

Section 8

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 65-66

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

65. ***"And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits on the Sabbath, so We said to them: , Be you (as) apes despised and rejected'."***

66. ***"So We made it an exemplary punishment to those who witnessed it and to their posterity and an admonishment to the pious ones."***

Those Who Exceeded on the Sabbath!

These two verses, like the previous verses, point out the disobedience and transgression dominating the souls of the Jews, and their intensive interest in economic gain.

At first, it says:

"And certainly you have known those among you who exceeded the limits on the Sabbath..."

And, also, you have known that:

"...so We said to them: 'Be you (as) apes, despised and rejected'."

Some may think that the present state of the Israelites and their apparent progress, after the first and the second World Wars or after their unlawful occupation of the Holy Land does not tally with this but yet they are hated by most nations and they have no rest in the real sense of the term, and the term 'a Jew' has passed into a proverb for a niggardly, miserly person –this is due to their own vanities and their

hatred towards the others which, for example, they have shown in many places such as Palestine and Lebanon, both openly and hiddenly, during these recent years.

"So We made it an exemplary punishment to those who witnessed it and to their posterity..."

"...and an admonishment to the pious ones."

It is worthy to note that Imam Baqir (as) and Imam al-Sadiq (as) are narrated from, who, on the meaning of this verse, have said:

"The purpose of the phrase *Ima bayna yadayha* / 'those who witnessed it' is the generation of that time, and the objective of the phrase *ma xalfaha* / 'their posterity, is about us Muslims." [1](#).

That is, that exemplary lesson was not exclusive to the Israelites alone, but it was meant for all of us, the Muslims, too; or, all who come after them until the Day of Judgement and who do the same as they did.

Explanation: Divine Miracles of Moses (as)

Whenever an apostle of *Allah* wanted to introduce himself to his people as a true, authentic Messenger of *Allah*, he would prove his claim by performing some miracles given by Him.

Here, it must be remembered that the following wonderful events wrought by divine and supernatural phenomena are counted in the Holy Qur'an as the miracles given to Moses (as) as the proof of his prophethood; each of which will be discussed in its appropriate place.

They are as follows:

1. The Rod of Moses (as) becoming a serpent. (7:107, 26:32)
2. The Palm of Moses (as) shining brightly. (7:108, 26:33)
3. The dividing of the sea. (2:50)
4. The gushing of water from the rock. (2:60, 2:74)
5. The shower of manna and quails from heaven. (2:57)
6. The shadowing of the cloud over the Israelites' heads. (2:57, 2:93)
7. The raising of the dead to life. (2:56, 2:73)
8. The suspension of the mount above the heads of the people. (2:63)
9. The transformation of the transgressors into despised apes. (2:65, 7:166).

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 67-74

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُؤًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بِكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْثُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ صَفْرَاءٌ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْثُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّظِيرِينَ

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ

قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَّا شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا الْآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبِّحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَسْقَى فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

67. "And (remember) when Moses said to his people: 'Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'. They said: 'Do you mock us?' He said: 'I take refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant!'"

68. "They said ' Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what she is.' Moses said: 'He says: Surely she is a cow neither old nor young, but of middle age; so do what you are commanded'."

69. "They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what colour she should be. 'Moses replied: 'He says she should be a yellow cow, bright in colour, giving delight to the beholders'."

70. "They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what kind of cow must it be, for surely to us the cows are all alike, and, if Allah wills, we shall surely be guided aright.'"

71. "(Moses) said: 'Verily, He says: Verily, she is a cow not (yet) trained to till the soil or to water the fields; sound and without blemish. They said: 'Now you have brought the truth. Then they offered her in sacrifice, though they had not the mind to do (it).'"

72. "And (remember) when you killed a man and disputed thereon: but Allah was to bring forth what you were hiding."

73. "So, We said: 'Strike him (the corpse) with a part of it (the sacrificed cow)'. Thus, Allah gives life to the dead and shows you of His signs, so that you might understand."

74. "Then your hearts hardened after that as stones or even worse in hardness; for verily, among stones there are some from which rivers gush forth, and others that split asunder and water issues out of them, and others tumble down through fear of Allah, and Allah is not heedless of what you do. "

The Story of the Israelites' Cow

Among what we have already studied about the Children of Israel in Surah Al-Baqarah, all of the facts were mentioned shortly and briefly.

The event of the Israelites' Cow which is referred to in the above verses, in contrast to all of the previous incidents, is explained in detail and comprehensively. This is so, perhaps, for the reason that this story is mentioned in the Qur'an only once.

Besides that, there are many instructive subjects involved in it which requires such an extensive explication. One of these subjects which are vividly seen throughout the story is the persistency of the Israelites in seeking for excuses.

