203026 - Ruling on referring to Qur’anic verses whilst changing some of the words

the question

Recently on the Internet it has become common to see some Quranic verses that the youth use by way of proving a point. For example, when someone says, “Truly, We did offer Al-Amanah (the trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained) to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of it (i.e. afraid of Allahs Torment). But the Brothers bore it” (cf. al-Ahzaab 33:72, where it says “But man bore it”; “Brothers” here refers to the Muslim Brotherhood); or another may say:”O secularists, I worship not that which you worship” (cf. Al-Kaafiroon 109:1-2, where it says “O kaafiroon (disbelievers)”. Is that permissible?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

In Arabic linguistics, this action is called iqtibaas (lit. borrowing); this means referring to a verse or hadeeth when speaking, without attributing it to its source, whether one alters a word sometimes or quotes it as it is. The basic principle concerning this is that any such quotations or references should be within a proper context and implying an appropriate meaning.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

No one has the right to use the wording of the Quran for any purpose other than that for which Allah revealed it. This is how the scholars interpreted the hadeeth, “The Book of Allah should not be quoted” i.e., the Quran should not be referred to inappropriately.

An example of that is if one says to someone who has come to discuss a need, “Then you came here according to the fixed term which I ordained (for you), O Moosa” (cf. Ta-Ha 20:40); or if a

person says when arguing: “When will this promise be fulfilled?”(cf. Yaa-Seen 36:48),or “Allah bears witness that they are certainly liars” (cf. at-Tawbah 9:107).

Furthermore, if the person says that by way of belittling the Quran or making fun of it, this is tantamount to kufr (disbelief).

However, if he recites the verse to support a ruling for which this verse was revealed, or in the context of discussing some ruling, this is acceptable. That includes what the fuqaha’ concluded of rulings on the basis of analogy, and what shaykhs and preachers quote to support to what they say.

End quote from Mukhtasar al-Fataawa al-Misriyyah, 172

As-Suyooti wrote an essay on this topic entitled Raf‘ al-Baas wa Kashf al-Iltibaas fi Darab al-Mathal min al-Quran wa’l-Iqtibaas, in the book al-Haawi li’l-Fataawa (1/305): on our website we have discussed this manner of speaking in detail; please see the following fatwas (in Arabic): 119673, 103923, 127745 and 150303.

From these fatwas we may conclude that it is haraam to refer to texts in the scenarios mentioned above; that is based on the following points:

-1-

it seems, from the phrases quoted above, that they were referred to for the purpose of mocking and making fun of others; in this case the Holy Quran was used as a tool for mockery in one of the most abhorrent ways of dealing with this holy Book which Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, sent down as a book of light and guidance, the words of which showed the way for mankind to follow, in the light of its teachings, and formed the foundation for much historical, linguistic, geographical and scientific research, as well as cultural and moral theories. If we bear all of that and more in mind, there will be no hesitation in regarding as abhorrent the words of one who says “But the Brothers bore it” instead of “But man bore it” (cf. al-Ahzaab 33:72), making fun of a group of Muslims. Is there anything more disrespectful towards the words and meanings of the Quran

than this?

-2-

we are very upset by much of what we have seen from some irresponsible media such as newspapers, magazines, satellite channels and so on, who take advantage of recent painful events in the Muslim world and use the Holy Quran in this manner, referring to its verses to address religious people and to mock some political Islamic groups and their predicament in some countries. It is as if the Holy Quran is not a Book for all Muslims, rather it is a book for some of them only. And it is as if the one who refers to it in this manner is trying to tell people, “We can come up with something like this Quran which you recite and venerate, in order to point out your faults!” For example, he may write “And those who were of the Brotherhood will be driven to Hell in groups” (cf. “And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups” [az-Zumar 39:51]); this poor man does not realise that the Book of Allah, may He be exalted, is of a sublime status and is not to be touched by any but those who are purified; those who are not purified with regard to religious commitment and manners are only exposing the darkness that resides in their hearts and the foolishness of their minds. They lose in worldly terms, let alone in terms of the Hereafter, by using this kind of mocking language, telling lies about Allah, distorting the meaning of His Book and, in fact, blatantly distorting the wording thereof.

