

Section 13: The Ministry of Moses

Surah al-'Araf , Verse 100

أَو لَمْ يَهْدِ لِلَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَهْلِهَا أَنْ لَوْ نَشَاءُ أَصَبْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَنَطْبَعُ
عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

100. “Does He not guide (thereby) those who inherit the earth after its (former) residents that if We please We will destroy them (too) for their sins and set a seal on their hearts so that they do not hear (the truth)?”

Once more in this verse, in order to awaken the neglectful minds of the present people, and making them attentive of the instructive lessons which had existed in the lives of the former nations, the Qur'an inquires whether those who inherit the earth next to the possessors of it did not take admonition from the study of the situation of the former nations.

They should understand that if Allah pleases, He is able to destroy them, too, for their faults, and inflicts them with the same evil end that the former sinners suffered.

The verse says:

“Does He not guide (thereby) those who inherit the earth after its (former) residents that if We please We will destroy them (too) for their sins...”

Allah is also able to leave them alive, while, because of their committing sins and corruptions, He seals their hearts and let them not perceive and recognize the truth, so that they never hear the truth and do not accept any advice. Such people will be wandering in the life bewildered. The verse says:

“...and set a seal on their hearts so that they do not hear (the truth)?”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 101

تِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِهَا ۗ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِ الْكَافِرِينَ

101. “These are the towns some of whose tidings We recount unto you; and certainly their Messengers came to them with manifest proofs, but they would not believe in what they had belied from before. Thus does Allah set a seal on the hearts of the infidels.”

In this verse, as well as the next one, the emphasis is again on the lessons which can be taken from the explanation of the former people’s events. But, here, the addressee is the Prophet (S), although the objective is indeed all human beings.

At first, it says:

“These are the towns some of whose tidings We recount unto you...”

Then, the verse implies that it was not such that they became unihiliated without completing the argument, but surely their divine prophets went to them with clear evidences and those prophets tried their utmost effort to guide them. The holy verse continues saying:

“...and certainly their Messengers came to them with manifest proofs...”

But they steadily showed opposition against the continuous preaches and repeated invitations of their prophets and persisted on their own saying. They were not ready to accept and believe in that which they had belied before. Here is what the verse says:

“...but they would not believe in what they had belied from before...”

The cause of this obstinacy has been stated in the next sentence of the holy verse, as follows:

“...Thus does Allah set a seal on the hearts of the infidels.”

That is, those who step in the path of wrong, as a result of repetition and continuation of action, some corruptions such as perversion, infidelity, and impurity settle in their hearts so deeply that they remain fixed therein like the curvings upon a coin. This is from the kind of effect and property of action which has been attributed to Allah, since it is He Who is the Cause of all causes.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 102

وَمَا وَجَدْنَا لَأَكْثَرِهِمْ مِنْ عَهْدٍ وَإِنْ وَجَدْنَا أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَاسِقِينَ

102. “And, We did not find in most of them any (firm) covenant, and verily We found most of them to be wrong-doers.”

The objective meaning of the word “*ahd*”, (covenant), mentioned in the verse, is either the relation between Allah and the sound innate disposition of people, or the invitation and laws of prophets, or the special covenants which sometimes people made with prophets saying that, for example, if the prophet performed so and so as a miracle or solved a particular difficulty of theirs, they would believe.

One of the evidences of this kind in the Qur’ān is Surah’A’raf, No. 7, verses 134 and 135 which say:

“And when the plague fell upon them, they said: ‘O’ Moses! invoke your Lord for us by the covenant He has made with you. If you remove the plague from us, we will certainly believe in you, and we will certainly send with you the Children of Israel.’”

“But when We removed the plague from them until a term which they should reach, behold, they broke (their promise again).”

Allah has made manifest some facts for human beings through both innate disposition and prophets in order that they may have confederation and submission unto them. But most people neglect the cry of innate disposition and prophets, and going out of the path of the truth, they become wrong-doers. The verse says:

“And, We did not find in most of them any (firm) covenant...”

Thus, the secret of the destruction of the former nations was breach of promise and disobedience.

“...and verily We found most of them to be wrong-doers.”

