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Section 32, Fight in the Cause of Allah. References to the Conduct of the Ancient People

Death caused by Allah against those who refused to fight when they were ordained –Muslims enjoined to sacrifice their lives and their wealth in the cause of Allah –Saul's kingdom over Israel and their demur against Saul being chosen as their king

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 243

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا
ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

243. "Have you not considered those (of old) who fled their homes, though they were thousands (in number), for fear of death? Then Allah said to them: 'Die!' (and they died); then He restored them to life. Truly Allah is gracious to people, but most people are not thankful. "

Occasion of Revelation

Once, one of the cities or Syria became smitten with a plague and people passed away one after another. At that time, some people, hoping that they might flee from the grips of death, abandoned their homeland.

After leaving their environment and escaping from death, they felt powerful and independent in them. They, neglecting the Will of Allah and expecting the natural phenomena to help them, became proud and

haughty. Therefore, the Lord destroyed them in that desert by the same sickness.

This verse indirectly and also instructively points to the awesome fate of one of the old nations. They encountered with a terrible infectious disease in their environment where thousands of them fled from.

"Have you not considered those (of old) who fled their homes, though they were thousands (in number), for fear of death?..."

Then it refers to their fate, saying:

"...Then Allah said to them: 'Die!' (and they died);

They died by the same sickness that they had used as the pretext of their flight. Then *Allah* brought them back to life, maybe, in order that the story of their lives might serve as a warning for others who can take an example from it.

"...then He restored them to life...."

This creative command is similar to the command cited in **Surah Yasin No.96, verse 82**, where it says: ***"His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: 'Be', so it is."***

The phrase: / umma 'ahyahum / (then He restored them to life), mentioned in the verse, hints to the story of those people who, after death, were quickened by the invocation of Ezekiel, the Prophet, (as). Since their coming back to life was one of the clear blessings of *Allah* both from their points of view and from the point of warning other people, the verse finally says:

"...Truly Allah is gracious to people..."

Not only this group of people received, but also all humankind always receives the grace, kindness, and blessings of *Allah*, while they are usually not grateful.

"...but most people are not thankful."

The late Sadduq, a great famous scholar from Shi'ah school of thought, reasoning on this verse for the possibility of resurrection, says: ***"One of our convictions is belief in resurrection (that some former people return to life again in this very world)."*** ¹

This holy verse can also be a document for the problem of the Resurrection and raising the dead in the Hereafter.

The explanation of Ezekiel's invocation, as has been cited upon the description of the concept of the Qur'anic phrase: "Then He restored them to life", is as follows:

Owing to the repeated visits of the plague, the children of Israel numbering several thousands left their homes for fear of death. It happened so that the disease once again pestered the town and the people in a huge number of thousands got out of the town being confident of their escape from death which evidently indicated lack of faith in God.

Allah commanded all of them to die and they were all dead and reduced to dust; only their bones were lying on the earth. One of the Israelite prophets, Ezekiel, passed that way and prayed to the Lord to raise the people to life.

Ezekiel, was inspired by *Allah* to pray to Him reciting a particular name and to sprinkle water on the rotten bones of the dead, which 'Ezekiel' did and the people were once again quickened. Thus it was manifested for the knowledge of the faithless people that *Allah* does whatsoever He pleases and they could never go their own way against the Will of the Lord.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 244-245

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

244 "And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

245. "Who is he that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold? And Allah straitens and extends and unto Him you will be returned."

From here on the verses of Holy War come forth. It begins with the command of fighting in the path of *Allah*, and warns us to beware that He hears what we say and knows what we have in our hearts, from our motives and intentions, regarding the Holy War in the way of *Allah*. It says:

"And fight in the way of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

In spite of all that has been said that Islam prefers peaceful methods of preaching the truth, and that it never took any initiative in waging war against its opponents, the fact is that Islam recognizes the right of taking even the initiative in using force against those who persist in ungodly activities causing human degradation or social or moral deterioration.

But this measure cannot be adopted save by the Prophet of *Allah* or his Vicegerent authorized by him and none else. As the fifth Holy Imam Muhammad Ibne–Ali Al–Baqir (as) says '**A war may be termed as holy or godly (jihad)**' if the object be to make people give up submission to anyone besides *Allah*, and to submit only to God's authority and the Divine Will.

But if the object be to make them give up submission to one creature in order to submit to any other, it is the usual war waged for selfish and some worldly gain. Hence it is unholy and thus condemned by Islam.

