

Section 7: Hud Exhorts His People to Guard Themselves Against Evil

Surah Ash-Shu'ara – Verses 123–126

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

123. “The ‘Ad (people) belied the messengers.”

124. “When their brother Hud said to them: ‘Will you not fear (Allah)?’

125. “Verily I am unto you a trustworthy messenger.”

126. "Then be in awe of Allah and obey me."

127. "And I do not ask you any recompense for it, my recompense is only from the Lord of the worlds."

'Ad was the name of the great grandfather of the people of Hud, and that group of people were known by the name of their ancestor. 'Ad People were a tribe from Arabs who were living in the good climate land of Yaman located in a region near the sea by the name of 'Ahqaf'.

Their country was flourishing and habitable. Those people used to live in cities and Hud was their prophet. Their name has been mentioned in 24 occurrences of the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, there is a Surah called Al-Ahqaf and another Surah named Hud.

However, here on the words of the Qur'an are about the People of 'Ad and their prophet Hud, a part of whose life, their destiny, and some instructive lessons involved in them, have been stated in eighteen verses.

As was mentioned before; the People of 'Ad were a tribe who lived in 'Ahqaf, in the area of 'Hidir Mut', a part of Yemen, located in the south of Arabia. Those rebellious people rejected the messengers of Allah, as the Qur'an says:

"The 'Ad (people) belied the messengers."

They rejected only Hud, but since Hud's call was the call of all Divine prophets, they had, in fact, rejected all of the prophets.

Next to this short statement, the holy Qur'an explains more about them, where it says:

"When their brother Hud said to them: 'Will you not fear (Allah)?"

As a sympathetic brother, Hud used to kindly invite them to monotheism and piety, and that is why the word /'ax/ 'brother' has been applied about him in the verse.

Then Hud added:

"Verily I am unto you a trustworthy messenger."

He wanted to say that the background of his life among them was an evidence for this fact that he had never paved the path of treachery and he had never got anything but truth and truthfulness.

He emphasized again: now that the situation was like that and they were aware of it, too, they should be afraid of Allah and obey him, because obeying him was indeed obeying Allah.

The verse says:

“Then be in awe of Allah and obey me.”

If you think that I seek for wealth and these things are for earning money and rank, you may know that I do not demand you the least recompense for my call.

The verse says:

“And I do not ask you any recompense for it, my recompense is only from the Lord of the worlds.”

Surah Ash-Shu'ara - Verses 128-131

أَتْبُنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيْعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

128. “Do you build a landmark on every height for vain delight?”

129. “And you get strong buildings in the hope of living therein for ever.”

130. “When you assault, you assault like tyrants!”

131. “Then be in awe of Allah and obey me.”

The things which are attractive in the eye of the lovers of the world, are insignificant in viewpoint of the friends of Allah, and they rebuke people concerning them.

The criticism of the Qur'an is about the thought of revelry and dwellers of castles and, not the building of castle itself. Unfortunately, wealth, capital, and high glorious buildings are usually in possession of the deviated people and are used for satisfying lusts and low desires, while industry, invention, art, potentialities and human power must be used along the path of real needs. Concerning the life of Hud and the People of 'Ad, the Qur'an has referred to four parts of it.

At first, it points to the content of the call of Hud which is monotheism and piety, the subject that was explained through former verses, then it refers to their faults and their wrong deeds, and reminds them three subjects.

In the form of a positive interrogation with a negative sense, the Qur'an addresses them and says:

“Do you build a landmark on every height for vain delight?”

The Arabic word /ri'/ originally means 'a height'.

The Qur'anic word ***Ita'baun/*** is derived from /'aba/ which means an action in which no correct aim is pursued, and with regard to the word /'ayah/ which means 'sign', it makes clear that this rich tribe, for gaudiness and in order to boast to others, used to build some buildings (like fortress and the like) upon high mountains and heights that had got no correct aim but attracting others' attention to them and show their own power and authority to other people.

These buildings were probably the site of diversion and play and lusts, as at our time it is customary among tyrannical ones.

Then, in the next verse, the holy Qur'an criticizes them for another fault of theirs.

It says:

“And you get strong buildings in the hope of living therein for ever.”

The Arabic word /masani'/ is the plural form of the word /masna'/ which means: 'a place and a beautiful strong building'.

Hud does not protest them why they had got some good and comfortable houses, but he says they have so engaged themselves with the world, and adorning themselves with building some useless strong castles and fortresses that they have neglected the Hereafter.