Allah has praised the faithful and blamed the breachers of promise.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 103

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

103. "Then, after them, We sent Moses with Our Signs unto Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they wronged (and disbelieved) in them. Consider then how the end of the mischief makers was! "

The name of Moses (as) has been repeated more than 130 times in the Qur'an. No other name has been mentioned therein as numerous as his name. As it is cited in Al-Mizn, the Qur'an has referred to the divine miracles concerning no prophet as many as it has mentioned for Moses (as).

The story of Moses (as), mentioned in the Qur'an, can be staged into five steps:

- 1) The birth and childhood of Moses.
- 2) His escape from the city of Madyan and living with Shuaib (Jethro).
- 3) His mission and his problems with Pharaoh.
- 4) His own deliverance and that of his people from Pharaoh, and returning to Palestine.
- 5) His conflicts with the Children of Israel.

This Surah, Al-'Araf, is the first Meccan Surah which has referred to the story of Moses (as).

One of the philosophies of the mission of prophets is standing against false deities. For general improvement of a society, the chiefs and great members of that society should be referred to first, because water must be purified from its head-source, as the verse says:

"Then, after them, We sent Moses with Our Signs unto Pharaoh and his chiefs..."

People's faith in the truth usually causes their society to be improved, while disbelief and heresy draw it towards corruption. The verse continues saying:

"...but they wronged (and disbelieved) in them. Consider then how the end of the mischief makers was! "

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 104

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ يَا فِرْعَوْنُ إِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

104. "And Moses said: 'O Pharaoh! Verily I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds'."

Prophets claimed nothing but their prophecy and invitation to the Truth. In the way of their invitation, they used to address the false deities of their time bravely and without any fear and opposed them.

" And Moses said: 'O Pharaoh! Verily I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds'."

To improve the society which has a regular system, it is better to begin from the chiefs of that society.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 105

حَقِيقٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا أَقُولَ عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِبَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعِيَ
بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

105. *“(I am) worthy of saying nothing about Allah except the truth. Indeed I have come to you with a clear Sign (a miracle) from your Lord; so send forth with me the Children of Israel.”*

Prophets are infallible, and they say nothing but the truth. From the tongue of Moses, the verse says:

“(I am) worthy of saying nothing about Allah except the truth...”

Prophets should have miracles to prove their prophecy, as the verse refers to it and says:

“...Indeed I have come to you with a clear Sign (a miracle) from your Lord...”

To provide the freedom of human beings is among the first aims of prophets. Except them, whoever takes the rein of the government in a society, drags those people into servitude of false deities.

As long as people are not delivered from the ties of false deities, it is not possible to offer them a complete cultural program to guide them. That was why Moses (as) said to Pharaoh:

“...so send forth with me the Children of Israel.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 106-107

قَالَ إِن كُنتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

106. *“He (Pharaoh) said: ‘If you have come with a Sign (a miracle), then bring it, if you are of the truthful ones.’”*

107. *“So he threw his rod, then behold! it was a clear serpent.”*

The Definition of a Miracle

The Arabic term /mu'jizah/ is derived from the root /'ajaza/ which means an action that those who have not the capacity and genius of prophethood or imamate are unable to do it, such as the act of Moses by his Rod, or the act of Jesus in raising men from the dead, and so on. The verse says:

“He (Pharaoh) said: ‘If you have come with a Sign (a miracle), then bring it, if you are of the truthful ones.’”

In *Surah Ash-Shu'arā*, No. 26, verse 45 we recite:

“Then Moses cast down his staff, and lo! It swallowed that which they falsely displayed.”

There were also some more miracles appeared from that Rod. It was struck the water of the sea when it dried up. *Surah Ash-Shu'arā*, No. 26, verse 63 says:

“Strike the sea with your staff...”

Or, it was struck the rock and fountains of water gushed forth from it. *Surah Al-Baqarah*, No. 2, verse 60 says:

“...Strike the rock with your staff.’...”

It should be explained that at the presence of Moses (as) the Rod changed to be a small snake, as *Surah An-Naml*, No. 27, verse 10 says:

“And cast down your staff, so when he saw it in motion as if it was a serpent...”

At the presence of people it seemed an ordinary snake. *Surah Thāhā*, No. 20, verse 20 says:

“Then he cast it down, and lo! it was a serpent running.”

But, at the presence of Pharaoh, it became a great clear snake, as the verse under discussion says:

“So he threw his rod, then behold! it was a clear serpent.”

However, a miracle should be clear for all, so that no doubt remains. The verse says:

“...then behold! it was a clear serpent.”