

(142) *"The fools among the people will say: "What has turned them from the Qiblah which they faced before?"*" Before the directive of change in *Qiblah* Prophet Muhammad (SAW) faced *Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem)* in his prayers for nearly 16 months, but he would supplicate to Allah (SWT) to change the *Qiblah* from *Jerusalem* to *Makkah*. So Allah (SWT) fulfilled his wish and commanded the believers to face the *Ka'bah* instead of *Jerusalem*. This did not go well with the *Jews* who used to criticize the believers that what made them change their *Qiblah* from *Bayt Al-Maqdis* to the Sacred House i.e. the *Ka'bah*. But Allah says, *"Say: To Allah belong both East and West"* This subject has already been mentioned before in *ayah* 115 where Allah (SWT) states that whether you face *Bayt Al-Maqdis* or the the *Ka'bah*, every location belongs to Allah (SWT). And *"He guides whom He wills to the straight path."*

(143) *"Thus have We made of you an Ummah justly balanced"*. The substitution of *Jerusalem* with *Ka'bah* led to the removal of *Children of Israel* from their position as a Muslim Ummah and were replaced by the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and it was by following the guidance that this Muslim Ummah achieved those excellences which led to their appointment as the '*Wasat Ummah*'. The word *Wasat* means '*just*' or '*the best and the most honored*', thus meaning the best and the most just Ummah. Further Allah (SWT) says; *"That ye might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger a witness over yourselves."* Allah (SWT) says that He has made the Muslims the best nation ever. Hence, the Muslim Ummah will be the witness over all the nations on the *Day of Judgment* and the Messenger will be a witness over them i.e. the Prophet as Allah's (SWT) representative will bear witness to the fact that he conveyed the message to the Muslims which he was sent with and the Muslims will bear witness that they have conveyed the message to the rest of Mankind. *"And We appointed the Qiblah which you used to observe only to test those who followed the Messenger from those who would turn on their heels."* Allah (SWT) commanded the Muslims to face in the direction of *Jerusalem* at first, then changed the *Qiblah* to the *Ka'bah* so as to test who will follow and obey the Messenger and who will revert from his religion. *"It was indeed a hard test except for those whom Allah (SWT) has guided."* i.e. indeed the change of *Qiblah* was a very hard test for the Muslims especially

those who had converted from Judaism to Islam, but not for those who believed in the truth of the Messenger (SAW) with certainty and sincerity. *"And never would Allah (SWT) make your faith of no effect."* The *Jews* questioned about the status of those who prayed facing *Bayt Al-Maqdis* and died before the *Qiblah* was changed. So Allah (SWT) says that their reward will not be lost i.e. the reward of the prayers that you prayed facing *Bayt Al-Maqdis* will be given to you—"For Allah is Compassionate and Merciful to mankind".

(144) *"We see the turning of your face to the heavens."* Allah's Messenger (SAW) used to supplicate to Allah (SWT) for change in the direction of the *Qiblah* and he would look up to the sky awaiting Allah's (SWT) command. So Allah (SWT) fulfilled his wish and said; *"Now We will turn you to a Qiblah that will please you. So turn your face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque."* This is the actual commandment of the change in *Qiblah*. The Prophet (SAW) was leading *Dhuhr*<sup>1</sup> prayer in the house of Bishr bin Bara<sup>2</sup> when this commandment of change in the direction of the *Qiblah* was revealed<sup>3</sup>. The Prophet at once turned his face towards the *Ka'bah* and so did all those who were following him in the prayer. Further Allah (SWT) states; *"Wherever you are turn your faces in that direction."* i.e. Allah (SWT) commands the Muslims to face the *Ka'bah* from wherever they are, be it the east, west, north or the south. *"The people of the book know well that that is the truth from their Lord."* Allah (SWT) says that the People of the Book knew that He is going to change the *Qiblah* from *Jerusalem* to *Makkah*. They were foretold in the scriptures given to them but they withheld its knowledge as they did in other matters. But Allah (SWT) says: *"Allah (SWT) is not unaware of what they do"*. Allah is watching over all their actions.

