

Section 5: Jews warned against their wicked plots

Cain's aggression –The Israelites warned –Punishment for those who war on the Apostle (Muhammad).

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 27

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ
الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

27. "(O' Prophet!) Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam when they offered each a sacrifice, hut it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other, (The one) said: 'I shall certainly slay you,' (The other) said: 'verily Allah accepts only from the pious ones.'"

The objective meaning of 'reciting the truth', maybe, is an indication to the idea that the explanation of this event has been distorted in the Torah and it has been combined with superstitions; hence, what is stated in the Qur'an is the 'truth'.

"(O' Prophet!) Recite to them the truth of the story of the two sons of Adam, when they offered each a sacrifice, hut it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other, (The one) said: 'I shall certainly slay you.'..."

In Islamic literature and in the Torah, (Genesis, Chapter 4, No.3 to12),¹ it is recorded that Abel was a shepherd and he offered his best lamb as the sacrificial animal. But, Cain who was a farmer brought the worst part of his agricultural product to sacrifice. The Qur'an also says:

"You will never attain righteousness unless you spend out of what you love..."²

Therefore, the main principle is striving to draw near to *Allah*, no to simply sacrifice. Whatever the sacrificial thing may be, the criterion of the acceptance of deeds is piety.

"... 'verily Allah accepts only from the pious ones' ."

Also, we must know that the expansion of envy stretches forth up to slaying one's brother; so, we must avoid this quality.

"... (The one) said: I shall certainly slay you,'... "

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 28

لَئِن بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسٍ يَدِي إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ
الْعَالَمِينَ

28. "If you stretch out your hand toward me to slay me, I am not one to stretch out my hand toward you to slay you. Verily, I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."

When confronting a jealous person, you ought to speak with him in a calmly manner, so that you can extinguish the fire of jealousy in him with the calmness of your speech. Thus, one of the ways of 'forbidding from doing evil' is that you assure the evil-doer that you will not transgress him in any way.

Abel did not intend to commit homicide. This does not mean that he might not defend himself either, (since submitting to a murderer's will do not adapt to piety).

"If you stretch out your hand toward me to slay me, I am not one to stretch out my hand toward you to slay you. ..."

By the way, refraining from murder because of the awe of *Allah* (s.w.t.) is a value, not because of disability and weakness. However, piety and God-fearing is the restraining factor from committing sin and transgression in the most sensitive circumstances.

"... Verily, I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verses 29 – 30

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

29. ***"Verily I desire that you should bear my sin and your (own) sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the (Hell) Fire, and this is the recompense of the unjust."***

30. ***"Then his soul (through temptation of envy) facilitated to him the murder of his brother. So he murdered him, and thus became one of the losers."***

Abel did not want to carry the burden of another person's sins; hence he did not take action on slaying his brother and shedding blood. Besides, he put the burden of his own sins on the killer's shoulder.

Imam Baqir (as) in a tradition said: "Whoever kills a believer intentionally, *Allah* records all the sins upon the killer and make the slain free from them; and this is *Allah's* word:

"Verily I desire that you should bear my sin and your (own) sin, and so you would be of the inmates of the (Hell) Fire, and this is the recompense of the unjust."

This verse does not mean, of course, that silence before a tyrant with the hope that he carries the responsibility of our sins is proper.

One of the styles of 'forbidding from doing evil' is attracting the attention of a transgressor to the fact that besides the retribution of his own cruelties, he should suffer the burden of the sins of the oppressed, too, and his punishment will be added.

However, the pure nature of man dislikes homicide, but the despotic soul makes a parade of this action and persuades him to murder.

"Then his soul (through temptation of envy) facilitated to him the murder of his brother. So he murdered him, and thus became one of the losers."

Thus, we ought to know that the faith in Resurrection has been a part of the fundamental creed of human beings on the earth, and the very faith keeps a person from homicide and other crimes.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 31

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ أَخِي فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ

31. ***"Then Allah sent a raven digging up the ground to show him (the murderer) how he should***

cover the dead body of his brother. He said: 'Woe unto me! Am I unable to be like this raven and cover the corpse of my brother?' So he became one of the remorseful. "

It is narrated in a tradition that Imam Sadiq (as) said that when Cain killed his brother, he left him in the desert, because he did not know what to do. Soon after that the sawage rushed toward the corpse of Abel.

At that time, as the Qur'an says, *Allah* sent a raven to dig up the land and, by hiding the dead body of another raven, or by concealing a part of its own prey, (as it is the habit of a raven) showed Cain how to hide the corpse of his brother in the ground.

