

Section 2: None Shall Bear the Burden of Others

Surah Isra' – Verse 11

وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا

11. “And man prays for evil as he prays for the good; and man is ever hasty.”

There are frequent references made to the haste by man and his aspiration for the evil in the Qur'an.

The Prophet (S) is addressed in a verse:

“And they ask you to hasten on the evil (the Chastisement) before the good...”¹

The verse signifies that: They expect quick punishment to be administered from him.

In another verse, quoting the unbelievers, it says:

“...then rain down upon us stones from the sky, or bring us a painful punishment.”²

This kind of ‘haste’ has its origin in ignorance, hostility, and fanaticism.

At any rate, we find in this noble verse and in line with the previous discussions that one of the main causes of disbelief is lack of adequate study into the matters, and it is so because man is instinctively hasty.

Alluding to the matter, it declares:

“And man prays for evil as he prays for the good; and man is ever hasty.”

In fact, the man's haste has its origin in his aspiration for acquiring greater amounts of benefits, and his haste for the acquisition of the ‘good’ and the ‘benefits’ causes him not to take into consideration the

entire perspective and dimensions of the issues.

It so happens that such haste does not lead him to the point where he would be able to differentiate what is truly 'good' and 'beneficial' for him. On the other hand, his passions and low desires will turn and expose differently the true face of reality in his eyes, therefore, he paves the way to aspire and follow what is evil.

It is in this case that man aspires for the evil much in the same way that he aspires for the good, and it is owing to his misconception about what is good and what is evil.

It also applies in the same manner that one struggles to obtain what is evil and to follow what is evil as if he struggles to attain what is good. It is a foregone conclusion that such a great calamity exists for humankind and it is an amazing obstacle which obstructs the path of happiness which in turn results in regret and in damages.

In an Islamic tradition quoted from the Messenger of Allah (S), he says:

“Haste brings forth the people’s destruction; if the people did their jobs with deliberation, no one would annihilate.”

Certainly, in Islamic quotations, we have a chapter on the issue of ‘speed’ and ‘agility’ with respect to the good deeds, among which one can cite a tradition by the blissful Prophet (S) saying:

“Allah admires that good act which is hastened to be performed.”

At any rate, ‘haste’ is a demising attribute when one might engage in his study and verification of the dimension of a certain thing. Nevertheless, speedy action is required in case the necessary process of decision-making has been achieved, and any sort of delays in that case is detrimental. Therefore, it is for this reason that we read in Islamic quotations:

“Speed up in doing decent jobs.”

That is, once it is certain and proven that a task is good to be performed, there is no room left for any delays.

Generally speaking, haste is inherent in human nature, but one must first recognize where to use it properly.

Surah Isra’ – Verse 12

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ فَمَحْوًا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَصْلَانَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا

12. “And We have appointed the night and the day two signs (of Our power); then We took away the sign of the night (the moon light), and We made the sign of the day sight-giving that you may seek grace from your Lord and that you may know the number of the years and the reckoning and We have explained everything very distinctly.”

The underlying reason behind why the term night has usually preceded the term ‘day’ in the Qur’an might be due to the fact that the ‘darkness’ of the earth emanates from itself while its ‘light’ has its origin in the sun.

The revolving movement of the earth around itself and the emergence of the day and the night and their alterations go according to the Divine providence and will, and they are not circumstantial or accidental.

The verse says:

“And We have appointed the night and the day two signs (of Our power); then We took away the sign of the night (the moon light), and We made the sign of the day sight-giving that you may seek grace from your Lord...”

Paving the ground for the acquisition of the means of sustenance is the function of the Divine providence. However, despite the fact that His grace and favor are both in action, we must also go on with our struggle, never to take pride in our cleverness or audacity.

“...you may seek grace from your Lord...”

The night and the day form a natural calendar which is perennial, universal, easy to use, understandable, means of establishing order, and planning, knowing the number of years and keeping account of the affairs.

The holy verse continues saying:

“...and that you may know the number of the years and the reckoning...”

Incidentally, the measures for the organization of the system of creation are not unintended or without due causes. They are all having man as their main axis.

In the hierarchy of existence, everything is well organized, based on universal laws, and distinctly separated so as to avoid any collision, interference, and collapse.

The verse, in this regard, says:

“...and We have explained everything very distinctly.”

Surah Isra' – Verse 13

وَكُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَائِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنْشُورًا

13. “And every man’s record of action have We fastened to his neck; and on the Day of Judgment, We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open.”

