104825 - Reconciling between the verse “Allah will protect you from the people” and the death of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)

the question

How can we reconcile between the verse “Allah will protect you from the people” i.e., from being killed, and the hadeeth narrated by ‘Aa’ishah in Saheeh al-Bukhaari: “O ‘Aa’ishah, I still feel the pain of the food that I ate in Khaybar, and this time I feel that my aorta is being cut from that poison”?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The verse in question says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O Messenger (Muhammad)! Proclaim (the Message) which has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Verily, Allah guides not the people who disbelieve.”

[al-Maa’idah 5:67].

The hadeeth in question says:

‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to say, during the illness of which he died: “O ‘Aa’ishah, I still feel the pain of the food that I ate in Khaybar, and this time I feel that my aorta is being cut from that poison.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4165

The “food” was poisoned mutton.

The aorta is an artery connected to the heart; if it is cut, the individual dies.

The original story is as follows

It was narrated from Anas that a Jewish woman brought some poisoned mutton to the Messenger of Allaah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he ate some of it. Then she was brought to the Messenger of Allaah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and he asked her about that. She said: I wanted to kill you. He said: “Allaah would not have given you the power to do that.”

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2474; Muslim, 2190

Secondly:

The Muslim must understand that there is no contradiction between the texts of the revelation. What some people think, that there are contradictions between the texts of the revelation are only apparent contradictions as it appears to them, but in fact they are not contradictions. Hence the well-versed scholars of Islam are not incapable – by the grace and help of Allah – of reconciling what appears to be a contradiction for those who are unaware of how these texts may be reconciled.

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

It is not possible for there to be in Islam two reports that contradict one another in all ways, without one of them being stronger and thus taking precedence.

Al-Musawwadah, 306

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

As for there being two clear saheeh hadeeths that contradict one another in all aspects without one of them abrogating the other, this does not exist in the first place. Allah forbid that such a

contradiction should be found be in the words of the most truthful one (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), from whose lips nothing but the truth came.

Zaad al-Ma‘aad, 4/149

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:

Blessings and peace of Allah be upon the one whose words confirmed one another and testified to one another. Any conflict or confusion can only stem from misunderstandings, not from the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). What every believer must do is confirm his beliefs in the words of the most truthful one (i.e., the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), and he should realise that above every man of knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable.

Miftaah Dar as-Sa‘aadah, 3/383

Ash-Shaatibi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Anyone who is well versed in the fundamentals of sharee‘ah would realize that the shar‘i texts could hardly contradict one another and anyone who examines the basis of different shar‘i issues would not see any confusion therein, because there are no contradictions at all in sharee‘ah. So the one who is well versed in it is aware of the subtle differences between one text and another, he will never find any contradiction. Therefore you can never find two texts that all Muslim scholars agree contradict one another. But because the scholars are not infallible, it is possible that there may be a contradiction between texts in the opinion of some of them.

Al-Muwaafaqaat, 4/294.

There are some scholars who challenged those who claimed that there are contradictions between the texts of the revelation, such as Imam Ibn Khuzaymah (may Allah have mercy on him) who used to say – as we see in Tadreeb ar-Raawi, 2/176: I do not know of any two hadeeths that contradict one another; if anyone has two hadeeths that contradict one another, let him bring them to me so that I may reconcile between them.

Thirdly:

With regard to what the questioner mentioned about there being an apparent contradiction between the words of Allah, may He be exalted, “Allah will protect you from mankind” and the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “and this time I feel that my aorta is being cut” and the fact that he died from the poison that the Jews put in his food – there is no contradiction between them, because the protection of which the verse speaks is protection from fitnah and misguidance, and from being killed before having conveyed the message, and all of that was fulfilled for him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). His Lord, may He be exalted, protected him from all of that and he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not die until after he had conveyed the message of his Lord. Allah, may He be exalted, said (interpretation of the meaning):

“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”

[al-Maa’idah 5:3].

Some of the scholars mentioned a subtle meaning here, which is that Allah, may He be exalted, insisted that for our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), Prophethood and martyrdom should be combined.

Allah, may He be exalted, protected His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) from the kuffaar of Quraysh when they wanted to kill him in Makkah, and his Lord protected him from being killed in Madinah in the campaigns in which he was present. And even when the Jews attempted to kill him with poison, Allah protected him from that, and the mutton told him that it was poisoned. The Sahaabi who was with him and ate some of it – namely Bishr ibn al-Bara’ ibn Ma‘roor – died but the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not die. But this does not contradict the fact that that there was some effect from that poison or his belief that he would die because of it. What he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said does not mean that the poison was the cause of his death; rather the report indicates that he was feeling it and

that that might coincide with the end of his life.

Whatever the case, protection from being killed came before he finished conveying the message of his Lord, and he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not die until he had conveyed it in the most complete manner. The context of the verse indicates that, as his Lord, may He be exalted, instructed him to convey the message and told him that He would protect him from the people.

This idea is also supported by what the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to the Jewish woman: “Allaah would not have given you the power to do that.” That was after she told him that she had wanted to kill him. This is either a statement that refers to his being protected against being killed by poison until he departed this world, or it is a statement indicating that that would not happen before the message was conveyed.

