

Section 16: The Delivery of the Israelites

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 130

وَلَقَدْ أَخْذَنَا آَلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّينِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَكَّرُونَ

130. “And certainly We afflicted the clan of Pharaoh with drought and scarcity of fruits, so that they may take admonition.”

The Arabic word /sinin/ is the plural form of /sanah/ which means ‘year’; but when it is used with the term /'axṣ/ in the Arabic contexts, it often means: ‘to afflict with drought and famine’. The Qur'an implies that Allah afflicted Pharaoh and his clan with drought and famine because of the indecent manner that they committed. The verse says:

“And certainly We afflicted the clan of Pharaoh with drought...”

It also implies that besides famine and drought, Allah afflicted them with scarcity of fruits in order that they be in awe and to become monotheists, but they did not change their way. The verse continues saying:

“...and scarcity of fruits, so that they may take admonition.”

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 131

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطْبَرُوا بِمُؤْسَى وَمَنْ مَعْهُ أَلَا
إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

131. “So, when any good came to them, they said: ‘This is our due’; and if any evil afflicted them, they took it bad omens due to Moses and those with him. Be it known! Surely the cause of their bad omens is with Allah, but most of them do not know.”

Whenever they obtained abundance of good, they said that it was for their own due that there had continuously been bounties in their cities, and, therefore, they did not thank Allah. The verse says:

“So, when any good came to them, they said: ‘This is our due’...”

But when they afflicted famine and starvation, they took Moses and his followers bad omens and said that it was due to them. In this regard, the verse says:

“...and if any evil afflicted them, they took it bad omens due to Moses and those with him...”

Their real misfortune was as a result of their own sins and evil deeds. Such things cause the punishment of Allah for them both in this world and the Hereafter. The verse says:

“...Be it known! Surely the cause of their bad omens is with Allah...”

But most of them do not know it, and do not contemplate to know this fact. The verse ends as follows:

“...but most of them do not know.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 132

وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ ءَايَةٍ لِتَسْحِرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

132. “And they said: ‘Whatever sign you may bring to us to charm us with it, we will not believe in you.’”

The enemies knew that the job of Moses was not magic and also knew that it was a Divine Sign, but they arrogantly and obstinately did not believe.

But, when the sorcerers, who were expert in their job, understood that the accomplishment of Moses (as) was not a magic, they believed.

Perhaps, the manner of the people of Pharaoh, that they called the accomplishment of Moses ‘a sign’, had been done mockingly.

The verse says:

“And they said: ‘Whatever sign you may bring to us to charm us with it, we will not believe in

you'."

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 133

فَارْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادَعَ وَالدَّمَ ءَايَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ
فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ

133. "So We sent against them the flood and the locusts and the vermin and the frogs and the blood as distinct signs, yet they acted proudly and they were a guilty people."

The Arabic term /tūfān/ in the Persian language means: 'hurricane', but in the Arabic language it has been used with the sense of: 'a violent flood'. In Mufradat-i-Riqib, it is cited that the word /tūfān/ is applied for any common event which is horrible.

The Arabic word /qummal/ means: some small insects, such as: lice, ants, aphids, and a kind of insects.

'Blood', which was among the divine signs and a punishment for the opponents of the people of Moses (as), means: the change of water(s) into blood, or a common bleeding of people.

The attack of locusts, flood, and 'water being altered into blood' were ordained only against the people of Pharaoh, while the Children of Israel were in security.

The explanation of these punishments have been mentioned in the Turah, too. Some evidences are as follows:

- 1– The river turned into blood.... Exodus, Chapter 7, verse 20
- 2– Swarm of flies.... Exodus, Chapter 8, verse 21 and verse 24
- 3– The plague of hail.... Exodus, Chapter 9, verse 24 and verse 25
- 4– The attack of locusts.... Exodus, Chapter 10, verses 12 and 14

After Allah's warning and people's heedlessness, it is the turn of some grievous retributions to come forth.

The verse says:

"So We sent against them the flood and the locusts and the vermin and the frogs and the blood as distinct signs..."

Living creatures are the agents of Allah. Their mission is sometimes to bring mercy, like the spider's web

at the doorway of the cave for the protection of the Messenger of Allah (S). And, it is sometimes a chastisement mission, like that of the swallows, and, in this verse, the mission of frogs and locusts.

However, many calamities are often for training. In any retribution, there is a respite for people to contemplate and repent and return to the Straight Path. Therefore, the Divine retributions come after completing the argument.

They saw the divine sign and punishment, yet they acted arrogantly. The verse says:

“...yet they acted proudly and they were a guilty people.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 134–135

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عِنْدَكَ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ
عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْزَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِالْغُوهُ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ

134. “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.’”

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

The Arabic term /nakش/ originally means: ‘to untwist a rope’, but later it has been used in the sense of ‘breaking a covenant’, or ‘violating an oath’. The verse says:

“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.’”

The Qur’كnic term /’ajal/, in this verse, may be the time which Moses (as) appointed for the removal of a calamity, saying that, for example, it would be removed on so and so day or at so and so hour, in order that they might understand that it was a divine retribution and not an accidental happening.

The purpose also maybe that those obstinate people would finally meet the unavoidable Wrath of Allah, but until the appearance of that time and being drowned in the sea, the punishment was temporarily

removed.

