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# Chapter 2: Debate of Prophet (S) with a group of Polytheists

It is reported from Imam Abu Muhammad Hasan al-Askari (as): 'I asked my father Ali Ibn Muhammad (as): 'Did Prophet of God (S) do any debates with Jews and Polytheists?' He replied: 'Yes, several times."

**Then he (as) said:** 'Once Prophet of God (S) was sitting on the floor around the Holy *Kaaba*. The companions were around him. He (S) was teaching them the Book of Allah and divine command about good and forbidden actions. A group of leaders of Quraysh including Walid Ibn Mughayra al–Makhzoumi, Abul Bakhtari bin Hisham, Abu Jahal, 'Aas Ibn Wael Sahmi, and Abudullah Ibn Umayyah al–Makhzoumi came there.

They started talking to each other saying: 'Muhammad's activities are increasing day by day and the number of followers is becoming larger. It is better we should have a debate with him and prove his views false so that his prophetic mission gets belittled in front of his followers, he loses his respect and gets humiliated. Perhaps, he gives up his heretic, rebellious, misguiding and false beliefs. Otherwise we will use our bloody sword to stop him.'

Abu Jahal: 'But who will talk to Muhammad and debate with him?'

**Ibn Abi Umayyah:** 'I will debate with him. I am equal to him in tribal rivalry, and I am qualified enough to debate and discuss with him.'

Abu Jahal: 'Okay.'

Then all these influential figures of Quraysh approached Prophet Muhammad (S) and the discussion began.

**Ibn Abi Umayyah:** 'O Muhammad! You have made a great claim and uttered very horrific statements. You imagine that you are a messenger of God. However, it is not worthy of God to make a man like us

His messenger. You eat like we eat, you drink like we drink, and you go to markets like we do.

Similarly, these kings of Rome and these kings of Persia make their messengers those who are wealthy, and have material greatness, those who have great palaces, houses and tents, have many slaves and servants. God of the worlds is even greater than these kings are His slaves, and if you were the Prophet of God, then you would have similar greatness [like God] and you had an angel with you who would verify your statements, and we could have seen that angel.

And if God wished to send a Prophet towards us, he would not be a human being, but would send an angel as his Prophet who would not be a human like us.

O Muhammad you look like bewitched person and do not look like a Prophet.'

Prophet of God (S): "Do you want say something more?"

**Ibn Abi Umayyah:** 'Yes! If God wished to send a messenger towards us, He would have made such a person His messenger who would be at higher status than us wealth and greatness. So this Qur'an about which you think has descended upon you, could it not have descended upon great individuals in Mecca and Medina, for example, Walid Ibn Mughayra from Mecca, Urwa bin Masu'd Thaqafi from Ta'ef?'

Prophet of God (S): "Did you finish your talk?"

**Ibn Abi Umayyah:** 'No. We will not believe in you until you bring out springs in the land of Mecca because the terrain of Mecca is rocky and mountainous. You cut and dig the land of Mecca and bring out springs from it because we need it.

Or we will believe in you if you own a garden of grapes and dates. You eat from it and also give us to eat from it. And streams of water should flow in between these gardens.

Or you bring down heavens upon us or bring God and angels before us and they should be face to face with us, or you should have a house of gold and you should give us from it, or you climb to heaven and this climbing is not enough, we will believe in you only when you bring down a book upon us, that we can read and it should have my name and my companions names in it from God whereby it should be mentioned in it that you should believe in Muhammad bin Abdullah, he is my prophet and you should confirm his words, because whatever he says is from us. In spite of all this O Muhammad we cannot be sure to give you our word that we will believe in you or not. And suppose even you climb up in the heavens and open its doors and let us in there, even then it is possible that we can say you have blindfolded us with your magic and bewitched us.'

Prophet of God (S): "Is there anything more left of your word?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'O Muhammad! Aren't these arguments that I have brought forth and criticisms

against you enough and does it leave room for more? Now you can say whatever you like and explain about yourself and if you have logical reasons, then answer our questions.'

**Prophet of God (S):** "O Lord! You hear every sound and You know everything and whatever your servants say, You know it very well."