The verse says:

"Then Allah sent a raven digging up the ground to show him (the murderer) how he should cover the dead body of his brother. ..."

Next to that statement, the Qur'an adds that at that moment Cain became worried of his own negligence and cried:

"... 'Woe unto me! Am I unable to be like this raven and cover the corpse of my brother?'..."

Yet, finally he felt sorry about what he had done, but that regret was not a reference for his repentance from the sin.

"...So he became one of the remorseful."

The Prophet of Islam (S) is narrated that he has said:

"No blood of a person is shed unjustly unless there is a portion of its responsibility upon (Cain) the son of Adam who was the first homicide as a custom." 3

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 32

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ
جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ

32. "For this reason We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever slays a human being for other than manslaughter or mischief in the earth, it is as he had slain mankind as a whole; and whoever saves a life (from death), it is as if he had saved mankind as a whole. And certainly Our

messengers came to them with clear evidences; then verily, even after that, many of them became prodigals in the earth."

The Oneness of Human Beings

Next to the statement of the story of the Children of Adam, there has been mentioned a general conclusion in this holy verse which fits with humanities. At first, it says:

"For this reason We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever slays a human being for other than manslaughter or mischief in the earth, it is as he had slain mankind as a whole; ..."

How is it that slaying a human being is equal to slaying all human beings and saving a person is equal to saving all human beings? To answer this question, it is only possible to say that in this verse, the Qur'an has referred to a social and training fact.

The person, who slays an innocent human being, has such a preparation, in fact, to kill some other innocent persons, too. This person is, indeed, a homicide whose prey is innocent human beings. And, we know that there is no difference between the innocent persons from this point of view.

On the other hand, the person who, because of having the quality of philanthropy and human emotions, saves another person from death has such a preparation to perform this sympathetic action unto any other human beings.

So, regarding the fact that the Qur'an has applied the phrase: /fa-ka-'anna-ma/ (it is as it), it seems that although the life and death of a person is not equal to the life and death of a society, it has a likeness to it.

Again, it can be said that in potency, there is a capability in any person to bring a great society, or a new generation, into existence. Hence, annihilating a human being sometimes results to the effacement and murder of a generation.

It is worthy to note that once someone asked Imam Sadiq (as) about the commentary of this verse when he (as) answered: "The purpose of the words: 'to slay' and 'to save from death', which have been referred to in the verse, is saving from a fire accident, a whirlpool, and the like.

Then he (as) kept silent and after that he added: "A greater interpretation of this verse is that a person invites another one to the path of right or wrong and the one accepts that invitation."

At the end of the verse, the Qur'an hints to the manner of breaking law among the Children of Israel. It says:

"... And certainly our messengers came to them with clear evidences; then verily, even after that, many of them became prodigals in the earth."

The Arabic term /'israf/ has a vast scope of meaning in lexicon which envelops any transgression and exceeding the limits. Yet, it is often used for remittals, expenditures and expenses.

Explanations

1. The members of human beings originate from a common truth and have a single soul, so that they are similar to the limbs of a body. Therefore, slaying a person is the same as killing all humankind.
2. The act of evaluating deeds relates to the motives and aims. Slaying a person with the intention of transgression, is putting a society into death; while killing under the title of retaliation is counted as the life of the society.
3. The death and life of a person is sometimes effective in the death and life of a society. Similarly, sometimes the individual murders prepare the ground for some massacres.
4. The sign of a living society is helping the needy and saving the souls or lives.
5. Suicide, and even abortion, is one of the examples of 'homicide', which is unlawful.
6. Transgressing against the rights of an individual is a threat to the security of the society.
7. The managers of the professions like physicians, nurses, fire-extinguishers, reinforces, makers of medicine, etc, whose job is securing the lives of human beings, should know the position and value of their own profession.

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 33

إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

33. "The only recompense of those who make war against Allah and His messenger, and strive to make mischief in the land, is that they should be killed or crucified, or their hands and their feet be cut off from opposite side or they be banished from (their) land. This is degradation for them in the world, and in the Hereafter, they will have a grievous chastisement."

Upon the occasion of revelation of this verse, it is cited that a group of pagans came into Medina and then they became Muslim.

They were tired and sick; therefore, the Prophet (S) ordered that they would be taken in a good climate

region outside Medina where they were permitted to enjoy the milk of the alms-tax camels therein.

When they gained their health, they took the Muslim shepherds, who were living thereabout, and cut off their hands and feet, blinded their eyes, and plundered the camels. They left out Islam, too.

