

Fast 20: Unbiased judgment, even in favour of enemy

- One of the greatest principles of justice has been laid down in the Quran as follows:

“O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and do not let hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Aware of what you do.” (5:8)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ لِلَّهِ
شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوْمٍ
عَلَىٰ آلَاتِعْدِلُوا إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

We may have reason for hating a particular nation or people; it may be justified if they have wronged us. Whatever the case, that dislike must not stand in the way of our doing them justice. Muslims must do justice equally, regardless of whether they are dealing with a dispute among Muslims, between Muslims and non-Muslims, or between Muslims and their enemies. Here justice is described as being “nearer to observance of duty” or nearer *taqwa*. Three times in this verse, once at its beginning and twice at its end, it is emphasized that it is Allah Who requires us to do justice, to do justice is to fulfil our duty to Him, and that He has knowledge of what we do, so we cannot evade the consequences of being unjust.

- A similar command to the above had occurred shortly before the above verse:

“And do not let hatred of a people — because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque — incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to Allah.” (5:2)

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَا نُ قَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوا كُمْ عَنِ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى
الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ
وَالتَّعَدَاوِي ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ

The fact that their enemies had prevented Muslims from going to the Ka'bah may make Muslims hate them, but it must not incite Muslims to break the limits of justice that they have been taught to observe. The second sentence above teaches one of the noblest principles ever taught, prohibiting blind patriotism and unjustified favouring of one's own people. Muslims must help each other in good works, but must not join with each other in committing bad deeds. It requires that a Muslim must never support wrong-doing by others in his community, just because he belongs to that community.

- It is repeated in the Quran that Allah loves those who do justice and are equitable. The Jews in Madinah had accepted the Holy Prophet as judge in all disputes, whether among their own people or between them and others. Then they turned against him. So Allah instructed him as follows:

“...if they come to you, judge between them or turn away from them. ... And if you judge, **judge between them with equity. Surely Allah loves the equitable.**” (5:42)

فَإِنْ جَاءُوكَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ... وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

- Similarly, Muslims are told: “if two groups of the believers quarrel, make peace between them”, and then it is added:

“...make peace between them with justice and act equitably. **Surely Allah loves the equitable.**” (49:9)

فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

- Again, Muslims are given the following instruction regarding friendly non-Muslims:

“Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes, **that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice.**” (49:9)


لَا يَنْهَى اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٩﴾

- Once a Muslim stole something and hid it at a Jew’s house. Afterwards, he accused the Jew of the theft. The Muslim’s tribe supported him. The Holy Prophet Muhammad, acting as judge, cleared the Jew, even at the risk of alienating and losing the Muslim’s entire tribe. God revealed to the Prophet in this connection:

“Surely We have revealed the Book to you with truth that you may judge between people by means of what Allah has taught you. **And do not be one pleading the cause of the dishonest,** and ask the forgiveness of

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْغَافِلِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴿٥١﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَلَا تَجَادِلْ

Allah. Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. And do not contend (i.e., plead) on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls. Surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful.” (4:105–107)

عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا


The Quran was revealed as a book preaching the truth, and therefore it taught the Holy Prophet, and of course all Muslims, to judge by means of the truth. When you know that someone is dishonest in what they say, you don't give judgment in their favour, regardless of any repercussions you may suffer.

The Holy Prophet is here told to ask forgiveness of Allah, even though he did absolutely the right thing. Asking “forgiveness” of Allah does not only mean asking forgiveness for any wrong done, but it also means, particularly in case of prophets, asking for Allah's protection that they may never incline even towards the thought of committing a misdeed. Christian critics of Islam have misunderstood the act of the Holy Prophet asking for God's forgiveness and allege that it means that he actually committed sins. Prophets don't gloat and boast that they are sinless. Instead they remember that they are human and need God's protection.