Right at that time, following verses of Qur'an were revealed:

And they say: What is the matter with this Messenger that he eats food and goes about in the markets; why has not an angel been sent down to him, so that he should have been a warner with him? Or (why is not) a treasure sent down to him, or he is made to have a garden from which he should eat? And the unjust say: You do not follow any but a man deprived of reason. See what likenesses they apply to you, so they have gone astray; therefore they shall not be able to find a way. Blessed is He Who, if He please, will give you what is better than this, gardens beneath which rivers flow, and He will give you palaces. [25: 7-10]

Then, it may be that you will give up part of what is revealed to you and your breast will become straitened by it because they say: Why has not a treasure been sent down upon him or an angel come with him? You are only a warner; and Allah is custodian over all things. [11: 12]

And they say: Why has not an angel been sent down to him? And had We sent down an angel, the matter would have certainly been decided and then they would not have been respited. [6: 8]

The Prophet of God (S) then said: "O Ibn Abi Umayyah!, You have said that I eat in the same manner as you eat and for this very reason I shouldn't be the messenger of God. So listen this is the matter of God Himself. He orders whatever He wishes. You and others have no right to criticize and raise argument on this matter. Don't you see how He keeps few individuals as poor and needy and makes few others rich and wealthy, bestows respect to few and humiliates others, some are healthy while others are sick?

Some are honorable and others are lower status, and among there is no one who doesn't eat food, and it is not allowed for poor to complaint to God: 'Why did you make us poor? And made others wealthy?' And weak have no right to ask God: 'Why have you made us low and made other honorable? And similarly disabled and weak have no right to complain to God: 'Why have You made us disabled and weak while You have bestowed others with health?' And those who are humiliated cannot say: 'Why have You humiliated us and bestowed others with greatness?' And similarly those who are ugly cannot say: 'Why have You made us ugly and bestowed others with beauty?'

And if they [all of the above] say such to [complain to] God, it will be as if they would criticize God and will thus dispute with God and become infidels. And even if they say it, God will reply to them: 'I am the greatest King, the ultimate humiliate and bestower of greatness, the one makes rich, makes poor, bestower of respect, and the one disgraces, bestower of health, makes sick, and you all are my servants

and there is no way for you all except to accept my decree and be happy with my judgment. And if you bow down to my orders then you will be included among my believing servants. And if you disobey then you will be counted among infidels.

Now your saying that 'King of Rome and King of Persia make their messengers only those who are wealthy, and have material greatness, those who have great palaces, houses and tents, have many slaves and servants. God of the worlds is even greater than these kings are His slaves, and so if you were the Prophet of God, then you would have all these things...

So the reality is that God is the al-Wise Planner and He doesn't act according to your whims and imaginations; instead He orders and acts on whatever He wishes.

O Ibn Abi Umayyah! God has sent His Prophet only so that he preaches people the knowledge of His religion and invite them towards their God and tolerate hardships and difficulties day and night for preaching His message. So if the Prophet lived in palace then his servants and slaves will keep him hidden and separated from people. So [in this situation] will not the purpose of His messengership be lost and the matters be delayed and become difficult? Don't you see that when King becomes hidden from the eyes of people, then how the corruption appears and problems creep up in the society while they are not aware of it.

O Ibn Abi Umayyah! God has made me Prophet and sent me and you are seeing that I don't have material possessions and wealth and this is because He wants to show you His power and authority. He is the supporter of His Prophet and you people don't have power to murder him and prevent him from propagation of truth and this is the manifest proof of His power and your helplessness. And soon God will bestow me victory over you people and then I will kill some of you and will take some others of you as prisoners. Then God will bless me with victory over your cities and then those who will rule over your cities will not be from you and will be against your religion [believers]."

## The Prophet of God (S) then continued...

"And your saying that 'If you were the Prophet of God, then there would have been an angel with you, who would testify you and we would be able to see him. Rather if God sent a Prophet towards us, He wouldn't send a human being like us; instead, He would have sent an angel as His Prophet.'

So listen! An angel cannot be seen by your eyes and sensed your senses. And if power of your sight is increased and then you see an angel, even then you will say 'this is not an angel, it is a human being' because it has appeared to you in the physical form and whenever it will come in physical form, it will appear in the form of a human being so that you can become familiar to it, listen what it says, understand purpose of his talk. Then how will you verify truthfulness of angel and testify whatever he said is right?

It is for the same reason that God has made human being as His Prophet [and not an angel] and

showed miracles and wonders through his hands which other human beings cannot show so for this reason people like you believe in their truthfulness and in the fact that they are sent by God.