To sum up: it may either be said that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was protected from being killed by the poison – as we shall see below in the words of Ibn Katheer, an-Nawawi and others – and that Allah revealed to him that there was poison in the meat and this was part of His protection of him, or it may be said that the protection was during his conveying of the message of Islam, which does not mean that he could not be killed after the message had been conveyed – as we shall see below in the words of al-Qurtubi, Ibn Hajar and al-‘Uthaymeen – and that through this killing, Allah granted our Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) both Prophethood and martyrdom, and made that a reminder to us of the ongoing enmity of the Jews towards us and our religion.

There follow some of the comments of the scholars on what we have mentioned above, which will explain what we mean, in sha Allah.

1. Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Part of Allah’s protection of His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was His protection of him from the people of Makkah and their leaders, those who bore malicious envy towards him, and those who were stubborn, despite the intensity of their enmity and resentment,

and their drawing up plans to oppose him night and day, through the means that He created by His decree and wisdom. At the beginning of his mission, He protected him by means of his paternal uncle Abu Taalib, who was an important leader who was obeyed among Quraysh. Allah created in his heart a natural love for the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), not love as ordained by Allah; if he had become Muslim, the kuffaar and their leaders would have had the audacity to harm the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). But because he (Abu Taalib) and they had in common the fact that they were not believers, the kuffaar feared and respected him. But when Abu Taalib died, the mushrikeen caused him some harm, then Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, brought him the Ansaar, who swore allegiance to him as Muslims, who arranged for him to move to their land – namely Madinah. When he joined them, they protected him against the red and the black (i.e., all people). Whenever any of the mushrikeen or people of the Book wanted to do him harm, Allah opposed them and turned their plots against them. When the Jews plotted against him by means of witchcraft, Allah protected him from them and revealed to him the Mi'wadhatayn (Soorat al-Falaq and an-Naas) as a remedy for this disease. When the Jews poisoned the leg of mutton in Khaybar, Allah informed him of that and protected him from it. And there are many similar cases which it would take too long to mention here.

Tafseer an-Nawawi, 3/154

2. an-Nawawi said, in his commentary on the hadeeth about the poisoned mutton:

This shows how he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was protected from all the people, as Allah said (interpretation of the meaning): "Allah will protect you from mankind"[al-Maa'idah 5:67]. This is a miracle of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), as he was protected from the poison that killed others, and Allah, may He be exalted, informed him that it was poisoned, and the leg of mutton itself spoke to him. Elsewhere than in Muslim it is narrated that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "The leg (of mutton) is informing me that it is poisoned."

Sharh Muslim, 14/p. 179

3. Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning): “Allah will protect you from mankind”[al-Maa’idah 5:67], Ibn Qutaybah said: That is, He will protect you against them. The protection of Allah means that He prevents him from committing sin.

If it is said: Where is the guarantee of protection when his cheek was cut, his tooth was broken and other kinds of harm reached him? There are two answers to this.

The first is that he was protected against being killed or captured or extensive harm. With regard to regular harm, that was possible.

The second is that this verse was revealed after those things happened to him, because al-Maa’idah is one of the last soorahs to be revealed.

Zaad al-Maseer, 2/397

4. Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azeez ibn Baaz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to what befell the Messengers of different kinds of harm, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was not protected from that; rather some such things did happen to him. He was wounded on the day of Uhud, his helmet was broken on his head, some of the links of chainmail were embedded in his cheek and he fell into one of the holes that were dug there. They also put great pressure on him in Makkah where he encountered some of that which had befallen previous Messengers, that Allah had decreed for him, and Allah raised him thereby in status and multiplied his rewards. But Allah protected him against them and they were not able to kill him or to stop him conveying the message; they did not come between him and what he was obliged to do of conveying the message. He conveyed the message and fulfilled the trust, may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon him.

Fataawa ash-Shaykh Ibn Baaz, 8/p. 150

5. Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

There is nothing in this verse that contradicts the idea that he should take precautions to protect himself, just as the fact that Allah declared that His religion would be victorious and prevail does not contradict the command to fight and make all necessary preparations for the fight.

Al-Mufhim lima Ashkila min Talkhees Kitaab Muslim, 6/280

6. al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, after quoting these words of al-Qurtubi:

Based on this, what is meant is protection against fitnah and misguidance, or being killed. And Allah knows best.

Fath al-Baari, 6/82

Fourthly:

Among the practical examples of the Prophet's being protected from being killed before the message had been conveyed is the following:

It was narrated that Jaabir ibn 'Abdullah said: We went out on a campaign with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in the direction of Najd. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) caught up with us in a valley where there were a lot of trees. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) dismounted beneath a tree and hung up his sword of one of its branches, and the people scattered in the valley seeking the shade of the trees. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "A man came to me whilst I was sleeping and took the sword. I woke up to see him standing over my head and he took me surprise when I saw that the sword was unsheathed in his hand. He said to me: Who will protect you from me? I said: Allah. Then he said a second time: Who will protect you from me? I said: Allah. Then he put the sword back in its sheath, and there he is, still sitting here." Then the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not take the matter any further.

Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2753; Muslim, 843

According to another report, he said: O Muhammad, who will protect you from me? The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah will protect me from you; put down the sword.” And he put it down.

An-Nawawi said:

This shows that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) put his trust in Allah and that Allah, may He be exalted, protected him from the people, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “Allah will protect you from mankind”[al-Maa’idah 5:67].

Sharh Muslim, 15/44

And Allah knows best.