(145) *"Even if you give every proof to the people of the Book, they will not accept your Qiblah."* Allah (SWT) describes the stubbornness of the *Jews* and the *Christians*, that even if Prophet Muhammad (SAW) gives them every proof, still they are not going to accept the *Ka'bah* as their *Qiblah*. *"Nor will you accept theirs."* i.e. this indicates that as much as the People of the Book follow their desires, the Prophet (SAW) adheres to Allah's (SWT) commands, obeying Him and pleasing Him. Further Allah (SWT) says; *"Neither of them are the followers of each other's Qiblah."*

i.e. the People of the Book not even followed each others' *Qiblah* in *Jerusalem*. The *Jews* prayed facing towards the western part of the temple built by Solomon (AS) while the Christians held the eastern part of the temple to be more sacred. *"If, after all the knowledge you have been given, you yield to their desires then surely you will be among the wrongdoers."* Although this Ayah address the Prophet (SAW) as an individual, in fact it also includes his Ummah.

(146) *"The people of the Book know this as they know their own sons; but some of them conceal the truth which they themselves know."* i.e. The People of the Book know that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is the final Messenger they were waiting for and what Allah (SWT) revealed to him is the truth. They recognize him as they know their own sons, but they deliberately conceal the truth from the people.

(147) *"The truth is from your Lord so be not of those who doubt."* Allah (SWT) strengthens the hearts of the Prophet (SAW) and his Companions (RAA) that what Allah (SWT) has revealed to you is the truth, so do not become like those who doubt. The truth is from your Lord: therefore never doubt it.

(148) *"Everyone has a direction towards which he turns, therefore, emulate one another in good deeds."* This *ayah* refers to the followers of the various religious traditions. It means that every religious community has a *Qiblah* which they face in their prayers. But Allah's (SWT) appointed *Qiblah* i.e. the *Ka'bah*, is what the believers face. This can also be taken in a general sense: 'to each is a goal to which he turns'. So emulate one another in good works. *"Wherever you are, Allah will bring all of you together; Allah (SWT) has power over all things"* i.e. Allah (SWT) will gather you on the *Day of Resurrection*, wherever you are on earth, even if your bodies have turned to dust and disintegrated completely.

(149) *"From whatever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque."* To emphasize its importance Allah (SWT) repeats His command to face *Masjid Al-Haram* (the Sacred Mosque) from wherever one is in the world. Further Allah states; *"This is in fact a commandment from your Lord."* i.e. it has always been ordained by Allah (SWT) that the final *Qiblah* of the believers would be the

*Ka'bah*. And Allah says, *"Allah is not unaware of what you do."* He [SWT] is never heedless of what you do.

(150) *"So Whatever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, face towards it."* Again Allah (SWT) repeats His command to all Muslims to turn in the direction of the *Ka'bah* for the third time. And Allah (SWT) says, *"So that people will not have any argument against you."* This refers to the People of the Book. They knew in their Books that the Last Prophet (SAW) will later on be commanded to face the *Qiblah* of Abraham (AS), so if Allah had not commanded the Prophet (SAW) to face the *Ka'bah* instead of *Jerusalem*, then they would have used this as an argument against the Muslims and for denying the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW). *"Except those among them who are wrongdoers."* This refers to the idolators of *Makkah*. *"Do not fear them; fear Me."* i.e. do not fear these stubborn and unjust people but fear me alone. *"So that I may perfect My favors to you and that you may be rightly guided."* The favors here refer to the leadership and the guidance from which the *Children of Israel* were deposed and those were bestowed upon the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