And if He had sent angel as prophet and miracles and wonders were seen through him, then you by assuming that showing these miracles and wonders is inherent in all the angels and that these great feats are a part of their nature wouldn't consider their 'miracles' as 'miracles'. Don't you see birds that they fly and you do not call their 'flying' as miracle? Why? Because flying is a part of their nature and inherent to them. But if a human being starts flying then you will call it as miracle. So this is a grace of God that [in this way] He has made this matter easier so that it is easy for you to believe and that His argument prevails over you."

# The Prophet of God (S) then continued...

"And your saying that I am a 'bewitched man'; so it is really regrettable that you have said it about me while you know very well that I am more intelligent and wiser than you and since my birth until today while I am forty years of age, have you ever seen me committing a lowly act? or found me disgraceful? or seen me lying? or found me deceitful? or found an error in my word? or an irrationality in my opinions? Can you rationally accept this fact that a person can remain in this condition for such a long duration only on the basis of his personal ability and power? or can he be protected from all the evils [and imperfections] by the power of God and His might?"

"And your saying that 'if this Qur'an was to descend, it should have descended upon two great rich personalities of Mecca or Ta'ef such as Walid and Urwa.' So you should know that the way you feel about the material possessions of this world, God does take it that way. While the worldly possessions have high value in your eyes, in the eyes of God, these have no value. Instead, if in the view of God, this world had value equal to the wing of a mosquito, then the nonbeliever wouldn't be able to drink even a mouthful of water from it. And God's distribution [of blessings] has nothing to do with you.

Instead with His benevolence and mercy, He blesses among his servants to whom He wishes and whatever He wishes He does it. And He is not of those who are afraid like you who is afraid of wealth and possessions of rich individuals and consider it as a sign of prophethood. Neither is He from among those who have greed towards wealth and possessions like you, who is greedy and wants to specially keep wealth bound to prophethood. And He is not among those who are after their inordinate desires like you are after your pleasures and keeps that ahead which doesn't deserve to be kept ahead.

Without any doubt His deal is on the basis of justice and fairness and He doesn't prefer anyone and bestow honor in religion and His greatness except to one who is most obedient to Him and most superior in serving Him. And similarly His doesn't push anyone back in honor and preference in religion and greatness except the one who has drifted far away from his obedience to Him. By all means, He never looks at anyone's personality, He never cares about the wealth and worldly possessions as these possessions are bestowed to them by His own benevolence to them. And remember when He bestows

wealth and worldly possessions to someone, it is not obligatory for Him to bless him with prophethood because no one can force Him to act against what He wishes.

Don't you see that how He has made one person wealthy and gave him ugly face and made another person very poor and gave him beautiful face. Blessed one with honor but kept him poor. Blessed one with wealth but didn't give him honor. Then the ugly faced wealthy cannot say that O God with wealth also make me beautiful like that person, and neither that beautiful person can say that [O God] with beauty bless me with wealth like that person and nor honorable person, with his honor can also ask for wealth and nor that lowly wealthy person with his wealth can also ask for honor like that honorable person.

This is not possible except for the order of God Who has distributed all this with His decree. And He is All–Wise in His actions, all–Praiseworthy in His deeds and this is what He, the All–exalted has said "I have not descended this Qur'an except on a man from two great cities." and God has said: "Isn't it the mercy of Your Lord O Muhammad! That We have distributed among them their earnings for life of this world in such a way that We have given preference to some of them over others in some aspects, thus some of them will need others for wealth, while one will need other for their comfort, and for services."

That's why you see that the great Kings and very wealthy individuals are also needy like the poorest because the worldly possessions that this one has that poor one doesn't have it; the services that that poorest person can provide, this king cannot and so to acquire knowledge and wisdom, rich is forced to seek the help of poor.

So this poor person needs the wealth of rich King and the King is needy of knowledge, counsel and wisdom of this poor man. Thus it is neither appropriate for the King to say that I wish I could also have knowledge of this poor man and nor is it appropriate for the poor man with knowledge and wise counsel to also desire for the wealth of King and wish to use both his artful wisdom and also control the wealth of the King.

### The Prophet of God (S) then continued...

"But your saying that 'We will not believe in you until you bring out streams of water in Mecca because the land of Mecca is rocky mountainous. You cut out its land and dig it and make channels of water in it because we direly need it.' You have demanded this from while in reality you are totally ignorant of the logic of God behind it.

