

Section 20: The Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Apostle Unto the Whole Mankind

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 158

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعاً الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ
وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

158. “Say: ‘O mankind! I am the messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to Whom belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life. And makes to die’. Believe then in Allah and His Messenger, the unschooled prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided.”

Some of orientalists have said that the Prophet of Islam (S) was thinking only for the people of his own region, but when he succeeded he thought to preach other people of the world, too.

In answer to this statement, it should be said that there are some different verses of the Qur'an containing such words as: 'you all', 1 'the whole of mankind' 2 'whoever it reaches' 3 'unto the worlds'.⁴

These Qur'anic evidences prove that his prophethood was worldly. He was commissioned to be a prophet over all people of the world when he was in Mecca and before gaining his success. It was not so, as those orientalists say, that later he decided to invite all the people of the world.

Imam Hassan Mujtaba (as), the second Imam, has said:

“Once some of the Jewish people came to the Messenger of Allah and said: ‘Do you suppose that you

are a prophet the same as Moses was?’ After a while of keeping silence, he answered:

‘Yes. I am the master of the (whole) children of Adam, but I do not boast of it. I am the seal of prophets, the leader of the pious, and the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds.’

They asked: ‘Whom have you been sent to? To Arabs, or to non-Arabs, or to us?’ Then the above verse was revealed with the meaning that he was sent as a Messenger to the whole mankind.”⁵

The repetition of the Qur’ānic word /’Ummi/ in this holy verse and in the sixth verse before this, is an indication to its importance.

However, the prophethood of Mohammad (S) is surely worldly, and a worldly Divine religion needs a worldly leader.

Like any project, his Messengership, of course, progressed stage by stage. At first, the invitation of the Prophet (S) was to the family members, then to the people of’Umm-ul-Qur’ā, Mecca, and, finally, to the whole humankind. The verse says:

“Say: ‘O mankind! I am the messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to Whom belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life. And makes to die’...”

Another matter is that prophethood is something necessary for Theism and Resurrection. Since Allah (s.w.t.) is the only possessor of the world of existence thoroughly, and life and death are under His control, then the leadership and guidance of human beings should be authorized by Him, too. The holy verse says:

“...Believe then in Allah and His Messenger, the unschooled prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided.”

Belief in Allah and His Messenger, together with obedience from the Holy Prophet (S), is the secret of guidance, for which the Qur’ān, the Prophet’s rules and practice (Sunnah) must be followed.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 159

وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

159. “And of the people of Moses there is a group who guide by the truth and establish justice thereby.”

Guiding by the truth is a sign of the absence of bigotry, and also an indication of gratitude and following

the truth itself. So, this recent group, whom are referred to in this verse, were separate from the pertinacious ones who used to seek pretexts. The holy verse says:

“And of the people of Moses there is a group who guide by the truth...”

Perhaps, the objective meaning referred to this group is those people among the Jews who accepted the invitation of the Messenger of Allah (S).

Therefore, in confronting the minorities, justice should particularly be observed, and their sincere services and accomplishments must not be neglected.

The verse ends as follows:

“...and establish justice thereby.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 160

وَقَطَّعْنَاهُمْ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُّوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

160. “And We divided them into twelve tribal communities; and We revealed unto Moses, when his people asked him for water, (saying): ‘Strike the rock with your rod.’ So twelve fountains gushed forth from it. Each tribe, indeed, came to know its drinking-place. And We outspread the cloud to overshadow them, and We sent down manna and quails upon them, (saying): ‘Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you.’ And they did no harm to Us but they were doing injustice to their own selves.”

Several kinds of Allah’s bounties upon the Children of Israel are referred to in this verse. At first, the Qur’ān says that Allah divided them into twelve groups, each of which were a branch of the progeny of Israel. He assigned a just order among them which was far from harsh conflicts.

The verse says:

“And We divided them into twelve tribal communities...”

The next bounty was at the time when the people of Moses (as) were traveling toward Jerusalem in the hot desert where they entangled with a horrible blazing thirst. They asked him for water and Allah

revealed him to strike the rock with his Rod, and he did so. After that twelve springs gushed forth from the rock.

The verse says:

“...and We revealed unto Moses, when his people asked him for water, (saying): ‘Strike the rock with your rod.’ So twelve fountains gushed forth from it...”

The water of these fountains were divided among them so regularly that each group knew their own spring very well. The verse says:

“...Each tribe, indeed, came to know its drinking-place...”

Another bounty came to them in that blazing desert, where there was no shelter nor any shadow. The Lord outspread the cloud to overshadow them with the cloud. The verse continues saying:

“... And We outspread the cloud to overshadow them...”

Finally, the fourth bounty was that Allah sent down manna and quails as some delicious and nutritious food for them to eat. The verse says:

“...(saying): ‘Eat of the good things wherewith We have provided you.’...”