The verse says:

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

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 136

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِآنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

136. “So We took vengeance on them and drowned them in the sea, because they belied Our Signs and were heedless of them.”

The Arabic term /intiqām/ with the meaning of ‘vengeance’, in this verse, means ‘punishment’, and it does not mean ‘grudge’ or ‘rancour’ here.

The word /yam/ in the old Egyptian language was used for a sea or a river. Since the story here refers to Egypt, the same old word has been used in this verse of the Qur’ān.¹

However, it should be noted that Allah is also ‘taker of vengeance’. The verse says:

“So We took vengeance on them and drowned them in the sea, because they belied Our Signs...”

Another point is that the main source of misfortunes and calamities is inside the entities of ourselves, and negligence brings a heavy compensation for us. The holy verse continues saying:

“...and were heedless of them.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 137

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَحْنِعُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا
وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَى عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ
فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ

137. “And We made the people, who were abased, the inheritors to the east (parts) of the land and the west (parts) of it which We had blessed therein, and the good word of your Lord about the Children of Israel was fulfilled for what they endured patiently, and We destroyed what

Pharaoh and his people had built and what they used to erect.”

The region that the Children of Israel inherited included of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and present Palestine. Those lands contained both material bounties and spiritual bounties, where the great prophets raised and were buried.

The lands which were under the control of Pharaoh and his people were so vast that there were different horizons and with different hours of risings and settings of the sun therein.

From the points of industry, agriculture, and interesting buildings of their time, the people of Pharaoh were very developed. The verse says:

“And We made the people, who were abased, the inheritors to the east (parts) of the land and the west (parts) of it which We had blessed therein, and the good word of your Lord about the Children of Israel was fulfilled for what they endured patiently, and We destroyed what Pharaoh and his people had built and what they used to erect.”

Yet, since the governments of divine prophets have been the governments of the oppressed, and Allah fulfills His promises, those oppressed people who show patience and perseverance can become the inheritors of the earth, as the verse indicates:

“...We made the people, who were abased, the inheritors to the east (parts) of the land and the west (parts) of it...”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 138

وَجَاءُونَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَى أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ قَالُوا
يَا مُوسَى اجْعِلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ إِلَهٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ

138. “And We made the Children of Israel to pass the sea; then they came upon a people cleaving to idols they had. They said: ‘O’ Moses! make for us a god, as they have gods’. He (Moses) said: ‘Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly’.”

Those expert sorcerers of Pharaoh, who were dealing with sorcery and magic during all their lives, became such good believers by seeing a miracle that Pharaoh’s terrible threats could not change their decision.

But, some of the followers of Moses, who saw all those great miracles, were so weak that they even asked him (as) for an idol, and the observation of a deviated scene of idolatry drew them toward perversity.

The verse says:

"And We made the Children of Israel to pass the sea; then they came upon a people cleaving to idols they had. They said: 'O' Moses! make for us a god, as they have gods'. He (Moses) said: 'Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly'."

Therefore, as long as a group of people have not become strong enough in their true belief and faith, they should not migrate unto some perverted and dangerous regions, because environments may affect on them, and communities are always exposed to the danger of aberration.

Also, sometimes it happens that watching an unappropriate view (of a film, a picture, or a society) spoils all the training efforts of the leaders.

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 139

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مُتَّبِرُ مَا هُمْ فِيهِ وَيَاطِلُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

139. "(Moses said:) Surely this they are engaged upon shall be perished, and what they are doing are in vain."

The Qur'anic term /mutabbarun/ is derived from the word /tabarr/ with the meaning of 'destruction'.

The holy verse maybe points to the glad tidings of Moses (as) to the people, saying that by their presence in that region, polytheism and perversion would be effaced. (narrated from Marqqi, commentary). Here is the verse:

"(Moses said:) Surely this they are engaged upon shall be perished, and what they are doing are in vain."

Therefore, both the mental and practical perversions are perishable. The end of them all is destruction.

Surah al-'Araf – Verses 140-141

قَالَ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغِيْكُمْ إِلَهًا وَهُوَ فَخَلَّكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ءالِ فِرْعَأْوَنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُقْتَلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحِيُونَ

نِسَاءكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

140. “He said: ‘Shall I find for you a god other than Allah, while He has preferred you above all creatures?’”

141. “And (remember) when We delivered you from Pharaoh’s clan who were afflicting you with evil torment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women, and in that was a great trial from your Lord.”

Then, for an emphasis, the Qur’ⁿ adds that Moses said to them whether he should find a god other than Allah for them; the same Lord Who preferred them over all people of their time. Here is the statement of the verse:

“He said: ‘Shall I find for you a god other than Allah, while He has preferred you above all creatures?’”

In the next verse, Allah points to one of His great bounties bestowed upon the Children of Israel, so that by attending to that great bounty the sense of gratitude could be moved in them, and they knew that only His Pure Essence is eligible to be adored, worshipped and submitted.

At first it says:

“And (remember) when We delivered you from Pharaoh’s clan who were afflicting you with evil torment...”

Then, this ceaseless torment is explained as follows:

“...slaughtering your sons and sparing your women...”

The explanation of the verse implies that in that event there lies a great trial upon them from the side of Allah. The verse says:

“...and in that was a great trial from your Lord.”

1. Narrated from Mu‘jam-ul-Kabir.

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