O Ibn Abi Umayyah! Suppose if you are able to do all this, will you then become Prophet?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'No'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Have you seen Ta'ef where your gardens exist? Wasn't the land barren, rocky and unsuitable for cultivation that you plowed, made its bumpy terrain smooth and brought out streams

of water from it?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Yes'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Is this type of work done by other people too?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Yes'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Then have you and all of them become prophets?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'No'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Then when these things cannot be proof of your prophethood so how can these things be proof of Muhammad's Prophethood? And what you said earlier is same as if you say that we will not believe in you as Prophet until you do not stand up as common people stand up and do not walk as common people walk and do not eat as common people eat. And you are saying that 'You should have a garden of grapes and dates from which you yourself eat and also give us to eat from it.' So don't you and your friends own gardens of grapes and dates in Ta'ef from which you all eat and also give to others? Thus, because of these gardens have you all become Prophets?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'No'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Then what is your condition that you are demanding such things that if they do exist even then the truthfulness and authenticity of a matter cannot be proved; instead if these are used as an argument to prove authenticity, then it will amount to nothing but lie and deceit. Because it would mean that to prove something, an argument was used which in reality was false and baseless and doesn't deserve to be called as a proof; and its aim was nothing but to cheat and deceive common ignorant people and misguide them. And Prophet of God is loftier and dignified than this [act of deceit and cheating]."

# The Prophet of God (S) then continued...

"And now your saying that heavens should fall upon us; so the reality is that if heaven falls on you that you will be doomed and you will die then your real motive behind this demand will be that you want Prophet of God to kill you while in reality the Prophet of God is much more merciful and compassionate towards you than [wishing to] kill you and he has not come to this world to kill.

Instead he wants to establish proofs of God upon you. And the proofs of God are never in harmony for a Prophet to establish over servants of God. Because servants of God [people] are not aware of the corrective and corruptive issues and there is a great variation in their dispositions and natures which makes agreement on one thing impossible [one person wants something while other doesn't].

God is your physician and He doesn't say something which is impossible. Have you seen a physician

who gives medicine according to the wish of patients? What he thinks he does it whether they are happy or unhappy. Similarly God is your physician so if you will use His recommended medicine, you will be cured and if you refuse taking it, you will continue to suffer from the disease.

Now your saying that 'Until you bring God and angels face to face with us so that we can see them, we will not believe.' So this is totally impossible demand which is not hidden from anyone. Remember that my God in not like creatures that He comes and goes, moves, and comes face to face with a thing that we can bring Him. So it proves that your demand is impossible to fulfill. And in reality what you have demanded about My Lord is more deserving for your idols because all these qualities are present in your weak and imperfect idols who cannot hear, cannot see, neither they have knowledge of anything, nor they can give you anything, or to others.

O Ibn Abi Umayyah! Don't you own property and gardens in Ta'ef and Mecca and don't you keep your representatives over it?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Why not?'

**Prophet of God (S):** So do you handle the matters personally by yourself or you do it via your 'representatives' who act on your behalf between you and the second party and make deal with them?

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Through representatives'

**Prophet of God (S):** "If sometimes those who do business with you, your tenants and your servants, demand your representatives that we will not accept you as representative until you do not bring Ibn Abi Umayyah to us, so that we can see him and whatever you told us attributing to him, we would hear that directly from him. So would you allow it to happen and would you take this as reasonable from them?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'No'

**Prophet of God (S):** "So in the same way as your representatives should have a 'specific sign' that would point to your representation by them, isn't it obligatory upon people to testify them?" [that they are your representatives]

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Why not?'

**Prophet of God (S):** "Is it possible that when your representatives listen to that 'demand' they come to you and say 'You come with us because they are demanding that you go to them' So won't you be offended by this action of your representative and will not you say to him that you are my 'messenger' neither advisor and nor ruler."

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'Yes'

Prophet of God (S): "Then why do you ask from the messenger of the God of Worlds that he would

keep an abominable relationship that he would order His Lord to do something and prevent Him from doing something while you do not allow even your ordinary representatives to give you any type of order."

**The Prophet (S) then said:** "By these solid arguments from me, all what you said and your claims are refuted and your criticisms are rebutted.

And your saying that 'If you were Prophet, you would have owned a golden palace' So you know that Pharaohs of Egypt had similar palaces. Thus, did they become prophets by having these grand decorated palaces?"