(151) *"Just as We bestowed Our favor upon you."* Here the favor refers to Prophet Muhammad (SAW). *"When We sent among you a Messenger of your own who recites to you Our revelations, sanctifies you, teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you that which you did not know."* This is an answer to the prayer of Prophet Abraham (AS) and Ishmael (AS), when they supplicated to their Lord to send a Messenger amongst their descendants; *"O' Lord! send amongst them a Prophet of their own. Who shall recite to them Your Revelations and teach them the Book, and the Wisdom, and purify them. Surely, You are the All-Mighty, the Wise."* So Allah accepted Prophet Abraham's (AS) supplication and sent Prophet Muhammad (SAW) amongst their offspring who recites the Book of Allah (SWT) to the believers, purifies them, teaches them the Book and the Wisdom and also that which they were not aware of.

(152) *"Therefore, remember Me, and I will remember you."* Remembering Allah (SWT) means to remember His commands and Allah (SWT) says, He will remember you

i.e. He will reward and forgive you. There is a hadith in which the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said:

*“Allah (SWT) the Exalted said, ‘O’ son of Adam! If you mention Me to yourself, I will mention you to Myself. If you mention Me in a gathering, I will mention you in a gathering of the angels (or said in a better gathering). If you draw closer to Me by a hand span, I will draw closer to you by forearm’s length. If you draw closer to Me by a forearm’s length, I will draw closer to you by an arm’s length. And if you come to Me walking, I will come to you running.”*<sup>4</sup>

Allah (SWT) states, *“Be grateful to Me and never disbelieve Me.”* i.e. thank Allah (SWT) and be grateful to Him for all the favors and blessings He bestowed upon you.

We mentioned in the introduction of *Al-Baqarah* that this surah can be divided into nearly two equal parts according to its subject-matter content. The first part which mainly addressed the *Children of Israel* ends here, and now the second portion of the surah begins in which Allah (SWT) addresses the believers, who from hereon are given the instructions and directions that are essential for their training and which will enable them to discharge the duties of the position of leadership they were entrusted with.

(153) *“O’ You who believe! Seek My help with patience and prayer. Surely, Allah (SWT) is with those who are patient.”* For bearing the burden of responsibility of religious leadership Allah (SWT) directs the believers to seek help with prayer and patience. A prayer will train a person in discipline and other moral qualities while patience is needed to avoid sins and prohibitions and in performing acts of worship and devout servitude to Him.

(154) *“Do not say about those who are slain in the cause of Allah (SWT), that they are dead. Nay, they are alive.”* This *ayah* indicates that the persons who are martyred in the way of Allah (SWT) are alive and enjoying eternal life and He also provides them with sustenance. Further Allah (SWT) says, *“you do not perceive it.”* i.e. the states and events that take place after the physical death are beyond the reach of ordinary human perception.

(155) *“We shall surely test you with fear and famine, with loss of property, lives and fruits.”* Allah (SWT) tests His bondsmen with bounties and sometimes with calamities

and afflictions, so that the earnest and sincere believers can be distinguished from those who are lacking in zeal and genuine belief. These trials present themselves in the normal situations of life – famine, losing friends and family, loss of wealth and property and loss of fruits i.e. sudden calamity in gardens and farms—and one has to realize in what manner one is being tested. So one should face all eventualities by remembering Allah (SWT) and thanking Him in every situation. And Allah (SWT) says, *“But give glad tidings to those who endure with patience.”* These trials provide the real test of life and the only way to succeed in them is through patience and steadfastness.

(156) *“Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: ‘We belong to Allah (SWT) and to Him we shall return.’”* i.e. a believer is one who observes patience when he faces adversity calamities and afflictions and knows that his body and soul belongs to Allah (SWT) and that He will surely resurrect him on the *Day of Judgment* for recompense.

(157) *“Such are the people on whom there are blessings and Mercy from Allah (SWT).”* The believers who remember Allah (SWT) and thank Him even in the time of stress and afflictions will earn His blessings and mercy. And Allah (SWT) says, *“And they are the ones that are rightly guided.”* i.e. Allah (SWT) guides them to the straight path.