The Messenger of *Allah* (S) ordered that they would be captured and be treated with the same manner as they had done upon the shepherds. Then, in this circumstance the above-mentioned verse was revealed.

These retributions, which are mentioned in the verse under discussion, are counted 'rights of *Allah*' and they are not forgivable and changeable. (Atyab-ul-Bayan)⁴

However, in order to improve the society, not only admonishment and, guidance are necessary, but weapon and severe revolutionary treatment are needed. (The words in the previous verse were some educational messages and warnings unto the murderer. Now, in this verse, the statement is upon the punishment of the one who fights against *Allah* and makes mischief.)

The notable point here is that fighting against the servants of *Allah*, the same as fighting against *Allah*. So, the one who stands against people, is like that he has stood against *Allah*.

Therefore, there have been decreed several kinds of punishment for those who disturb the security of the society. These punishments are: execution, banishment, cutting off the hand and the foot, and to hang such wicked persons.

In the meantime, Islamic punishments are accompanied with justice. Since corruptions and the qualifications of the mischief-makers are different; the retributions are not the same, either. If the mischief has been committed tragically, its punishment is slaughter.

But, if it is superficial, its retribution is banishment. Concerning such punishments, this fact is understood from the Islamic traditions that the retribution of homicide is execution; the retribution of terrorizing is banishment, the retribution of larceny is cutting off the hand and the foot; the retribution of murder and robbery (with arm) is cutting off the hand and the foot and being hanged. (At- Tafsir-u-Safi)

Also, it is cited in Usul-i-Kafi that one of the meanings of the phrase '**be banished from their land**' (mentioned in the verse) is throwing such a person in the sea. (Al-Kafi, vol. 7, p. 267)

Explanations

1. The responsibility of the government and rulers is to protect the security of the society in cities, villages, roads, and so on.
2. Those opponents of the master ship of the Messenger of *Allah*(S) whose intention is destruction and who fight against the godly system, should be dispersed.

3. Those who rise against the Muslims leader, or against the Islamic government, are among **'those who make war against Allah'**. (At- Tafsir fi-Zilal-il-Qur'an)

4. Imam Rida (as) said: "The length of the time of banishment for the mischief-maker is one year. The place of banishment should be announced to people in order that they break their communication with the banished person, and stop bargaining, holding familiar intercourse, and marriage with him." (Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn)

5. According to a verse of the Qur'an,⁵ a usurer is also counted among **'those who make war against Allah'**, since such a person disturbs the economic security in the society.

Also, as some Islamic traditions indicate, disgracing a Muslim believer is considered as fighting against Allah. 6

Surah Al-Ma'idah, Verse 34

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

34. "Except those who repent before you have power over them. So know you that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

The repentance of a mischief-maker and a person who fights against the command of Allah (s.w.t.) deserves only the retribution of threat and terrorizing, not the retribution of murder and theft. That is, repentance is effective in 'the right of Allah' not in 'the right of people', because the right of people depends on the content of the possessor (S) of the right. Thus, the account of the person who fights against the command of Allah (muharib) is different from that of a murderer and thief.

In the meantime, the gate of repentance is open to everyone. Yet, that repentance is worthy when it is done before capturing the criminal and confronting the court. It should also be done consciously and wilfully, without any compulsion. (Also, repentance for other sins is accepted before death).⁷

However, the Divine punishment has the aspect of training and improving upon the individuals and the society, not as revenge. Therefore, the repentance of a sinner is efficacious. The verse says:

"Except those who repent before you have power over them. So know you that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

1. 3. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

4. And Abel, he also brought of the first lings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.
5. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.
6. And the LORD said, Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?
7. If thou doest well, shall thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.
8. And Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and slew him.
9. And the LORD said unto Cain. Where is' Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not; Am I my brother's keeper?
10. And He said. What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground.
11. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
12. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

2. Surah 'Ale-'Imran, No.3, verse 92

3. Musnad Ahmad Hanbal, recorded in Tafsir-i-fi-Zalal, vol. 2, p. 703

4. It is cited in Al-Mizan that the choice of one retribution out of these four retributions is up to the leader of Muslims. So, even when the possessors of the blood of the slain remit, one of the retributions must be executed.

5. Surah Al-Baqarah, No: 2, verse 219

6. Bihar-ul-'Anwar, vol. 5, p. 283

7. The Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa', No.4, verse 18

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-4/section-5-jews-warned-aga-inst-their-wicked-plots>