Ibn Abi Umayyah: 'No'

**Prophet of God** (S): "So in the same way this thing cannot be a proof of my prophethood. And your saying that until you climb up in the heavens and until you bring down a written book for us, we will not believe in you. So O Ibn Abi Umayyah! Climbing up to the heavens is more difficult than bringing down something from it. And you have already said that even if you climb over heaven, we will not believe you and similarly you have said that even after the book descends from the heaven we may believe or it is possible that we may not believe. So O Ibn Abi Umayyah! In this situation when you are obstinately adherent to your disbelief and arrogance, then your cure is nothing but that you should suffer punishment at the hands of friends of God [Awliya Allah] and His angels. God has blessed me with Hikmatal Balighatal Jamiah 1 (Ultimate and Complete Wisdom) through which all your false arguments and criticisms are refuted."

**Abu Jahal:** 'O Muhammad! Is it not so that when *Bani Israel* [the nation of Prophet Musa (as)] demanded from Musa (as) to make them see God, they were punished with thunder from sky?'

Prophet of God (S): "Yes, it did."

**Abu Jahal:** 'So if you are really the Prophet of God, then descend the punishment of thunder from sky upon us because what we have demanded is more severe [in deserving punishment] than the nation of Musa (as). They had said to Musa (as) to show God and we are saying that we will not believe until you bring God and His angels in front of us so that we can see them.'

**Prophet of God (S):** "O Abu Jahal! Are you not aware of the story of Ibrahim *Khalil Allah* (as) when he was elevated into the *malakut* [heavens, hidden world], as the God says:

'And thus did We show Ibrahim the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure.' [Qur'an, 6:75].

So when he was elevated to the heavens, He made powerful his sight and thus whatever was open and secret on earth became visible to him. So when he saw a man and a woman committing fornication, he prayed to curse them and so they died. Then he saw two others in the same condition [committing]

fornication], he prayed to curse them and they too died. Then he again saw two others in the same condition and so he prayed again to curse them and they too died.

Then he again saw two others in the same condition and when he wanted to pray to curse them, God sent revelation upon him: 'O Ibrahim! Stop your prayers to curse my servants and maids; For I am Forgiving, Merciful, Al-Mighty and Tolerant God. In the same way as their worship doesn't give Me any benefit, their sins also do not harm Me. And so when I punish them it is not meant to satisfy My anger over them like you have done. So now you should hold your cursing prayers from my servants; for you are only My warning servant. Do not try to become My partner in my Kingdom. Do not try to prevail over Me and My servants. Remember that I deal with My servants in three ways:

- 1. If they repent, then I accept their repentance and forgive their sins and cover their faults.
- 2. If they do not repent even then I keep away my punishment from them because I know that their progeny will have virtuous believers and so because of these believers who will be born, I show mercy towards their father and mothers until when these believers are born, and then I tighten My grip on their fathers and mothers with my punishment and tribulations and,
- 3. O Ibrahim! When they neither repent nor they have any believer in their progeny, then even much more than your wish is My great punishment descends upon them because My punishment over My servants is to the level of My Magnificence and My Greatness.

O Ibrahim! Do not come in between Me and My servants because I am more merciful to them than you. I am the Almighty, Tolerant, All-Knowing and Al-Wise God. With My Knowledge I make My plans for them and I implement upon them My decisions with My power."

**Prophet of God (S) then said:** "O Abu Jahal! Certainly the divine punishment is away from you because He knows that a virtuous son Akramah will be born from you; otherwise the divine punishment would have descended upon you and those who are like you among Quraysh and this respite from God is only for the fact that a few among you will believe in Muhammad (S) in near future and will be prosperous in both the worlds. Thus God doesn't wish to deprive them of this great felicity; and some of them are such that pure and virtuous progeny will appear from them and so He is waiting for them to appear.

If this wasn't the fact, the divine punishment would have descended upon you much earlier. And now you look at the sky."

And when he (S) looked at the sky, the doors of heaven opened and fire started descending down and it reached very near over the heads of those who were present until they felt its heat. Abu Jahal and others present there started feeling stressed and were gripped in the state of fear.

Then the Prophet of God (S) said: "Don't be afraid. God doesn't want to kill you. He showed you this

to give a warning."

Reference: *al-Ihtajaj*, vol. 1, p. 47-67 [written by al-Allama Abu Mansur Ahmed Ibn Ali al-Tabarsi. d. 599 A.H.]

1. Please see glossary for more details.

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