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Lesson Sixteen: Prediction of the Defeat of a Great Power

The beginning of the mission of the Most Noble Messenger came in the year 611 AD, and thus fell in the reign of Khusrau Parviz.

At that time, two great and powerful states, Eastern Rome or Byzantium and Iran, ruled over the greater part of the civilized world. They had for long been going to war with each other in order to expand the area under their control. ¹ These lengthy battles between the Byzantines and the Iranians had begun in the reign of Anushirvan and had continued into the reign of Khusrau Parviz.

Encouraged and egged on by his advisors, Anushirvan had disregarded the peace treaty existing with Byzantines and attacked them. Within a short period, the Iranians succeeded in conquering Syria and Antioch, advancing as far as Asia Minor itself. Antioch was burned to the ground and Asia Minor was plundered. Twenty years later, when the military power of both sides was crumbling, a new peace agreement was signed, and the forces of both states returned to their previous borders.

After the death of Anushirvan and its aftermath, Khusrau Parviz ultimately came to the throne. In 614 AD he attacked the Greeks again, gaining control of Syria, Palestine and North Africa.

He sacked Jerusalem, set fire to the Holy Sepulchre, and destroyed numerous cities. The war ended in a clear victory for Iran.

News of the defeat of the Byzantine worshippers of God, at the hands of the fire-worshipping Iranians, was received with satisfaction by the idolators of Mecca and with grief and sadness by the Muslims. In the course of this bloody struggle, Jerusalem had come into the possession of the Iranians, which was taken by the polytheists as a good omen for their own struggle against the Muslims, foretelling victory and triumph over them.

This interpretation made by the Meccans was grievous to the Muslims and caused them much anxiety

about the future course of events. It was then that a revelation came foretelling the renewed triumph of the Byzantines, worshippers of God, over the Iranians; it disclosed the secret that the Byzantines would make good their defeat in less than ten years and carry off a definitive victory. These are the relevant verses of the Qur'an:

"The Byzantines have been defeated in a land near the Hijaz, but in the future they will triumph over their enemies, in a period of less than ten years. All affairs, both earlier and later, are in the hands of God, and on the day when the Byzantines triumph, the believers and the followers of Islam will rejoice. God assists whomsoever He wills, and He is powerful and compassionate. This is the promise of God, a promise which cannot be violated, but most of the people know not."
(30:2-6)

The prophecy of the Qur'an was fulfilled in the year 625 AD, corresponding to year 2 AH. Less than ten years had passed since the previous battle between the two powers, and the Byzantines were able to occupy Iran. It was so definite and certain for the Muslims that this event would take place that some of them placed bets on it like Abu Bakr who took out a bet against Ubayy bin Khalaf. [2](#)

How can we explain the confident and categorical prediction of the victory of a defeated people over a victorious people, in the absence of any factors pointing to the likelihood of such an event?

A realistic approach to the state of society and the course of events would definitely have contradicted this prophesy.

The Prophet of Islam foretold a definite military victory at a certain point in the future; how did he know it was going to occur?

Would it be fair to put it on the same level as the predictions made by politicians and political commentators? Could the application of any criteria have made it possible to calculate that people, defeated, exhausted and demoralized in the course of a trying war, should within a given space of time, triumph definitively over the erstwhile victor? It should be remembered, after all, that many factors play a role in military victory and that the slightest error in tactics or miscalculation can change the whole course of battle.

Surely the explanation is that some unaccountable element is contained in the unfolding of events, which permits the prediction of an occurrence like a great military victory. It is unrealistic to attempt to analyze these matters from a purely materialistic point of view.

[The Prediction of Other Events](#)

The Qur'an has also foretold other events. Let us give a few examples. One is the conquest of Mecca and the triumph of the Muslims over the polytheists, described by the Qur'an as follows:

"That which God inspired in his Prophet by means of a dream is true and veracious: without any doubt, you will enter the Sacred Mosque in safety and security. You will shave your heads and shorten your hair without any fear or anxiety. God knows what you do not know, and you will win a victory near at hand before your conquest of Mecca." (48:27)

This verse informs the Muslims that they will enter the Sacred Mosque and perform the ceremonies of the lesser pilgrimage ('umra) without any fear, and that the polytheists will be defeated and their power will vanish. It also assures them that in the near future they will enjoy another victory. These predictions were made at a time when no military expert or adviser could have predicted the occurrence, given the difficult circumstances of the Muslims and the unfavorable situation in which they found themselves.

In reality, then, it was not the outer beings of the Muslim warriors, the physical strength and weaponry they possessed, that were victorious; it was God's aid, joined to their strenuous efforts, that gave rise to victory .

The repeated statement in the Qur'an that all miracles and victories take place with the permission of God indicates how limited is the role played by personalities in history despite their power of choice and the dimensions their creative activity may assume.

The Prophets represent the most important of the factors necessary for destroying existing social realities and bringing about social changes at a given point in history. With their luminosity, they penetrate the darkness surrounding society that is an obstacle on the path to God. They create a distinctive set of values, and with God's permission, they guide men to righteousness and salubrity.

It is precisely within the growing darkness that the evolutionary course of history causes the emergence of exalted personalities. Their appearance is one of the basic factors in bringing about fundamental social change and one of the undoubted necessities of history.