-3-

here we will quote the views of some scholars who forbade this kind of referring to the text if it is done in the context of mockery and disrespect.

As-Suyooti (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

One kind of reprehensible referral to texts is quoting a verse in the context of a joke – we seek refuge with Allah from that – such as saying (in verse):

“She conveyed a message to her lovers with her eyes, ‘Far, very far is that which you are promised’ [cf. al-Mu’minoon 23:36];

Seek physical intimacy with her – ‘For the like of this let all strive, who wish to strive’ [cf. as-Saaffaat 37:61].”

End quote from al-Itqaan fi ‘Uloom al-Quran, 1/387; as-Suyooti quoted this categorization (of ways of quoting or referring to Quran, into those which are acceptable and those which are not) from one of the scholars, and approved of this categorization.

Then he (as-Suyooti – may Allah have mercy on him) said:

I do not know of any difference of opinion among the scholars that this is permissible to refer to the Quran, provided that the context is not one of approving of promiscuity, immorality, mockery on the part of evildoers, drinking alcohol, promoting homosexuality, and so on.

End quote from Tanweer al-Hawaalik Sharh Muwatta’ Maalik, 1/312

Ibn ‘Aqeel al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Referencing the Quran in the context of improper speech is not permissible.

End quote from Ibn Muflih in al-Adaab ash-Shar‘iyyah, 2/289.

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about some examples of referring to Quranic texts, such as when someone said, “Today we have seen Noon and what they know (noonwa ma ya ‘lamoon)”

(this is a rhyme which tries to sound like what is mentioned at the beginning of Soorat al-Qalam).

He replied:

As for the one who said that by way of mockery, this is a very serious matter; it may even be said that he has gone beyond the pale of Islam, because it is not permissible under any circumstances to quote the Quran by way of mockery, and the same applies to Islamic rulings. Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The hypocrites fear lest a Soorah (chapter of the Quran) should be revealed about them, showing them what is in their hearts. Say: ‘(Go ahead and) mock! But certainly Allah will bring to light all that you fear.’

If you ask them (about this), they declare: ‘We were only talking idly and joking.’ Say: ‘Was it at Allah, and His Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) and His Messenger (SAW) that you were mocking?

‘Make no excuse; you have disbelieved after you had believed. If We pardon some of you, We will punish others amongst you because they were Mujrimoon (disbelievers, polytheists, sinners, criminals, etc.)’”

[at-Tawbah 9:64-66].

Hence the scholars (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: Whoever utters a word of disbelief, even if that is jokingly, has become a disbeliever; he must repent and believe that he is repenting from apostasy, and he has to renew his Islam. The verses of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and the words of His Messenger are too great to be taken as a joke.

However, in the case of one who quotes a verse in relation to some incident that occurs, there is nothing wrong with that. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) quoted verses in relation to incidents that occurred. He quoted the verse (interpretation of the meaning), “Your wealth and your children are only a trial” [at-Taghaabun 64:15], when [his grandsons] al-Hasan and al-Husayn came stumbling; he came down from the minbar and said: (interpretation of the meaning), “Your wealth and your children are only a trial” [at-Taghaabun 64:15]. So there is nothing wrong with quoting verses in relation to some incidents that occur. But to quote verses inappropriately, in ways that are not in accordance with that which was intended by Allah, especially if that is in the context of joking and mocking – this is a very serious matter.

End quote from Liqa’ al-Baab al-Maftooh, 60/13

Anyone wishing to know more may refer to the book al-Iqtibaas: Anwaa‘uhu wa Ahkaamuhu, by Dr.

‘Abd al-Muhsin ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azeez al-‘Askar.

And Allah knows best.