(158) *“Verily! Safa and Marwah are among the symbols of Allah (SWT). So anyone who performs Hajj or Umrah to the House, there is no blame if one goes around both of them. And anyone who does good voluntarily should know that surely Allah knows and appreciates.”* Prophet Abraham’s (AS) wife Hajar ran between *Safa* and *Marwah* in search of water for young Ishmael (AS) and begged Allah (SWT) for His help. Allah (SWT) answered her prayers and made the fountain of *Zamzam* <sup>5</sup> bring forth its water for Hajar and her son. Allah (SWT) also laid down for all the Muslims to briskly walk or run between *Safa* and *Marwah* during Hajj and Umrah till the *Day of Judgment*.

(159) *“Those who conceal the clear proofs We have sent down and the guidance after We have made it clear for the people in the book.”* This *ayah* refers to the *Jews* who distorted their Books and hid the truth from their own common people. And to maintain their fake superiority and popularity they would approve corrupted and

deviated beliefs and conceal the truth. For such people Allah (SWT) says, *"On them shall be Allah's (SWT) curse and the curse of those entitled to curse."*

(160) *"Except those who repent, reform and let the truth be known; I will accept their repentance, for I am the Receiver of Repentance, the Merciful."* i.e. the doors of Allah's (SWT) mercy are always open to His servants. He will always forgive one who repents and mends his erring ways and proclaims the truth as Allah (SWT) wishes it to be proclaimed. He is the Relenting One, the Merciful.

(161) *"Surely those who are unbelievers and die while they are unbelievers, they are the ones on whom is the curse of Allah (SWT), the angels and all mankind."*

(162) *"They will live in it forever, neither their punishment shall be lightened nor shall they be given respite."*

The above *ayat* state that those who persist in their disbelief until death will be deprived of His mercy and they will have eternal curse of Allah (SWT), His angels and the believers until the *Day of Judgment* and after that their abode will be the hell and the torment of hellfire which will never be decreased, nor shall they be given respite.

(163) *"And your Allah is one Allah (SWT), there is no god but He, The Most Gracious Most Merciful."* i.e. Allah (SWT) is the only deity worthy of worship and He has no partners or equals and He is Ar-Rahman and Ar-Raheem<sup>6</sup>—the Compassionate, the Merciful.

(164) *"Surely, In the creation of the heavens and the earth."* This *ayah* gives the proofs that Allah (SWT) is the only deity, He is the creator of the heavens and the earth and of all the creatures in them and they all testify to the Oneness of Allah (SWT). And the structures, mountains, valleys, deserts and seas within them display His ineffable creativity spread out before us. And *"In the alternation of the night and the day."* i.e. the coming of day and night one after the other and *"In the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind."* People travel from one shore to another carrying goods and food so people benefit from it. And *"In the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, with which He revives the earth after its death and*

*spreads in it all kinds of animals.*" Another sign of Allah's (SWT) Omnipresence and Greatness is the rain which He sends down from the sky and invests life therewith in the lifeless and brings forth grains and fruits for His creatures of every variety that flourish in this world. And there is also a sign, *"In the change of the winds and the clouds between the sky and the earth that are made subservient."* i.e. sometimes they bring the mercy of Allah (SWT), and sometimes trouble and torment. *"There are signs for people who are wise."* It is only those who give deep thought to Allah's (SWT) signs who can know their true significance and the metaphysical inner reality that lies beneath the outward surface of things. In all the variegated natural phenomena mentioned in this Ayah are signs and portents of divine existence for people who understand and have discerning minds.