However, Islam enjoins on Muslims to be always ready, well prepared and well equipped to meet all exigencies or an eventuality which may unexpectedly develop against them, and then they should gather strength as much as they can so that their opponents, the opponents of the divine cause may refrain from any unprovoked aggression.

Occasion Of Revelation

It is narrated that the holy Prophet (S) once said that whoever gives any alms will receive it twice in Heaven. Abud–Dahdah Ansari, addressing the Messenger of *Allah* (S), said that he had two gardens and questioned if he donated one of them as alms, would he have it twice in Heaven?

Then the Prophet replied him positively. After that he donated his more privileged garden to the Prophet (S) before when the revelation was sent down making his alms two thousand thousand fold for him. This is the interpretation of / ad'afan kaṣīrah/ ' manifold '.

This verse inquires who is it that offers to *Allah* a goodly gift and donates from the wealth He has given to him on the path of Holy War and alongside the way of helping the needy, so that *Allah* would multiply it to him manifold. It says:

"Who is he that will lend to Allah a goodly loan, so He will multiply it for him manifold?..."

Thus, according to this verse, lending *Allah* is also rendered into the donations which are performed in the way of Holy War.

So, at the end of the verse, it says that it is *Allah* (s.w.t.) Who both withholds and amplifies the sustenance of the servants. This statement points to the idea that do not think that donation and giving alms causes your wealth to be diminished. The increase and decrease of your sustenance depend on *Allah*.

"... And Allah straitens and extends and unto Him you will be returned. "

Why Is Donation Rendered To Loan?

In several verses of the Qur'an donating in the path of *Allah* has been rendered into giving a loan to

Allah. It shows the ultimate grace of Allah unto His servants, on one hand, and the utmost importance of the subject of donation, on the other hand.

In Nahjul-Balagha, Imam Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) says:

"Allah asks you for a loan while the treasures of heavens and the earth belong to Him and He is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy. (It is not because of His want), but that He may try you for which of you is the best in action." 2

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 246-252

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدَ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا مَلِكًا
نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا
أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاءِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ
تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا
وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا
تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَن شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي
أَنَّهُمْ مُّلَاقُوا اللَّهَ كَم مِّن فِتْنَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِتْنَةٌ كَثِيرَةٌ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبَّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا
عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمَهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنْ
 اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرَبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ
 قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلِمَهُ
 مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو
 فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

246. "Have you not seen the chiefs of the Children of Israel, after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: 'Raise up for us a king that we will fight in Allah's way'. He said: ' Might it be that, if fighting is written for you, then you will not fight?' They said: 'Why should we not fight in the way of Allah, while we have been expelled from our dwellings and our children?' But when fighting was written for them, they turned back save a few of them, and Allah is All-Knowing of the unjust."

247. "And their Prophet said to them: 'Verily Allah has raised up Saul for you as a king.' They said: ' How can he hold kingship over us, while we are more rightful to kingship than he, and he has not been given abundance of wealth?' He said: 'Verily Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature. Allah gives His kingdom unto whom so He wills; and Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.'"

248. "And their Prophet said to them: 'Verily the sign of his kingship is that the Ark of the Covenant will come to you, wherein shall be a tranquility from your Lord, and the Relics of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron have left behind, the angels bearing it. Surely in that shall be a sign for you, if you are (truly) faithful.'"

249. "So when Saul marched out with the troops he said: ' Verily Allah will try you by a river, whoever drinks from it he is not of me, and whoever tastes it not, he is surely of me, including the one who tastes but a single handful.' But they all drank of it, except a few of them. And when he (Saul) crossed it (the river), those who believed with him said: 'We have no power today against Goliath and his troops.' Those who knew that they would meet Allah said: ' How often a small party has overcome a numerous host by Allah's leave! And Allah is with the (steadfast) patient ones '."

250. "So when they encountered Goliath and his troops, they said: 'Our Lord! Pour down upon us patience, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people '."

