

Section 5: Children of Israel Deceived by Samiri

Surah Ta Ha – Verses 90 – 91

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي
وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَى

90. “And (yet) Aaron had aforetime said to them: ‘O my people! Verily you are being tested therewith (the Calf), and verily your Lord is the Beneficent (Allah); therefore follow me and obey my order.’”

91. “They said: ‘Never will We cease worshipping it, until Moses returns unto us’.”

At the time of appearing an innovation, the duty of a leader and his followers is that they should protest loudly and give an ultimatum.

That was why Aaron, the successor of Moses and the great prophet of Allah, did not leave out his prophetic mission and fulfilled the duty of struggling against aberration and corruption as much as he could.

As the Qur'an in this regard says:

“And (yet) Aaron had aforetime said to them: ‘O my people! Verily you are being tested therewith (the Calf),...”

Therefore, they should be careful not to be deceived and not to go astray from the path of Monotheism.

Then, the Qur'an adds that their Lord is surely that very Beneficent Allah Who has bestowed on them all of these bounties.

The verse says:

"...and verily your Lord is the Beneficent (Allah)..."

This statements implies that formerly they were slaves and He made them free; they were captives, He delivered them; they were misguided, He guided them; they were in dispersion He gathered them and, under the light of the leadership of a godly man, united them; they were ignorant and immoral, He cast the light of knowledge over them, and He guided them unto the Straight Path of Monotheism.

The verse, addressing them, from the tongue of Aaron says:

"...therefore follow me and obey my order'."

It implies that whether they have forgotten that his brother, Moses, has introduced him as his successor and has made the obedience of Aaron (as) obligatory for them. Why have they committed breach of promise?

But the Children of Israel had so obstinately been attached to the Calf that the strong logic and the clear evidences of that godly man, that sympathetic leader, did not influence in them, and they manifestly opposed Aaron.

The verse says:

"They said: 'Never will We cease worshipping it, until Moses returns unto us'."

Thus, they refused both the firm order of intellect, and the command of the successor of their Divine leader.

But in any case, Aaron accompanied with a minority of the true believer, who were about ten thousand persons, separated from that community, while a majority of them, who were ignorant and obstinate, wanted to kill him.

They were neglectful that obedience from the successor and representative of the prophet was obligatory for them. They did not care that following the Divine leaders was the secret of immunity from seditions.

Surah Ta Ha – Verses 92 – 94

قَالَ يَا هَٰرُونَُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا

أَلَا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمْ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

92. *“(Moses) said: ‘O Aaron! What hindered you when you saw them going astray,”*

93. *“So that you did not follow me? Did you then disobey my order?”*

94. *“Said (Aaron): ‘O son of my mother! Seize me neither by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Verily I feared lest you would say ‘You have caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not observe my word!’”*

When Moses (as) returned from Tur (Mount Sinaie) and found his people misguided, he interrogated three types of people:

1. His people, whom he asked:

“Did not your Lord promise you a fair promise (the descent of the Turah)?”¹

2. Aaron, to whom he said:

“What hindered you...?”

3. Samiri, whom Moses addressed and said:

“What then was your object, O Samiri?”

As it is recorded in Atyab-ul-Bayan, the commentary, since Aaron was a prophet and was sinless, he had done his duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Therefore, the action of Moses (as) against Aaron can idiomatically be rendered into a ‘sham quarrel’, or he says: ‘If the cap fits, wear it’, and he addresses Aaron so that people might be careful of their own accountability.

But, there is a tradition recorded in At-Tafsir-us-Safi, narrated from Imam Sadiq (as), which says that the reprimand of Moses (as) was this that why Aaron (as) did not immediately inform Moses of that circumstance when he saw it.

Concerning the methods of teaching, in order to move the common opinions, or to shake the lifeless body of a society, sometimes we must invent a new action, as Moses (as) behaved so harshly unto his own sinless successor, Aaron; or when Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) was preaching for people, in order to attract their attention, he slapped hardly in his own face.

However, at first Moses (as) turned his face to his brother Aaron, and said:

***“O Aaron! What hindered you when you saw them going astray,
“So that you did not follow me? Did you then disobey my order?”***

Did I not tell you:

“Be my successor among people, and set the (people’s) affairs right and do not follow the way of mischief-makers”

when I wanted to leave for the tryst?

The purpose of the Qur’anic phrase which is recited: /’alla tattabi’ani/ is:

‘Why did you not follow my style and my ordinances in severity of action concerning idolatry?’

Moses (as), with an intensive anger and violence, said these words to his brother shouting at him, while he was taking his hair and his head and dragging Aaron.

In order to sooth and to decrease his inflammation, Aaron called him as the son of his mother (in stead of his brother) and wanted him not to seize him by his beard and his head, since he though if he raised to struggle against them there would appear a great dispersion among the Children of Israel.

Also, he feared that at the time of his return, Moses might say that he had caused division among the Children of Israel and in his absence he had not observed his order and had not acted his instructions.

