

Lesson 13: An Educational Story from The Qur'an

Garune (Croesus)–Greedy Oppressor

In The Name Of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Garune, a kinsman of Hadhrat Moses (A.S.), had outwardly accepted the religion of Moses. He prayed, read the 'Torah', but he was a hypocrite of little faith. He just wanted the people to trust him so he could deceive them.

Garune bought farm products at a low price and then sold it back to the same people at a higher price. He always cheated, was unfair and made unlawful profit. He was as unjust and oppressive as he could be. In this way he accumulated great wealth which he loved more than any– thing else in the world. In fact, Garune did not worship Allah, he worshipped money. He spent of his wealth in ways of pleasure and comfort. He built beautiful castles and adorned the doors and walls with gold and jewels, even his horses and camels were adorned with gold and jewels.

Garune had hundreds of slaves and servants whom he treated badly. He made them literally bow down and kiss the ground he walked on.

Some scholarly followers of the faith admonished him saying: "O Garune! What are all of these gardens and riches for? What have you accumulated all this wealth and money for? Why do you exploit these people so?

So how will you answer Allah? Why do you abuse the rights of the people? How come you don't help the poor and needy? How come you don't think about the hereafter? Why don't you do any good deeds?"

With pride and conceit Garune answered: "it's none of your business. I know better how to spend my wealth." These believers said: "O Ga rune! All of this wealth and possessions have not been received

legally. If you hadn't cheated and made unlawful profit you couldn't have attained this much wealth. You would be the same as every- one else, not so much richer than everyone else."

Garune answered, "No, I am not like everyone else. I am clever, and smart. I worked and became rich, let others toil and work to become rich. Why should I help the poor?"

In order to give him some advice the believers said, "You don't give the people their rightful due and that is how you became so rich. If you paid your workers what they deserved you wouldn't have become this rich nor would they have become as poor as they are. Now, if you wish to become fortunate and have a happy ending you must use your wealth to comfort and improve the people of Allah. Accumulating wealth is not right, you must spend of your wealth in ways that please Allah."

But Garune mocked the believers and laughed at what they said, and with prideful disrespect said, "Don't give me your futile advice, I am much better than you and I have more faith in Allah, you better go do something about yourselves."

What are happiness and prosperity?

One day Garune wore his most splendid clothes, mounted a beautiful horse and came out of his castle. The people gathered to see the splendor of the tyrant.

Garune along the way and longed after all the gold and jewels that they saw. Some more ignorant than the others bowed down to the ground as he passed. They said, "How fortunate is Garune! How rich and fortunate is he! What a good life he has! How happy and prosperous he is! Wish we were like Garune!"

Some knowledgeable believers felt sorry for these people and advised them saying: "Happiness and prosperity do not come with abundant wealth, why do you bow down to Garune? Why do you respect an oppressor? He is not worthy of respect he has attained his wealth by raising the prices and cheating the people, he is not fortunate. The fortunate are they who truly have faith in Allah, help all creatures of Allah and do not abuse the people's rights."

One day Hadhrat Moses received a commandment from Allah: "Tell the rich they must pay 'Zakat'. He communicated the decree to the rich. He also notified Garune that he, like everyone else, must pay 'Zakat'.

This displeased Garune and he roughly said to Moses: "What do you mean 'Zakat'? For what reason should I give others my wealth? They should go work and make money."

Moses (A.S.) then said: ' "Zakat ' means giving the poor and needy their rightful due, so that they can live well; because you live in a city, a society, and through the help of the people you have accumulated riches. If they wouldn't have helped, you never could have become so rich. for example, if you lived in the middle of the desert alone, you never could have built this castle nor cultivated these gardens, nor

attained such wealth. You attained all these things through the help of these people, in truth you are not giving of your wealth, but in fact are paying them in the name of 'Zakat', their rightful due. Besides, you have usurped their rights to become this rich and must return that which is due to them.

Garune did not pay heed to Hadhrat Moses words, and disrespectfully said, "O Moses, what are you saying? Did I do wrong to believe in you? Did I commit some sin by praying? Now I have to pay tax!"

Hadhrat Moses patiently waited for him to finish and politely answered, "O Garune, I am not taking 'Zakat' for myself! But only to serve the society and the poor it is the command of Allah that people pay this duty to the poor and needy, in other words give 'Zakat' so that they will not remain poor. If you truly have faith in Allah, and accept me as His Prophet, then you must submit to the will of Allah and follow me. If you pray, then you must also give alms, because prayer without alms is useless. Reading the 'Torah' is for understanding and action"

But Garune did not listen to the council of Hadhrat Moses and the learned believers; he did not pay alms from his wealth nor return the usurped rights of the people. In addition, he often tormented the believers and opposed Moses (A.S.) by spreading rumors and slander, he sacrilegiously insulted him.

Moses, weary of Garune's insolence asked Allah to punish this greedy oppressor.

Hadhrat Moses prayer is answered

The ground, by the will of Allah, began to tremble and a great earthquake took place and that was the end of Garune and his oppression.

Garune entered the hereafter empty-handed to answer for all his evil deeds in everlasting torment. And those who had envied Garune and thought he was fortunate now said "What an awful end: Garune lost all his wealth and entered the hereafter empty-handed and guilty, to answer for his evil deeds. Now we know that money and possessions do not make a person fortunate, but that happiness is attained through faith in Allah and acting upon His commandments and serving the people.

Remember

The religion of Islam safeguards the basic necessities of man, and anticipated budgeting, one of which is 'zakat,' one of the religious precepts concerning wealth. 'Zakat' applies to farming, dairy farming, and money. Of course, according to special regulations and in the case that one has reached a moderate level of living.

'Zakat' is used to work and serve the Muslim community.

Think And Answer

1. How did Garune attain his wealth?
2. How did he spend of his wealth?
3. What did the believers tell him? How did they advise him?
4. "What is 'Zakat'? Why should I give to others of my wealth?" How did Moses answer these two questions?
5. What is the reason that part of the wealth of rich people belongs to poor people?
6. When the ignorant people came to see Garune's appearance what did they say? What did they wish?
7. In what way did Hadhrat Moses use 'Zakat'?
8. Was Garune truly fortunate? Finally what happened to him?
9. Where will he receive his punishment for his oppression of the people?
10. How did those people who thought Garune fortunate realize their mistake? What did they say?
11. Does Islam also have 'Zakat'? How is it used?

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