The Arabic term /t a’ir/, mentioned in this holy verse, alludes metaphorically to man’s action, for man’s actions are like birds which fly in order to reach man himself. Everybody’s record of action, whether good or bad, will be hung up around his neck.

We have frequent references made in the Qur’an to man’s record of action and there are various points dealt with in different verses, among which are the followings:

1) Man’s record of action is universal.

The above verse says:

“And every man’s record of action have We fastened to his neck...”

2) Nothing is left out of that record.

“...it leaves out nothing, small or great...”³

3) The culprits are intimidated by it.

“...and you see the guilty fearful at what is in it...”⁴

4) Man himself is in a position to arbitrate about his own course of action.

“Read your book, your own self suffices today...”⁵

5) Those who are salvaged will be given their books to their right hand and the ones who are supposed to go to Hell will be given their books to their left hand.

“Then as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say: ‘Lo! Read my book.’” “And as for him who is given his book in his left hand he shall say: ‘O would that my book had never been given me’.”⁶

Accounts are kept for all and there are no exceptions. And, finally, all human beings will attend in the gathering place of Resurrection with their record of actions.

All people’s actions are evident for Allah; the hanging up of the record of one’s actions upon the neck is

destined for his own understanding.

The registration of one's record of actions is not a tangible process for man in this world, yet everything will be made transparent and clear for him in the Hereafter.

Surah Isra' – Verse 14

اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا

14. “(It will be said to him): ‘Read your book; your own self suffices today as a reckoner against you’.”

Man will be told to read his own book of records on the Day of the Hereafter. Those people, who did not know how to read in this world, will be enabled to read then and there.

The verse says:

“(It will be said to him): ‘Read your book; your own self suffices today as a reckoner against you’.”

In a tradition, Imam Sadiq (as) is quoted as saying:

“On that day, will one remember all of what he has done and is registered in his record. It seems as if he has done all those in just the same moment. Therefore, the culprits, voice is being heard loud and clear as to what type of letter of record it is in which no minor offences are missed just in the same way that the major ones are not missed.”

Fakhre-Razi is of the opinion that the objective by ‘the book of record’ is here the ‘spiritual scroll’ on which man’s acts leave an impact, and by ‘reading’ is here meant the comprehension and understanding of it⁷. In Tafsir Al-Mizan, ‘book’ has been commented upon as ‘the acts in themselves’.

In numerous quotations, man is recommended that before the Resurrection he had better see to his own accounts and records.

For example:

“Reckon your own account before you will be reckoned.”⁸

Such calculations pave the ground for man’s awakening, and the lack of them are often signs of his own negligence. An Islamic tradition indicates that he who keeps record of his own deeds in this world will be at ease with his records in the Hereafter.

Therefore, one must read his own record of actions in this world in order to reform, amend, wipe out his

weaknesses or compensate for them, repent and add up to his scroll of decent acts.[9](#)

Surah Isra' – Verse 15

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

15. “Whoever gets guided aright, has only got guided aright to his own gain, and whoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss; and no one laden bears the burden of another, nor do We punish (anyone) until We raise a messenger.”

Keeping the contents of verses 25 of Al-An‘am, 13 of Al-‘Ankabūt, as well as Islamic quotations under consideration, one may conclude that the main pioneers of paganism and seduction must shoulder the burden of the mounting guilt of their followers as well as that of their own without decreasing anything from the guilt of the followers, for they have provided their means of seduction.

Man is free to select his own way. Accepting guidance, of course, is to his own advantage, while infidelity and rejection are to his own detriment. They are of no benefits or losses to Allah.

At any rate, this noble verse provides four fundamental and principal commandments in connection with Reckoning and compensations for one’s performances:

1) At first, it implies that he who is led straight on, has been guided to his own advantage and the consequences of his actions will benefit his own self solely.

“Whoever gets guided aright, has only got guided aright to his own gain...”

2) He who is misled, is seduced to his own detriment, and will eventually suffer the consequences of his own actions.

The verse continues saying:

“...and whoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss...”

3) And no one will ever shoulder the burden of the guilt of someone else and no one will be held responsible for the crime or the offences which are committed by another person.

The verse says:

“...and no one laden bears the burden of another...”