The verse says:

“Said (Aaron): ‘O son of my mother! Seize me neither by my beard nor by (the hair of) my head! Verily I feared lest you would say ‘You have caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not observe my word!’”

And, in this way, Aaron (as) proved his innocence.

Explanations

1. Leaders should be responsible for the aberrations of their people.
2. The silence and inattentiveness of the authorities is often reproachful.
3. A prophet can be an obedient to another prophet.
4. The Faith and religiousness is more important than family adherence.
5. Religious zeal is a requisite of prophethood.

Surah Ta Ha – Verses 95 – 97

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ وَانظُرْ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

95. *“(Moses) said: ‘What then was your object, O Samiri?’”*

96. *“He said: ‘I perceived what they did not perceive, so I took a handful of dust from the messenger’s track, then I threw it (into the Calf); thus my self prompted me.’”*

97. *“(Moses) said: ‘Depart then! Verily your share (of punishment) in this life will be that you will say: ‘Touch (me) not’; and surely there is a tryst for you (in Hereafter) which never will fail, and (now) look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter (the ashes of) it broadcast in the sea.’”*

The Qur’anic phrase /basurtubih/ is usually used in the sense of the Arabic word /basirat/, the plural of which is /basa’ir/ with the meaning of ‘perceive, understand’, not in the sense of /basar/ (the eye) the plural of which is /absar/ (the eyes).²

It has been recorded in the book entitled “Ihtijaj”, by Tabarsi, that when Hadrat Ali–ibn–Abitalib (as) opened the city of Basrah, people gathered around him in order to hear his words. Among those people Ali (as) saw Hassan Basri busy writing down something.

Imam Amir–ul–mu’mineen Ali (as), with a loud voice, addressed him and said:

“What are you doing?”

He answered he was writing down his statements so that he could repeat them for others. Imam Ali (as) said:

“O people! Beware that there is a Samiri in any nation, and you are, O Hassan! the Samiri of this

community. You take the tracks of the Messenger of Allah from me and mix them with your carnal desire and your own interpretation of them by your personal opinion, then you will create a new school and invite people to it."³

According to the commentary books of Al-Mizan Al-Furqan, and Nimunah, the purpose of Samiri from saying /qabattu qabdatan min'ar-ir-rasul/ is:

'I took some of the tracks of Moses (as) and believed in them, then I left them and built the Calf.'

Thus, the phrase recited. /basurtu bi ma lam yabsuru/ means: 'I found a design for fulfilling this accomplishment that others were neglectful of it.' This meaning is more fitting with the abovementioned tradition.

However, Moses (as), after finishing his debate with his brother, Aaron, and exonerating him, paid to summoning Samiri to judgment! He said to him why he performed that action and what his motive was.

The verse says:

"(Moses) said: 'What then was your object, O Samiri?'"

In answer to this question, the verse says:

"He said: 'I perceived what they did not perceive..."

Samiri added that he took something from the tracks of the messenger of Allah, Moses, and then he drew them toward the creed of idolatry.

The verse continues saying:

"...so I took a handful of dust from the messenger's track, then I threw it (into the Calf); thus my self prompted me'."

It is evident that the reply and excuse of Samiri in answer to Moses (as) was by no means acceptable. Therefore, Moses (as) issued the judgment of condemnation of Samiri in that court. He decreed three commandments upon him and his Calf.

The verse says:

"(Moses) said: 'De part then! Verily your share (of punishment) in this life will be that you will say: 'Touch (me) not'..."

Thus, by means of a decisive command, Moses (as) banished Samiri from the society and sent him to an absolute retreat.

The second punishment of Samiri was that Moses (as) notified him of his retribution in the Hereafter.

As the verse in this regard remarks, Moses (as) said:

“...and surely there is a tryst for you (in Hereafter) which never will fail...”

His third punishment was that: Moses (as) told Samiri:

“...and (now) look at your god to whose worship you kept (so long); we will certainly burn it, then we will certainly scatter (the ashes of) it broadcast in the sea’.”

To conclude, there is a tradition cited in the commentary books of Majma‘-ul-Bayan and Safi which indicates that Moses (as) had intended to get Samiri be killed, but Allah revealed him that since Samiri was a generous man he would relinquish killing him.

Therefore, by saying:

“Depart then!”

Moses (as) banished him from the society of the Children of Israel.

The Qur’anic term /la misas/ is used in the sense of ‘to be involved in a disease that no one should touch him at all’. At last, Samiri got an infliction of a psychical disease so that he used to run away from people, and whenever a person went nigh to him, he often shouted ‘Depart then!’⁴

Surah Ta Ha – Verses 98 – 99

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا

98. “Verily your God is Allah; there is no god but He, (and) He embraces all things in (His) knowledge.”

99. “(O Apostle) thus do We relate to you some of the news of what has gone before; and indeed We have given to you from Ourselves a Reminder (the Qur’an).”

Whenever you succeed to efface a wrong, do introduce a right instead of it.

That God is adorable Whose knowledge embraces every thing.