251. *"Thus they routed them by Allah's leave, and David slew Goliath; and Allah gave him the kingship and wisdom and taught him of what He willed. And were Allah not to repel some people by means of other people, the earth would certainly be full of mischief; but Allah is Gracious to all (His) creatures."*

252. *"These are the Signs of Allah; We recite them to you (Muhammad) in truth, and verily, you are (one) of the Messengers."*

Explanation

An Introduction to the above Group of Verses

In these verses Providence, the Great, points to one of the wonderful adventures of a group of the Israelites that happened after the time of Moses (as). The statement of this happening, of course, is following the statement of Holy War and the defence from the limits of the religion of *Allah*, which is, in fact, the same as the limits of humanity. It is stated, indeed, for the Muslims to take lesson from that marvelous incident.

A Marvelous Incident!

The Israelites who had become weak and poor under the domination of Pharaoh, gained great power and splendour under the wise leadership of Moses (as).

Allah showered many blessings upon them with the sanctity of this Great Prophet, including the Ark of the Covenant. The Jews, by carrying the Ark before the troops, got a kind of confidence and spiritual capability.

This power and glory continued a length of time after Moses (as). But the same victorious capacity and blissful bounties they had, gradually made them proud and, thereby, they became disobedient.

Finally, they were defeated with a great slaughter by Philistines when they lost their power and authority accompanied with loosing the Ark. After that, they became so weak and inflicted with dispersion that they were not able to defend themselves even against the smallest enemies.

It was so that their enemies expelled a great many of them from their own land and captured their children, too.

That status continued for years. At last, their prayer was heard and *Allah* raised a prophet for them called Samuel, to save them and guide them.

Those people, who had become tired and worn from the cruelty and transgressions of their enemies, were seeking for a shelter to take refuge in. Therefore, they gathered around him and asked him to appoint a king for them.

They all had decided to follow the command and leadership of such a king to fight unitedly against their enemy with heart and soul in order to regain their last honour and glory.

Prophet Samuel, who was well acquainted with their spirituality and knew their disloyal characteristics from before, told them he was afraid that they might disobey their commander, as to face with their enemy, when the order of Holy War in the way of *Allah* would be prescribed for them.

They objected that how they could disobey their commander and do not do their own duty in the case that the torturous enemy had expelled them from their home and had occupied their land and captured their children.

When Prophet Samuel found that those people had recognized their ailment and were seeking for the remedy, as if they had realized the secret of their state of being retarded, he prayed and asked the Lord what those people wanted. It was revealed to him to introduce Saul as their king.

Samuel invoked *Allah* that he had not seen Saul yet and he did not know him. The revelation came down indicating that he would be sent to him. Samuel was commanded that when Saul came to him, he (Samuel) would give him (Saul) the commandership of the troops and Holy War.

"Have you not seen the chiefs of the Children of Israel, after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: 'Raise up for us a king that we will fight in Allah's way'. He said: 'Might it be that, if fighting is written for you, then you will not fight?' They said: 'Why should we not fight in the way of Allah, while we have been expelled from our dwellings and our children?' But when fighting was written for them, they turned back save a few of them, and Allah is All-Knowing of the unjust. "

After Prophet Moses (as), the Israelites lost their power as a result of their self-indulgence and being desirous in welfare and laziness. So they became involved again in the domination and oppression of the tyrants when they lost both their freedom and home.

In order to be free from vagrancy and come out of the yoke of servitude of those tyrants, they decided to fight. Therefore, they went to their Prophet and asked him to appoint a king, a commander, for them so that they could struggle by Holy War against the tyrannical ruler of their time.

"Have you not seen the chiefs of the Children of Israel, after Moses, when they said to a Prophet of theirs: 'Raise up for us a king that we will fight in Allah's way.... "

The Prophet (as), regarding their notorious background, questioning them said: was it not probable that, after prescribing the command of war to them, they would disobey and would not be ready to fight?

"... He said: ' Might it be that, if fighting is written for you, then you will not fight? "

They did not agree with that idea and said that they would fight, for they had been expelled from their

home and had been made vagrant for a long time, because their cities had been occupied by the enemy and their children were captured:

"... They said: ' Why should we not fight in the way of Allah, while we have been expelled from our dwellings and our children? '... "

But, with all these claims, when the command was issued, all of them, except a few, did not attend the battle-field and disobeyed that command.

"... But when fighting way written for them, they turned back save a few of them, and Allah is All-Knowing of the unjust... "

Explanations

Explanations 3

Vr. 246 (279) The event alluded to in this verse has a reference also in the Bible. (1 Samuel 8: 19, 20).

19. "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay! but we will have a king over us;

20. "That we also may be like all the nations, and that our kind may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles."