They have not considered the world as a sojourn but as a perpetual dwelling. Yes, such buildings which causes negligence and pride are certainly blameworthy. A tradition narrated from the Prophet (S) indicates that once he was passing a road when he saw a splendid building which was located on the way.

He asked:

“What is this?”

The companions said:

“It belongs to one of the Helpers (ansar).”

The Prophet (S) stopped for a while. When its owner arrived and greeted, the Prophet (S) turned his face from him.

The man asked his friends about the matter and told them that, by Allah, he saw that the Prophet (S) was inconvenient with him and he did not know what had happened about him and what wrong he had done.

They answered him that the Prophet (S) had seen that splendid building of his and became inconvenient.

After that the man destroyed down that building. Later, one day when the Prophet (S) was passing there, he found no building over there. He questioned what happened to that building which was over there, and the companions explained the event for him.

The holy Prophet (S) said:

*“Verily every building is a burden for its owner on the Hereafter Day, except that one that he has to have.”*¹

This tradition, and other traditions like it, all make the view of Islam quietly clear that Islam does not agree with aristocratic buildings built extravagantly and cause negligence. Islam does not let Muslims build such buildings, like those of the proud oppressors, in particular that they are built in the places where the deprived are in dire need of dwelling.

It is interesting that the Messenger of Islam (S) did not resort to any force to reach this aim, and he did not order to ruin that building, but by means of a gentle ethical reaction, which was heedlessness, he provided the content of his aim.

Then, in the next verse, the Qur’an refers to the cruelty of the people of ‘Ad in their quarrel and disputation.

It says:

“When you assault, you assault like tyrants!”

Someone may do something that deserves punishment, but no one must exceed the limits and he must not order a heavy penalty for a tiny crime, shed the blood of people when he is angry, and he must not treat like the tyrants and oppressors of the world.

The Arabic word /batš/, as Raqib says in Mufradat, means ‘to take something by force and superiority’.

In fact, Hud blamed these mammonists in three ways: First through the tokens they built proudly and gaudily on heights in order to boast of others.

Then he criticizes the strong buildings such as castles of the oppressors which are the sign of having long desires and negligence from this fact that the world is a sojourn, not a permanent dwelling.

At last, he criticizes their extravagance in punishments.

This shows that they were so engaged with the love of this world that they had gone out of the line of servitude, and had become so mammonish that they nearly demanded divinity. These things prove again this fact that

“The love of the world is the top of all faults”.²

After stating these three critics, he invites them again to piety, when he says:

“Then be in awe of Allah and obey me.”

Surah Ash-Shu‘ara - Verses 132-135

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ

أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

132. “And be in awe of Him Who has succoured you with what you know.”

133. “He has succoured you with cattle and Children,”

134. “And gardens and springs.”

135. “Verily I fear for you the chastisement of a Great Day.”

Piety is the best way of being gratitude to Allah. Everybody knows how much the grace of Allah has been bestowed on him.

If there is not any receptivity and competency in a person, the admonition of prophets is not effective.

The third part of the statement of Hud is referred to in these verses. He explains the divine blessings to the servants so that, in this way, he can stimulate the sense of thank giving; in them, haply they return toward Allah.

In this concern, he (as) uses the method of 'epitome and expansion' which is very helpful for making the discussions pleasant.

At first, addressing them, he says:

“And be in awe of Him Who has succoured you with what you know.”

You ought to be in awe of the Lord Who constantly and regularly gave the bounties you know in abundance to you.

Then, after this short statement, he explains it in detail, and he says:

“He has succoured you with cattle and Children,”

On one hand, He bestowed on you some material capitals, a great part of which, at that time in particular, was cattle, and, on the other hand, He gave you enough human power that you can protect, maintain and bring them up.

This meaning has been repeated in different verses of the Qur'an that at the time of numerating the material bounties, it first refers to properties and then it mentions the human power that is the protector, guardian and fosterer of the properties.

This seems a natural sequence, and it does not mean that properties are more significant than children.

In Surah Al-'Isra', No. 17, verse 6 Allah says:

“...and We assisted you with wealth and children and We made you a numerous host.”

Then, the Qur'an adds:

“And gardens and springs.”

This means Allah gave you green gardens and fountains full of flowing water, and, thus, He enriched your life both from the point of human power and agriculture, horticulture, breeding live-stock, and the means of transportation, in such a way that you did not feel any deficiency or inconvenience in your life.