Certainly, this general rule, which states that no one will shoulder the burden of the guilt of someone else, has got no discrepancy with the verse in Surah An-Nahl which indicates that the seducers will also

have to bear the burden of the responsibility of those whom they have misled,[10](#) for their act of seduction of others will frame them as the performers of those evil acts and, in fact, it is their own sins which they are shouldering.

4) The fourth commandment is eventually stated that Allah shall not punish any person or any nation unless He has sent a prophet to them so as to explain to them their duties in detail and to complete the argument.

The verse says:

“...nor do We punish (anyone) until We raise a messenger.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 16

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا

16. “And once We determine to exterminate a town, We command its luxurious people (to obey Us), but they transgress therein, thus the word proves true against it, then We destroy it with utter destruction.”

The Qur’anic sentence: /’amran a mutrafih a/ signifies that Allah commands the great men of the nation to obey orders, for We must keep in mind the fact that the Almighty will never issue orders as for the commitment of sins and offences.

On the contrary, He always issues orders for the establishment of justice and benevolent acts. Allah’s way of extermination consists of issuing orders for obedience. The affluent, who lack conscience, will oppose and the common people also follow them. It is then that the Divine wrath will be decisively actualized and the Divine chastisement and fury will be incumbent.

The verse says:

“And once We determine to exterminate a town, We command its luxurious people (to obey Us), but they transgress therein, thus the word proves true against it, then We destroy it with utter destruction.”

The will to execute by the All-Knowing Allah is based upon the sinful grounds which we provide and the negative attributes which we exhibit, otherwise the compassionate Allah will never seek to exterminate any nation unduely. According to a statement issued by Imam Rida (as), the Divine Will in this verse is conditional upon our sin.[11](#)

Explanations

One of the manners by which the Divine chastisement and Wrath is achieved is ‘affluence’ and being immersed in Allah’s blessings.

The existence of a luxurious class in every society paves the ground for the Divine Wrath.

The moral and social decadence of every society is initiated by and is mainly on the hands of that society’s luxurious chiefs.

The affluent who are indifferent stand up to the call of the prophets before all others, for corruption usually has its origins in affluence.

Let us take the Divine threats seriously and reform us, for the executive force behind the Divine threats has its roots in our own performances, and the Divine outrage and chastisement are utterly severe.

“...then we destroy it with utter destruction.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 17

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا

17. “And what a great number (of people) We did exterminate after Noah! And your Lord is sufficient as Knowing and Seeing with regard to the sins of His servants.”

This noble verse, which recounts the extermination of a generation of mankind and the beginning of a new world order in human life, depicts the fact that the era of Noah (as) has been recorded as a turning point in the history of mankind.

The life preceding Noah (as) had been an extremely simple life in nature with a very limited population and was lacking in an adventurous type of history. Moreover, the continuity of the generation of human kind had been made possible with the few believers who were inside the ship with Noah (as).

The verse, while warning the ignorant and the negligent and while being instructive for the people, provides a source of comfort for the Prophet (S), exclaiming that if the pagans do not stop hurting and teasing him, they will face the Divine Wrath.

After Noah’s people, the nations of ‘Ad, Thamūd, Lūṭ, as well as the companions of Madyan, Pharaoh, Haman, Karun, and the companions of Phil also were entangled with the Divine Wrath.

The verse says:

“And what a great number (of people) We did exterminate after Noah!...”

The nations who throughout history were entangled with the Divine Wrath and fury are numerous, and the Divine Wrath is not exclusive to the Day of Judgment only. It also may take place in this world as well.

This noble verse presents examples of the above issues as a general principle, stating that: What a numerous groups of people who lived after Noah who, according to this way of treatment, were annihilated by Allah.

Then, The Qur'an adds that such is not the case that oppressions and tyranny, or sinfulness of an individual or a group remain hidden from the sharp sight of Allah. This much is adequate that Allah is well aware of the sins of His servants and He has got careful eyes on them.

The verse says:

“...And your Lord is sufficient as Knowing and Seeing with regard to the sins of His servants.”

The fact that the era succeeding Noah has been stressed here, might probably be for the sake that man's life before Noah had been very simple and so many differences were usually non-existent, in particular the division of the society into the 'affluent' and the 'oppressed' and, therefore, the people in those societies were hardly entangled with the Divine punishment.

Surah Isra' – Verse 18

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا

18. “Whoever desires this (transient worldly) life, We hasten for him therein what We please for whomever We desire; then We appoint Hell for him into which he will enter disgraced, rejected.”