A careful examination of history will show that the Prophets appeared at decisive turning points in time, playing a fundamental role in conveying human societies from a lower stage to a higher one. It is then up to the human being himself firmly to base his orientation to the world on an awareness of the constant evolution of all phenomena and the movement of all of being toward its lofty aims, as well as on faith and belief in the source of creation and worthy action that brings him into harmony with the universal proclamation of God's glory by all things.

Only then will his true human visage as the vicegerent upon the earth become apparent This proper orientation toward existence and the phenomena of nature will determine for him the values of his earthly existence.

History bears witness that human beings have joyously abandoned everything for the sake of the Divine teachings brought by the Prophets, in order to gain, thereby, that which is both everything and higher than everything.

Let us return to our previous topic.

The Qur'an mentions the future occurrence of another historical event, namely the triumph of the Muslim warriors at Khaybar and their conquest of its formidable fortresses. Hard blows had been inflicted on the Muslims from Khaybar, but in the end the army of Islam triumphed over the Jews, and the prediction of the Qur'an was completely fulfilled.

Would it have been possible to speak of victory, at a time of the utmost weakness, without utter confidence in the content of Divine revelation? Can we ascribe this precise knowledge of the future to the knowledge and perspicacity of the Prophet of Islam?

Knowledge cannot permit one to speak of an ineluctable future, to make categorical predictions; this is something in which only the true Prophets and friends of God can engage.

In these victorious wars, Islam triumphed not only materially over the forces of unbelief; it also subjected its opponents and enemies to its ideological and spiritual power.

When the Prophet was still living in Mecca and propagating Islam on a limited scale in extremely difficult and tiring circumstances, and when the future of Islam was still uncertain, the Qur'an predicted the ultimate fate of Abu Lahab to be inevitable entry to hellfire on account of his obstinate enmity to the Prophet of Islam.

Although many of the relatives of the Prophet pined the ranks of his opponents at the beginning of his mission, their innate ability to perceive and accept the truth gradually emerged from the darkness of ignorance and obstinacy, so despite their obduracy and perversity of mind, they changed their beliefs and joined the ranks of the Muslims.

At that time of feverish cries, nobody knew who would ultimately join the ranks of the believers and which opponents of the truth would maintain their erroneous attitudes until death. After all, the passage of time, the occurrence of certain events and the emerging of new conditions can bring about new insights in the human being, with the result that he changes his beliefs and opinions; no one can foretell with certainty what the future beliefs of a person will be.

Nonetheless, the Qur'an predicts with clarity the final outcome of the life of a given individual, Abu Lahab, the obstinate enemy of Islam. It proclaims categorically that he will refuse the religion of monotheism until the very end of his life, and that for this reason his painful destiny will be to enter the fire of God's wrath. These are the verses of the Qur'an:

"May Abu Lahab, who was constantly vexing and opposing the Prophet, perish, and may his two hands be cut off! The wealth he accumulated to destroy Islam has not availed him or saved him from destruction; he will soon fall into the flaming fire of Hell." (111:1-3)

All historians are agreed that Abu Lahab closed his eyes on this world as an unbeliever and that he

persisted in his obstinate hostility to the Prophet of Islam until the final moments of his life.

The verses revealed concerning the events mentioned above constitute a further proof that the sacred book of Islam is from God, and that it is linked, in a profound and exclusive way, with the supra-natural realm.

Other verses of the Qur'an also predict certain future events, such as the preservation of the Prophet from physical harm throughout the period of his messengerhood and his inhumanity from the evil deeds of his enemies. At the time this was predicted, the third year after the beginning of his mission, there was no indication that he would remain unharmed by his enemies throughout the period of his mission, and yet the passage of time proved this to be the case.

In Surah Kawthar, the Qur'an informs people that the descendants of the Prophet will ultimately be numerous – this despite the fact that in his lifetime his enemies were hopeful that he would die without issue, since all the sons of the Prophet had died in infancy and only one of his daughters survived. Given this, was it possible for any other than God, that eternal reality and fixed pivot of truth, to predict that matters would unfold in a sense completely opposed to existing circumstances?

Likewise, the prediction that the Prophet would return to Mecca, his home, made at a time when he abandoned it for Medina because of the pressures of the polytheists, is also an indication of a higher consciousness:

"God Who made incumbent on you the recitation of the Qur'an will return you to your birthplace."
(28:85)

In Surah Nasr, the Qur'an also predicts the definitive conquest of Mecca by the Muslims with numerous different groups of people joining the ranks of the Muslims. All these predictions of future events are inexplicable unless they be ascribed to the source of revelation, to the infinite knowledge of God.

It should also not be forgotten that in all the wars and battles they waged and all the victories they won, the Muslims behaved toward the defeated with the utmost generosity and compassion.

In this, they were guided by the inspiration they received from the Qur'an, an inspiration that took shape in the very midst of the battles and clashes in which they were engaged. Since the war waged by Islam was a war for the sake of God and the establishment of monotheism and justice, they never lost sight of the purpose of fighting even in the midst of battle and the clanging of swords.

Although military victory might have appeared to be the best possible opportunity for the Muslims to take revenge on the polytheists for all the pain and torture they had suffered at their hands for years, the Muslims restrained their anger and desire for revenge so that the sacred aim of their struggle should not be sullied or obscured by their personal desires and wishes.

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