But what happened that you forgot the Bestower of all these bounties; every day and night you sat at the table of His blessings but you did not recognize Him.

Then he states the last stage of his words and threatens and warns them with the Divine retribution, when he says:

“Verily I fear for you the chastisement of a Great Day.”

It will be a Day when you will see by your own eyes the consequence of those cruelties, injustice, pride, arrogance, worshipping low desires, sexuality, and alienation with Allah.

The Qur’anic phrase */yaumin ‘azim/ (a Great Day)* is usually applied for the Hereafter Day which is great from any dimension, but it has sometimes used in the verses of the Qur’an for the harsh and terrible days that some nations had, as the story of Shu‘ayb, mentioned in this very Surah, we are informed that Allah punished the people of Shu‘ayb (with the lightning emerged from the piece of cloud) after they showed obstinacy for accepting the truth, and that day was a great day.

It says:

“...then there seized them the chastisement of the Day of shadow. Verily it was a chastisement of a grievous day.”³

Therefore, the phrase */yaumin ‘azim/* mentioned in this verse may refer to the day when the arrogant ones of the ‘Ad People encountered the painful punishment of instructive wind. The evidence of this meaning is the statement of their retribution in a few verses later.

It may also refer to the retribution of Hereafter Day, or to both of those chastisements whose day is very great.

A Tradition

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“He who tortures people in the world severely, will have the worst punishment: among people with Allah on the Hereafter Day.”*⁴

Surah Ash-Shu‘ara – Verse 136

قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَضْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ

136. “They said: ‘It is the same to us whether you admonish or be not of the admonishers.’”

The previous verses contained the expressive words of the sympathetic prophet Hud (as) with his rebellious people, ‘Ad people.

Now the Qur’an refers to the irrational vicious answers of that group of people who told Hud that he would not put himself into trouble, because it was indifferent to them whether he admonished them or

not and his admonition would not have any effect on their heart.

The verse says:

“They said: ‘It is the same to us whether you admonish or be not of the admonishers.’”

Surah Ash-Shu‘ara – Verses 137–140

إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

137. “This (preaching) is naught but a custom of the ancients.”

138. “And we are not going to be punished.”

139. “So they belied him, then We destroyed them; verily in this is a sign; but most of them do not believe.”

140. “And verily your Lord, certainly He is the Mighty, the Merciful.”

The ancestors’ deviation is a preparation for the deviation of the later generations, so the Qur’an in this verse announces that the people of Hud told him:

“This (preaching) is naught but a custom of the ancients.”

The people of Hud expressed that, contrast to the statement of Hud, they would be chastised neither in this world nor in Hereafter.

The verse says:

“And we are not going to be punished.”

The Arabic word /xuluq/ means: ‘habit, style, and manner’, and since this word has been used here in its singular form in the sense of character, temper, and characteristic custom, it refers to the deeds they used to commit, such as: idolatry, building beautiful strong buildings, boasting by means of constructing fortresses and castles on heights, and also being unjust in punishments and retributions.

This means that they said what they were doing was the same thing that their ancestors customarily did and it could not be a matter to be objected.

Some Islamic commentators have rendered it into lie and falsehood. In this case, it means that his words about the Lord and Resurrection were some lies that had been told from before.

Following this matter, the holy Qur’an explains the painful destiny of this group of people as follows:

“So they belied him, then We destroyed them...”

And, at the end of this event, the Qur’an repeats the same two expressive instructive sentences that were stated at the end of the stories of Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

It says:

“...verily in this is a sign; but most of them do not believe.”

These concluding comprehensive sentences mean that in this event there is a clear sign concerning the Power of Allah, Prophets’ perseverance, and the evil fate of the tyrants and oppressors, yet most of them did not believe.

“And verily your Lord, certainly He is the Mighty, the Merciful.”

This verse means that your Lord conciliates and respites enough, but at the time of punishment He is so strict that there remains no chance of flee for any body.

-
1. Majma’-ul-Bayan, following the verse
 2. The Commentary of Fakhri-Razi, following the verse
 3. Surah Ash-Sh’ara’, No. 26, verse 189
 4. Nahj-ul-Fisahah, P. 59, and Kanz-ul-‘Ummal, Vol. 3, P. 500

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-12/section-7-hud-exhorts-his-people-guard-themselves>