As the previous holy verses dealt with the opposition by the still-necked dissidents in face of the Divine orders and their later extermination, this verse alludes to the true causes of such a disobedience and unruliness which is brought about by the love of the world, saying:

“Whoever desires this (transient worldly) life, We hasten for him therein what We please for whomever We desire...”

It is worthy to note that the Qur'an does not say that he, who seeks after the world, will obtain what he wishes. But, it sets two conditions for it: the first refers to that He bestows upon him only part of what he wants, or, in other words, he reaches the very extent to which We will.

The second one refers to the matter that all individuals do not obtain access to this much either.

On the contrary, only some of them will be provided with access to part of the worldly goods; those people whom We deem right:

“...for whomever We desire...”

Therefore, neither do all worldly lovers attain to their wishes, nor those who have their aspirations fulfilled will reach the whole of what they desire completely.

Our daily life also explicitly unveils the truth regarding this matter. How large is the number of those people who seek after wealth day and night successively and reach nowhere, obtaining very little for their tremendous effort, and what a large number of people exist there who have great ambitions in this world and who attain a limited number of their wishes.

Here is an important point of view revealing itself in that, this group, while having been designated to burn in Hell-Fire, are also qualified with two attributes of ‘disgraced’ and ‘rejected’ which being applied in their case, each of which is separately being stressed.

The verse continues saying:

“...then We appoint Hell for him into which he will enter disgraced, rejected.”

In fact, the Hell-Fire will be their physical punishment designated, and being blamed and distanced are their spiritual punishment which are allocated for them, for one must keep in mind that Resurrection is both ‘physical’ as well as ‘spiritual’ and its reward and punishment also encompass both.

Surah Isra’ – Verse 19

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَّشْكُورًا

19. “And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive, and he is a believer, (as for) these, their striving shall be thanked.”

He who desires for the good of Hereafter and the blessing of Paradise, and struggles along these lines; that is, he who obeys Allah (s.w.t.) and distances himself from the sins while believing in monotheism and the prophetic mission of the prophets, his struggle will be acknowledged and his worship will be acceptable.

The verse says:

“And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive, and he is a believer, (as for) these, their striving shall be thanked.”

Therefore, in order to achieve eternal happiness, there are three conditions pending:

- 1) Man's will, that is, the kind of will which relates to the eternal life, and does not appertain to the passing whims, pleasures, blessings and purely material gains and goals.
- 2) Such a 'will' must not be in a weak form and lack in strength in the spheres of thinking and spirit. Contrarily, it must call on all the particles of human existence and set them in motion and employ all his means and struggles to this end.
- 3) All of these must be coupled with faith; that kind of faith which is constant and steady, for one's decision and his struggle will yield results only when they have got their roots in correct and proper motives and those kinds of motives can not be anything other than faith to Allah.

Surah Isra' – Verse 20

كُلًّا نُّمِدُّ هُوْلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا

20. "All We succour, these and those, from the bounty of your Lord; and the bounty of your Lord is not closed (to anyone)."

Allah has created all men free and, by placing at their disposal all the means, He has put them to the test so that their way of acting and choice becomes evident, in a manner that those who deal with Allah are parted from the rest. It is just like 'the organization of water and electricity, which makes these two blessings available to all houses so that the individuals, by their own choice, use them in a good or a bad way.

Therefore, it is Allah's way of treatment to make all the blessings and helps available to all so that every body can exhibit his positive and negative attributes.

The verse says:

"All We succour, these and those, from the bounty of your Lord..."

Certainly, having faith in Allah and seeking the Hereafter have not any discrepancy with enjoying the material means.

Incidentally, Allah's favours cover us and are encompassing us owing to His Lordship and His Own benevolence; otherwise, He does not owe us anything.

The verse says:

"...and the bounty of your Lord is not closed (to anyone)."

Surah Isra' – Verse 21

انْظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَلَآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا

21. “Behold how We have preferred some of them over others; and, definitely, the Hereafter is greater in ranks and greater in excellence.”

The superiority of individuals over one another consists of two types: At times, man is endowed over his equals in his aptitude, interest, thinking, family conditions, geographical conditions etc, in which case all are Allah’s grace and are for one’s testing and are coupled with responsibilities.

This verse alludes to these kinds of superiorities. At other times, such superiorities have their bases in oppression, exploitation and in colonization, which must be considered separately.