After 'Moses,' prophets after prophets were appointed to succeed him and to maintain the Law ('Torah'). 'Moses' was succeeded by 'Usha bin Noon,' 'Kalib,' 'Ezekiel' and 'Ilyas' and 'Elisha' and as time passed the people neglected and ultimately gave up the Law and became idolatrous.

And in the time of the prophet 'Yasa' there appeared an enemy for the Israelites who were the people of the land of 'Shalisha,' from the tribe of Goliath ('Jaloot') who had captured all the land on the shores of the Mediterranean including Palestine and Egypt.

They subdued the Israelites, killed 440 Israelite princes and noblemen and had taken the Israelites as their subjects and taken away their lands. (1 Sam. 17: 1). Now the Israelites had no prophet to guide them out of the calamitous state.

They prayed to God for a prophet. At last their prayer was heard and God sent a prophet to them in Samuel. When Samuel appeared and claimed apostleship of God, the Israelites asked him to appoint a king for them to lead them in the battle for freedom from the subjection and servitude they had been suffering under the enemy.

In those days battles were fought only under kings and the Prophet was only the adviser or the administrative adviser or a director of the affairs. Prophet Samuel warned them beforehand that they might disobey after it gets prescribed for them to fight in the way of God.

Here was the question of fighting for the freedom of the people against the torturous subjection and it has been termed as the fight in the way of God. It is evident that the fight for right means the fight for God.

"And their Prophet said to them: 'Verily Allah has raised up Saul for you as a king.' They said: 'How can he hold kingship over us, while we are more rightful to kingship than he, and he has not been given abundance of wealth?' He said: 'Verily Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature. Allah gives His kingdom unto whom so He wills; and Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing ',"

This group of oppressed Israelites, though they had asked their prophet to appoint a chief for them to guide them to be able to escape from the torturous subjection of the tyrant rulers, failed in the field of trial.

"And their Prophet said to them: (Verily Allah has raised up Saul for you as a king.'..."

It is appropriate to note that their Prophet was Samuel. Talut, who is the same as Saul, was called 'Talut' (according to the Bible) on account of his height and the strength of his stature, for he was the tallest of his people (Sam. 10: 23). The proper names used in Arabic are different from their Hebrew originals.

So, when their prophet, Samuel, appointed Saul (Talut), who was an unknown poor shepherd, as their chief, they being affected by their proud and vain consideration that they had from their own leader and leadership, despised Saul's kingship for the lack of wealth and reputation.

Those people, who had wealth in abundance, said that they were worthier than him for the position because of the gross great wealth they had.

"... They said: 'How can he hold kingship over us, while we are more rightful to kingship than he, and he has not been given abundance of wealth? '..."

When the prophet heard their pretexts about the poverty and lack of wealth of Saul, he told them that undoubtedly *Allah* had appointed him as a king for them, and, instead of wealth, he had ability in knowledge and in body. Besides that, he had the necessary authority and ability of command of an army in fight.

"... He said: 'Verily Allah has chosen him over you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature.

So, *Allah* selects whosoever He wills for leadership due to his efficiency and his inner faculties.

"... Allah gives His kingdom unto whom so He wills; and Allah is All-Embracing, All-knowing'."

Conclusion

Whatever be the details of the Israelites' history referred to here, the instructions to be inferred from it regarding the religious authority who can wage war in the way of God is as follows: –

1. Besides the presence of a divine legislator and a religious judge sometimes an executor is also needed. It should be borne in mind that all the three aspects of government (Aamiriyat).. i.e. legislation justice and execution are included in the sovereignty of God.

He may delegate all the aspects to anyone man as His Vicegerent and He may distribute the various functions to different persons. In any case the appointment rests with God and none else. Here the Prophet represents the Divine Authority in law and justice.

When the people asked him to appoint a king as an executor, he said that God has appointed 'Talut' as their king, indicating that he (the Prophet) had no right to do it. This refutes the tendency now developing among the people that in the establishment of the legislative and the judicial bodies the 'Kitab', i.e., the Book and the 'Sunnat', i.e., the Tradition to be the final authorities, and the people should have no voice in the matter.

But in the establishment of the final executive authority people may have voice and call it the Theo-democratic form of government.

The sovereignty ('Aamiriyat') is exclusively God's. To allow the public to have any say in it, means return to the age of ignorance and not Islam.