(165) *"There are some who worship other deities besides Allah (SWT)." i.e. they associate rival and equals with Allah (SWT), worshipping them and attributing some of exclusive properties and powers of Allah (SWT) to them. And "they love them as they should love Allah."* i.e. Allah is the Supreme Authority who prescribes what is lawful and what is unlawful and only He defines the rights and duties for His subjects. But there are people who ascribe some of these attributes to other ideologies, institutes or persons, who are more dearer to them than the love of Allah (SWT). At another place Allah (SWT) says; *"O Prophet, tell them: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your relatives, the wealth that you have acquired, the business in which you fear a loss, and the homes which you like are dearer to you than Allah, His Messenger, and making Jihad in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His decision. Allah does not guide the transgressors."* <sup>7</sup> In contrast Allah (SWT) describes the attitude of the believers; *"whereas the believers are strong in love for Allah."* i.e. a true believer's only priority should be to please Allah (SWT) and love Him most by fearing Him, obeying His commandments and be ready to sacrifice all other affections for His sake, whether it is one's wealth and property, nation, ideology or one's family. And Allah (SWT) says; *"If those who are unjust could visualize when they will see the chastisement, they would come to know for sure that all powers belong to Allah."* i.e. if these disbelievers could see the punishment that they would face in the Hereafter because of the partners they ascribe to Allah (SWT), then they would never return to the



deviation of setting up rivals and equals to Allah (SWT). *“And that Allah is stern in retribution.”* This is as Allah (SWT) stated in another ayah; *“Who could be more unjust than the one who is reminded of the revelations of his Lord and he turns away from them? Surely We shall take vengeance on such criminals.”* <sup>8</sup>

(166) *“On that Day those leaders who were being followed will renounce those who followed them.”* The misguided leaders, saints and the Jinn who led people astray in the world will disown their followers on the *Day of Judgment* as Allah (SWT) says; *“Once the matter has been decided (on the Day of Judgment), Satan will say (to his followers): ‘In fact, the promises which Allah (SWT) made to you were all true; I too made some promises to you but failed to keep any of them. However, I had no power over you. I just invited you, and you accepted my invitation. Now! Do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor you can help me. I reject what you did before; that you associated me with Allah (SWT). Certainly such wrongdoers will have painful punishment.’”* <sup>9</sup> Then Allah (SWT) says; *“And when faced with their punishment, the bonds which united them will break asunder.”* i.e. when they see Allah’s (SWT) chastisement and punishment, they will denounce each other, but will not find a way to escape from the fire.

(167) *“The followers will say: ‘If it could be possible for us to live again, we would renounce them as they have renounced us today.’* Allah (SWT) describes the condition of the idolators in the Hereafter, when they will denounce the idols and leaders they used to follow and will wish they could return to this world, when they used to worship them so that they can denounce them as they have denounced them and instead worship Allah (SWT) alone. *“Thus Allah (SWT) will show them the fruits of their deeds.”* i.e. their deeds will become nothing but dust and will be of no avail. Thus Allah (SWT) says; *“They will sigh with regret, and shall not be able to come out of the Hell fire.”*

## Foot Notes

[1] i.e. Afternoon prayer. Scholars have differed in this matter, some say it was the Asr prayer and not the Dhuhr prayer. Allah knows the best.

[2] Presently this place is known as *Masjid al Qiblatain* (or the Mosque with two Qiblahs), and is situated in Madinah, a few kilometres from Masjid an-Nabi. It is one of the oldest Mosques in the world, and uniquely contains two mihrabs - one in the direction of bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), and the other towards *Makkah*.

[3] Tabaqat of Ibn Sa’d.

[4] Fath Al-Bari 13 : 521 , Musnad Ahmed 3 : 138.

[5] In Masjid Al-Haram near Ka'bah, it is now a well which gushed out by Allah's divine power in the form of a spring for the sake of Prophet (SAW). Ishmael (AS) and his mother. Water is still flowing out of it in immense quantity.

[6] The meaning of these two names is explained in the beginning of Surah *Al-Fatihah*.

[7] Surah At-Taubah(9) : 24.

[8] Surah As-Sajdah (32) : 22.

[9] Surah Abraham (14) : 22.