The Prophet (S) said:

“The hierarchy of Paradise is accorded to each individuals according to the reasoning and power of wisdom of the dwellers of Paradise.” [12](#)

Therefore, the Qur’an recounts this very basic principle in this verse. As differences in struggles in this world result in differential reaping of the results, this rule also applies in all the transactions in the Hereafter as well. The only difference is that this world is limited and its differences also are confined, whereas the Hereafter is unlimited and its variations also are unlimited.

The verse says:

“Behold how We have preferred some of them over others...”

Note as to how, We made some excel others because of the differences in their struggle: however, the hierarchical order of the here-after excels others and is far more precious.

The verse continues saying:

“...and, definitely, the Hereafter is greater in ranks and greater in excellence.”

Are World and Hereafter Contrary to Each Other?

In numerous verses, there are great appraisals made for the world along with its material benefits. However, inspire of the entire importance given to the material merits and blessings, one finds numerous meanings with regard to the humiliation and demising of those blessings of the world in the Qur’anic verses. Such dual meanings are also objectively found in Islamic quotations as well.

The answer to this query can be found in the Qur'an itself that the blessings of the material world, which are also the favours of Allah, and certainly are regarded as necessary in the system of creation, if used as a means for the spiritual development and happiness of man, they are to be appreciated as well and by all means.

However, if they are used only as a goal and as an end in themselves, aloof from humane and spiritual values, they naturally lead to the man's arrogance, negligence, unruliness, tyranny and oppression, and, hence, they are to be regarded as a curse and worthy of all kinds of condemnation.

How beautifully has this been stated by Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) in that speech of his which is concise and expressive:

"He who looks at it with insight, (regarding it as a means of vision), it will bestow him sight; and he who regards it as an end in itself, then it will blind him." [13](#)

In fact, the difference between the blamed world and the admired world is the same thing which is understood from the Qur'anic terms /'ilayh a/ which denotes to the 'aim' and /bih a/ which refers to the 'means'.

Ali (as), regarding this world and the Reckoning Day, says:

"Beware! Surely this world is a place from which protection cannot be sought except (while one is) in it." [14](#)

Surah Isra' – Verse 22

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا ءَاخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولًا

22. "Do not associate with Allah any other god, lest you will sit reproved, despised."

The blissful Prophet (S) is being addressed in this verse, but the verse is meant for the public who are under the leadership of him.

Man's flourishing nature as well as his glory, rest with monotheism and his paganism and worship of any other being is degradation to him and makes him despised and mean.

Therefore, this noble verse begins with the statement of the issue of monotheism and faith, that kind of monotheism which is the core of all positive activities and good deeds of man as well as his constructive deeds.

At first, the Qur'an says:

“Do not associate with Allah any other god...”

It does not state do not worship any other god along with Allah, but it says: ‘Do not associate’, so as to present a wider scope of meaning; that is, neither in ideas, nor in practice, nor in prayers, desires, nor in worshipping associate any other god along with Allah.

Then, alluding to the devastating effect of paganism, the verse implies that if you associate with Him any other god, you will be demised, despised and will be neglected (isolated).

It says:

“...lest you will sit reproved, despised.”

One can conclude from the above sentence that paganism has got three formidable disgraceful effects on man:

- 1) Paganism leads to, and is a source of, weakness, disability, and humiliation.
- 2) Paganism is the source of demise and blame, for it depicts a deviating line and method in face of logic, rationality, and it is an obvious neglect of Allah’s blessings.
- 3) Paganism will cause Allah to abandon the pagan to his self-made gods and stop protecting him.

Consequently, the ‘neglected one’ is he who has got no helpful companions and is blamed by Allah, the angels, the believers, and the awakened conscience of the enlightened people as well as the wise men of the world.

- [1.](#) Surah Ar-Ra’d, No. 13, verse 6
- [2.](#) Surah Al-’Anf al, No. 6, verse 32
- [3.](#) Surah Al-Kahf, No. 18, verse 49
- [4.](#) Ibid
- [5.](#) The current Surah, verse 14
- [6.](#) Surah Al-Haqqah, No. 69, verses 19 and 25
- [7.](#) Tafsir-ul-Kabir
- [8.](#) Bih ar, vol. 7, p. 73
- [9.](#) Tafsir-i-Kashf-ul-’Asr ar
- [10.](#) Surah An-Nahl, No. 16, verse 25
- [11.](#) Tafsir-i-Kanz-ud-Daqayiq
- [12.](#) Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
- [13.](#) Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon 82
- [14.](#) Nahj-ul-Balaghah, sermon 62