2. 'Jihad', i.e. war in the way of God was prescribed and practiced by the previous prophets also, and the reaction favorable or unfavorable, to this precept had been the same as in Islam.

3. The unfavorable reaction of the people to the divine appointment as based on temporal considerations which are known to the limited and narrow views, as was the case with the angels regarding the vicegerency of Adam.

The answer to this criticism is almost the same that it was God's selection and the selection is based on the extensity and the intensity of knowledge, strength and character and that the Kingdom is God's and He alone has the right to give to anyone whom He likes, but His liking is not arbitrary or unreasonable.

It is based on the superiority and the excellence of the person, known only to Him, as He alone is the all-Pervading and the Omniscient. This discards the importance of the temporal consideration as wealth, seniority in age, racial or parochial.

Therefore whenever the question of the authority succeeding the Holy Prophet in regard to legislation, justice and execution, is dealt with, the implication of this exemplary passage should be taken into consideration, as the method of the succession to the Holy Prophet has continued to be the same as

before4.

"And their Prophet said to them: 'Verily the sign of his kingship is that the Ark of the Covenant will come to you, wherein shall be a tranquility from your Lord, and the Relics of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron have left behind, the angels bearing it. Surely in that shall be a sign for you, if you are (truly) faithful.'"

To make that group of Israelites sure about the kingship of Saul, their prophet told them that the Ark of the Covenant, /tabut/, the sacred Chest of the Children of Israel, will be returned to them as a sign that Saul was appointed by *Allah*.

"And their Prophet said to them: 'Verily the sign of his kingship is that the Ark of the Covenant will come to you...'"

The purpose of /tabut/ is the wooden Chest wherein Moses's mother put her baby and, by the commandment of *Allah*, set it afloat in the water, of the Nile. Then, the men of Pharaoh took it and brought the baby unto Pharaoh.

The Chest remained safe in the Court of Pharaoh. When Moses (as) was appointed to prophethood, he (as) put the Tablets of the Torah in it and gave it to his vicegerent, Yusha'-ibn-Nun (Joshua), and when he died, his armour and some of his belongings were put in it, too.

That Chest, which had been known among the Children of Israel as 'the Ark of the Covenant', remained in the hand of the very Children of Israel as a Sacred Chest, and they used to carry it before their forces in the battles.

But, little by little, its sacredness wretched and the Chest was taken away. But, according to the verse under discussion their prophet, Samuel, promised them that the Ark of the Covenant would be returned to them soon as a sign of truthfulness of his statement.

That glad tidings naturally was considered very magnificent for the Children of Israel, because by seeing that Sacred Chest, which they knew as a token of their ancient independence and glory, they thought they could regain their lost tranquility and splendour.

There are some statements about this Chest mentioned in the Torah, a part of which will be cited at the end of this commentary under the title of explanation.

Finally, at the time of the kingship of Saul, *Allah* returned that Sacred Chest, which was taken away, unto them through angels. That Chest brought them tranquility and peace.

"... wherein shall be a tranquility from your Lord, and the Relics of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron have left behind, the angels bearing it. Surely in that shall be a sign for you, if you are (truly) faithful. "

Explanation

The term 'Tabut ' in this verse stands for the Holy Ark of Chest 3 yards long and 2 yards broad with–divine signs in it decipherable only by the Apostles of God. This Ark had divine blessings that whenever it was presented by the Israelites against their enemy in the midst of a battle, the enemy forces had no other choice but to take to their heels for their lives.

The Israelites used to always keep the Chest in front of their forces whenever any occasion of their proceeding against any enemy had occurred and they used to come out victorious. This Ark passed from one apostle to another apostle of God.

It is reported to contain the shoes, the rod and clothes of Moses, the turban of Aaron and some other sacred relics. This Ark had been certainly endowed with miraculous effects. It was this Ark that was brought out from Shiloh to help the Israelites in the war with Philistines....

"And when she (mother of Moses) could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink."⁵

The following verse of the Holy Qur'an clears the meaning of 'Tabut'. The address in the following verse is to Moses:

"And when we revealed unto thy mother what was revealed. That; Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river." (20: 38:39)

1. Tafsir-Nimunah, vol. 2, p. 159

2. Nahjul-Balagha, sermon 183, p. 268

3. This detail is narrated exactly from the footnote of the translation of the Holy Qur'an, by S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, P. 217

4. See the Qur'an, 24: 55

5. OT Ex. 2: 3

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