It also illustrates their level of faith in the revelations brought forth by Moses (as). Most important of all is that the story provides clear emphatic evidence to the possibility of the Resurrection.

As it is understood from the Holy Qur'an and its commentaries, the incident was described that one of the Israelites was murdered in a mysterious way, in which his murderer was not at all known.

So, there arose a dispute among the different tribes and divisions of the people as to who murdered the man. Every tribe accused the members of another tribe of the crime and announced that the members of its own tribe were innocent.

For its judgement and solution, the problem was brought to the Apostle Moses (as). On one hand, that crime was committed hiddenly and the murderer of the man could not be found by any ordinary means employed at that time.

On the other hand, that dispute might have led to a great complicated disturbance among the Children of Israel. Then, finally Moses (as), by the help of the Grace and Guidance of *Allah* and through a miraculous way, whose explanation will come later, solved the problem.

The Qur'an begins the description of the event as thus:

***"And (remember) when Moses said to his people:
'Surely, Allah commands you that you should sacrifice a cow'..."***

They said:, Do you mock us ?'

He said: 'I take refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant! ' "

That is, causing division and mocking others are acts of the ignorant and never is a prophet of *Allah* of such people.

When the Israelites realized that it was not a mockery and the matter was serious,

"They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to what she is, "

The phrase: '*Ask your Lord*' which is repeated several times in their demands, carries a kind of hidden impoliteness and ridicule in itself. It seems that they considered the Lord of Moses (as) a different Lord from their own Lord.

However, as a reply to their demand:

"...Moses said: 'He says: Surely she is a cow neither old nor young, but of middle age;...' "

In order to stop them from prolonging the matter by bringing new excuses forth to postpone that fulfillment of the command of *Allah*, at the end of the statement, it has been added:

"...so do what you are commanded'."

But, they still continued their insistence and obstinacy.

"They said: 'Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what colour she should be.'..."

"...Moses replied: 'He says she should be a yellow cow, bright in colour, giving delight to the beholders'. "

Anyhow, this cow should be very good and interesting in colour. The colour should be so bright and beautiful that any beholder wonders and becomes delighted when looking at it.

It is amazing that they were not satisfied with that and went on seeking for excuses by which, every time, they made the fulfillment of their duty more difficult.

A tradition says that Imam Rida (as) has said that any cow would have been sufficient, but they imposed the particulars upon themselves, and the more they did so, the more did *Allah* impose the restrictions as a punishment for their persistent demands for unnecessary details.

All this, while Moses (as), acting under inspiration, was driving them to purchase a particular cow belonging to a particular man who was very holy and pious and deserved to be favoured. They had to

pay him an enormous price for this cow which was the only one then available. Hence they were very near to not doing it. [2](#)

"They said: Ask your Lord for us to make it clear to us what kind of a cow must it be..."

"...for surely to us the cows are all alike..."

"...and, if Allah wills, we shall surely be guided aright..."

Again,

"(Moses) said: Verily, He says: Verily, she is a cow not (yet) trained to till the soil or to water the fields; sound and without blemish...."

"...They said: Now you have brought the truth..."

So, they tried with much effort to find that particular cow, and, finally, they found it.

"...Then they offered her in sacrifice, though they had not the mind to do (it)."

After describing this story in detail, again the Qur'an retells it briefly, and generally through the following two verses, thus:

"And (remember) when you killed a man and disputed thereon: but Allah was to bring forth what you were hiding."

"So, We said: Strike him (the corpse) with a part of it (the sacrificed cow)..."

".. Thus, Allah gives life to the dead..."

"...and shows you of His signs, so that you might understand."

In the last verse of the verses under discussion, the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites is referred to. It points out that after witnessing all these events and observing the Signs of *Allah* and the miraculous evidence that Moses (as) prepared for them, yet their hearts became hard, even harder than stone, because, there are some rocks that bring forth water, or shatter and fall down for the fear of *Allah*. It says:

"Then your hearts hardened after that as stones or even worse in hardness..."

"...for verily, among stones there are some from which rivers gush forth..."

"...and others that split as under and water issues out of them..."

"...and others tumble down through fear of Allah..."

So, your hearts are even harder than these rocks, because neither a spring of passion, love, or knowledge flows out of them nor tremble they from the fear of *Allah*. Then in the last sentence of the verse, it says:

"...and Allah is not heedless of what you do."

This is a subtle threat against this group of Israelites and all others who behave like them or do the same as they did.

[1.](#) Majma'-ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 130

[2.](#) Nur-uth- Thaqaalayn, vol. 1, pg 88-89

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