

Tafseer Al-Baqarah (2: 211-212)

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:

﴿سَلِّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ * زُيِّنَ
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللّٰهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ

حِسَابٍ ﴿

“Ask the Children of Israel how many have We have given them of Signs. And whoever exchanges the favour of Allah [for disbelief] after it has come to him - then indeed, Allah is severe in penalty. (211). Beautified for those who disbelieve is the life of this world, and they ridicule those who believe. But those who fear Allah are above them on the Day of Resurrection. And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account. (212)”

These two verses clarify the following:

1. In the previous verses, Allah (swt) has mentioned the Obligation of entering Islam completely, for those who wish their Iman to be accepted by Allah (swt). Thus, one must not believe in some part of revelation, while denying another part, nor believe in Islam whilst adding to Islam that which is not Islam, particularly after clear clarifications and definite evidences were brought for one to believe in Islam completely. Then Allah (swt) has clarified that those who deviate from this, by not entering into Islam completely after clear evidences have come, will receive a severe punishment.

Then, in these noble verses, Allah (swt) elucidates an answer for those who ask with surprise: “How can it be that one does not to enter Islam completely, even after the signs have come to establish evidence for that?”

The answer deliberates the reality of the Children of Israel. Definite evidences had come to them that obliged them to believe; in Musa (as), in what was revealed to him (as) as a Divine Book and what was revealed within the Book of description of the Messenger of Allah (saw), obliging them to believe in him (saw). All those were clear evidences brought by Musa (as), yet they denied Muhammad (saw), distorting and altering their books in subservience to their desires. They altered the clear evidences which were revealed to them as blessings that would lead them to Iman and Guidance. They altered them, making them a path to their Disbelief and Misguidance, whilst they knew that those who exchange the blessings of Allah with Disbelief will have severe and painful punishment. Allah (swt) said, ﴿فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ﴾ “Then indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.”

﴿سَلِّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ﴾ “Ask the Children of Israel.” It is an interrogation in the form of censure and rebuke over their transgression, ingratitude and abandoning of truth after clear evidence. It is not in the form of interrogation for an answer, in order to know their reality through their answer. It is like saying to others: ‘Ask such and such person just how much I have favoured him.’ The intention here is to rebuke that person and not to wait for his answer.

﴿كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ آيَةٍ﴾ “How many We have given them of signs” The “How many” (كم kam) is the “informative how” (كم خبرية kam khabariyah). Since the Discriminator (mumayyaz) of “how many,” the word “signs” (آية), is separated from “how” by the verb “given,” the word “of” مِّنْ is mandatory. This is lest the Discriminator is confused with the object (maf'ool) of the verb. This is as in the saying of Allah (swt), ﴿كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ﴾ “How much they left behind of gardens and springs” [TMQ Surah Dhukhan: 25] and as in saying of Allah (swt), ﴿وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ﴾ “And how many We have destroyed of cities.” [TMQ Surah Qasas: 58]. If the word “of” (مِّنْ) were not

mentioned, the verse would be just (كم آتيناهم آية) **“How many We gave them signs.”** In such a case the word “signs” would be ambiguous as to whether it is the Discriminator of “how many” or the object of the verb (maf’ool).

2. In the second verse, Allah (swt) has clarified the reason that Disbelievers do not follow the clear signs that have come to them. The reason is due to their adherence to the beauty and adornment of this world, such that the beauty of the world distracts them from contemplating the signs, which in turn distracts them from being Believers.

Moreover, they look down upon and ridicule the believers, who look for the rewards in the Hereafter and are not concerned with this world, for their poverty.

Then, Allah (swt) clarifies that the poor Believers, who are ridiculed by Disbelievers for whom the world is beautified, will be superior and of the highest status before Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgment. They will be in blissful gardens, whereas those disbelievers will be in Hellfire, which is the worst destination. Thus Believers will be superior to them in status. As believers they will be in an elevated Paradise, whilst the Disbelievers will be in a low pit of hellfire.

As for the Sustenance (Rizq) in this world, Allah (swt) gives it to whomsoever He (swt) wishes, without being reckoned by anyone for that. Moreover, it is a wisdom (Hikma) of Allah by which the disbelievers are pulled into prosperity in order to increase their sins, whilst the Believers are tested with the restrictions of Rizq in order to increase their rewards. Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾ **“And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account”** [TMQ Surah An-Nur: 38].

﴿زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا﴾ **“Beautified for those who disbelieve is the life of this world.”**

The beautification of this world i.e. making it delightful and lovable for those who disbelieve is of two possible forms; either by enjoying the vastness of wealth which Allah (swt) has given to them or by the whispering of the Shaytan to enjoy them, so that they will be lured into the trap of desires and pleasures.

As for the first possible form of beautification, the world is beautified for them in order to lure them, as Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُطَمِّئُ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُطَمِّئُ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ﴾ **“And let not those who disbelieve ever think that [because] We extend their time [of enjoyment] it is better for them. We only extend it for them so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment.”** [TMQ Surah Al-i Imran: 178]

As for the second possible form, the beautification is by the whispering of the Shaytan as we have mentioned, as in the saying of Allah (swt) about the action of Iblees (may Allah (swt) curse him), ﴿لَأَزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَاغْوِيَتَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ﴾ **“I will surely make [disobedience] beautified for them on earth, and I will mislead them all”** [TMQ Surah Al-Hijr: 39].

In this case, the Preponderant opinion is that beautification of the world for disbelievers is the expansion of Rizq for them in order to lure them. Thus, the matter is related to Rizq due the Contextualization (Qareena) in the last verse, as Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾ **“And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account.”**

﴿وَيَسْتَخْرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا﴾ **“and they ridicule those who believe.”** i.e. they mock them due to their poverty and for their turning away from this world, towards the Hereafter.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾ **“But those who fear Allah are above them on the Day of Resurrection”** i.e. they are above them because Believers will be in ‘Illiyin’ (The most elevated places of Jannah), whereas the Disbelievers will be in the lowest places of Hell.

There are narrations about who ridiculed who, be it the Kuffar leaders of Mecca who ridiculed the poor believers or the Jews of Madinah who ridiculed the poor emigrants or others. The most preponderant opinion is that it was the Jews who mocked the poor emigrants. This is because the previous verse is about their case. However, according to Sharia Principle, العبرة ليست بـ“Consideration is given to the generality of the text and not to the

particularity of the cause (sabab),” the wording is general, such that includes Disbelievers who possess these characteristics and exhibit the same behaviour.