However, in this holy verse, with an intensive emphasis on the subject of Monotheism, Moses (as)

defined the line of sovereignty of Allah, and said:

“Verily your God is Allah; there is no god but He, (and) He embraces all things in (His) knowledge.”

It is not like the artificial idols which neither hear any words, nor do they deliver any answer, nor solve any problem, nor repel any harm.

Next to the explanations concerning the history of the adventurous life of Moses (as) and the Children of Israel, the Qur’an also concludes a general conclusion from it.

It, addressing the Prophet (S), says:

“(O Apostle) thus do We relate to you some of the news of what has gone before...”

Then the verse implies that Allah has given the Apostle a Reminder, the Qur’an, which is full of lessons of warning, rational demonstrations, the instructive news of the former nations, and some awakening matters about the coming nations.

The verse continues saying:

“...and indeed We have given to you from Ourselves a Reminder (the Qur’an).”

Explanations

There are a lot of divine graces in detailing the history of the Apostles of Allah, among them are as follows:

1. Increase of knowledge and cognizance.
2. Gaining insight and finding the path of prosperity.
3. Warning people and reminding them.
4. Glad tidings for the believers, and encouraging them.

Surah Ta Ha – Verses 100 – 103

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْرًا

خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِمْلًا

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا

يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا

100. "Whoever turns away from it, verily he will bear, on the Day of Judgment, a burden."

101. "They will abide in this (burden of sin); and evil will the burden be for them on the Day of Judgment!"

102. "(On) the day when the Trumpet shall be blown, and We will muster the guilty, blear-eyed, on that day."

103. "They shall consult among themselves in a low voice (saying): 'You did tarry but ten (days)'."

The Arabic words /himl/ and /haml/ philologically are used in the same meaning, but the word /himl/ is usually applied for the outward burden while /haml/ is used for the inward burden, like a child in the mother's womb.

However, this holy verse speaks about those people who forget the facts of the Qur'an and the lessons of the history.

It says:

"Whoever turns away from it, verily he will bear, on the Day of Judgment, a burden."

Yes, turning one's back on the Qur'an drives him to some deviated paths and puts on his back the heavy burden of kinds of sins and mental and creedal aberrations.

Then the Qur'an adds:

"They will abide in this (burden of sin)..."

"...and evil will the burden be for them on the Day of Judgment!"

Then, explaining the day of Judgment and its beginning it says:

"(On) the day when the Trumpet shall be blown, and We will muster the guilty, blear-eyed, on that day."

It is in this circumstance that the sinners shall whisper with each other about the length of their stop in the intermediate world. Some of them say that they had tarried there for only ten days and they do not know how long it had been.

The verse says:

“They shall consult among themselves in a low voice (saying): ‘You did tarry but ten (days)’.”

This state of their speaking in a low voice may be for the great horror that they feel in themselves because of seeing the scenery of the Hereafter, or because of the intense of weakness and feebleness in them.

Surah Ta Ha – Verse 104

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِن لَبِئْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا

104. “We know best what they will say when their best in conduct will say: ‘You tarried but a day’.”

The greatness of Hereafter is so much so that, when people attend there, they consider the length of their life in this world as long as half a day, or one day, or at most ten days.

In this regard, the Qur’an, from the tongue of different groups of people, says as follows:

1. Ten days as the verse says:

“You did tarry but ten (days).”⁵

2. One day, about which the above verse says:

“You tarried but a day.”

3. A part of a day, where the Qur’an says:

“...it will be as though they had not tarried but the latter part of a day or the early part of it.”⁶

4. Some short moments, for which the guilty shall say:

“...they did not tarry but an hour...”⁷

5. A little time, about which the Qur’an says:

“...you did not tarry but a little...”⁸

It seems that this difference of attitudes, due to the length of the lifetime in the world, depends on the amount of insight existed in different persons. In this verse, for example, the Qur’an points to those people who are best in conduct. Such people count the lifetime in this world as much as ‘one day’, while, as the previous verse indicates, the sinners count it ten days.

Of course, it is evident that the limited lifetime in this world in comparison with the unlimited world of Hereafter is little and even less than little. Or, it is not possible to compare a finite and limited thing with an infinite and unlimited one.

Perhaps the secret of this fact that Allah refers the knowledge of the length of their stop in the world to Himself is the same matter. Allah knows best what they say and they imagine that they have tarried ten days in the world, but the best and the most truthful ones of them say that they have not tarried in the world more than one day.

The verse says:

“We know best what they will say when their best in conduct will say: ‘You tarried but a day’.”

To conclude, Allah in one expressive sentence says that He knows best what they say, whether they say it in a low voice or aloud.

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1. The current Surah, verse 86
 2. Mufradat-i-Raqib
 3. The commentary of Nimunah, vol.13, p. 286
 4. Tafsir-i-Nemuna, vol. 13, p. 288
 5. The current Surah, verse 102
 6. Surah An-Nazi'at, No. 79, verse 46
 7. Surah Ar-Room, No.30, verse 55
 8. Surah Al-Mu'minoon, No.23, verse 114

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