But they ate the food and showed ungratitude. By that manner, they did no harm to Allah (s.w.t.), but they committed injustice to themselves. The verse ends as follows:

“...And they did not harm to Us but they were doing injustice to their own selves.”

Some Explanations

The Arabic term /asbāt/ is the plural form of /sibt/ which is used for the children, grandsons, and sub-branches of a family. Every tribe of the Children of Israel were the progenies of one of the children of Jacob.

The Qur’ānic term /manna/ means a kind of food like honey and some herbal expressed juice such as tamarix mannifera, and ‘salwa’ (a quail) is a bird lawful to be eaten, resembling pigeon and partridge.

During a short moment there, several miracles took place: striking the rock by the Rod, plenty water being gushed forth, the number of fountains as many as the number of the tribes, and so on.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 161

وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ اسْكُنُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ وَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوهَا

الْبَابُ سُجَّدًا نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَاتِكُمْ سَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

161. “And (remember) when it was said to them: ‘Dwell in this town (Jerusalem) and eat of it wherever you desire, and ask forgiveness, and enter prostrating at the gate. We shall forgive you your faults. Soon We will give more (the portion of) the doers of good’.”

The Qur’ānic term /hittah/ philologically means: ‘the descent of something from upward.’ There are some other derivations from this term, too. It is used in the sense of request for divine mercy and remission (of sins).

The commandment was that the Children of Israel should ask forgiveness from Allah by means of this word, /hittah/, on their arrival into the holy land of Jerusalem. (But with the thought of mockery, they changed the word.) The verse says:

“And (remember) when it was said to them: ‘Dwell in this town (Jerusalem) and eat of it wherever you desire, and ask forgiveness, and enter prostrating at the gate...”

A meaning similar to the content of this verse, with a little difference, has been stated in Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, through verses 58 and 59, too.

In Islamic literature, there are some traditions narrated from the Immaculate Imams of Ahlul-Bayt (as) who have clearly said:

“We are the gate of your ‘hittah’ (forgiveness).”

That is, if you enter inside the orb of our government and mastership, mercy will be bestowed upon you.

By the way, there is a good tidings in this verse which indicates Allah may provide all the material and spiritual needs of humankind in this world and the next world. So, in order that they can be eligible to enjoy some bounties such as: housing, food, forgiveness, and mercy, He commands them to supplicate, to ask forgiveness, and to prostrate.

Also, with a sincere repentance, Allah forgives a great deal of faults. In this verse He says:

“...We shall forgive you your faults...”

To obtain the divine remission, both supplication and practice are necessary. The verse says:

“...and ask forgiveness, and enter prostrating at the gate...”

However, there should be a difference between a good doer and a wrong doer. In the rank where evildoers can be forgiven, the good doers must be given a higher and a better grace. The verse says:

“...Soon We will give more (the portion of) the doers of good.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 162

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ

162. “But those of them who were unjust changed a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them; so We sent upon them a torment from heaven for they had been doing injustice.”

Sometimes perversion and changing the meanings are made manifestly, as the change of an utterance; and sometimes the frame of an utterance is preserved, but the content and spirit of that subject is changed. The example of the latter is the trick of the Children of Israel for catching fish on the Sabbath, (which will be dealt with in the next verse).

The verse says:

“But those of them who were unjust changed a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them...”

The Qur’ān refers to three kinds of perversion which were performed in the Law of Allah:

- 1) A pertinacious perversion, like the manner of the Children of Israel who, instead of saying /hittah/ (seeking for forgiveness and remission), said /hintah/ (wheat).
- 2) A change done deceitfully, like the action accomplished by the Children of Israel when they made some pools in the bank of the sea wherein fish came on the Sabbath,
- 3) and they hunted them on Sunday. They said they had
- 4) not hunted fish on the Sabbath. But regarding this subject, Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 65 says:

“And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits on the Sabbath...”

- 5) A change for their own benefit, like postponing the sacred months in the Age of Ignorance in order to carry on their fight. Since they did not like to cease fighting because of adapting with sacred months, they postponed the months. Then, the verse was revealed, saying

“Verily the postponing (of the sacred month) is only an addition unto infidelity...” (Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 37)

Thus, the punishment of changing the commandments of Allah is His Wrath and chastisement. The verse says:

“...so We sent upon them a torment from heaven...”

And we should know that the fates of human beings are in their own authority, and that these punishments are the fruit of their own sins and transgressions. The verse continues says:

“...for they had been doing injustice.”

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1. The verse under discussion
 2. Surah Sab^٧, No. 34, verse 28
 3. Surah Al-’An^٦’m, No. 6, verse 19
 4. Surah Furq^٦n, No. 25, verse 1
 5. Tafsir-us-S^٦fi

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