islam completely. The root word (الزَّلَى) means 'fall' (السقوط) and the intention is to mention it as a metaphor (majaaz).

﴿فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾ **“Then know that Allah is Exalted and Wise.”** i.e. Allah is dominant over His matter and nothing makes Him incapable of visiting retribution upon you and He is the all-Wise, Who does not punish without right. This is the literal meaning (manTuq) of the entire verse. As for the implied/inferred meaning (mafhum) of the entire verse, it means that if you are reticent of entering into Islam completely, then Allah (swt) will punish you severely, as you deserve.

5- ﴿هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ﴾ “Do they await?” is in the interrogative, question form, with the meaning of negation i.e. ‘They do not wait.’

﴿إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ﴾ “But that Allah should come to them” i.e. The command (amr) of Allah (swt) comes to them with the punishment, according to the subject (baab) of “الإسناد المجازي” “metaphorical attribution with ellipsis - when words can be left out of a sentence.” This is such as in the sayings of Allah (swt): ﴿أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ﴾ “Or there comes the command (amr) of your Lord?” [TMQ Surah Nahl: 33], and, ﴿فَجَاءَهَا بِأَسْنَاءٍ﴾ “Our Punishment came suddenly.” [TMQ Surah A’raf: 4]. Arabs used to say ‘وصل الأمير’ ‘The leader has arrived,’ when the leader’s messenger or his command arrived and this was due to the subject (baab) of ‘metaphorical attribution with ellipses.’

Thus, the verse ﴿إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ﴾ ‘but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds’ means the command (amr) of Allah (swt) comes to them with the covers of clouds. The word (فِي) ‘in’ here means ‘with-مع’ like the saying of Arabs ‘أقبل الأمير في العسكر’ ‘The leader marched ‘in’ the army’ i.e. with the army. The word (ظُلَلٍ) is the plural of the word (ظِلَّة), meaning shadow, which means all that casts a shadow upon you.

Accordingly, the meaning of the verse is: “Those who fail to enter Islam completely do not wait except for the arrival of command of Allah for their punishment accompanied by dark clouds and angels.” There is a great threatening and powerful, expressive, visualization in this. Dark clouds are usually thought of as mercy, but here they come to them with torment, indicating the horror of what was prepared for them, in terms of severity of the punishment. And when the angels of torment come towards them, it explains the extent of terror and how awful the matter is.

6. And there is great threat and emphasis on punishing them in the last verse, with what they deserve as clarified in the previous verse. However, here the punishment is stated in the literal form (manTuq). As for the previous verse, verse 209, the punishment is stated in the implicit form/by inference (mafhum). The first verse, verse 209, informs them that Allah (swt) is Exalted and Wise and punishes for their deviation. Here, the Punishment of Allah (swt) for them comes in the form of evidencing by indication (dalaaalat ul-ishaarah). It is not mentioned in the form of text, literally/explicitly (manTuq). Instead, it mentions ﴿فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ﴾ “then know that Allah is Exalted and Wise.” As for the following verse, verse 210, the threat to punish is mentioned literally (manTuq), as, ﴿هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ﴾ “Do they await but that Allah should come to them in the covers of clouds and the angels [as well]?”

Thus, both rejection of partial entry into Islam and punishment for those who do not enter Islam completely, are conclusive matters that cannot be changed. ﴿وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَرْجَعُ﴾ “The matter is [then] decided. And to Allah [all] matters are returned.”