

Section 8: Every People Will Be Summoned with Their Own Imam

Surah Isra' – Verse 71

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا

71. “On the Day We shall call every people with their Imam (leader); then whoever is given his book in his right hand; then these will read their book (joyfully); and they will not be treated unjustly in the least.

This holy verse makes allusions to one of the other Divine blessings given to man, and then it refers to the heavy responsibilities which run parallel to these blessings and are upon him. At first, the Holy Qur'an points to the 'issue of leadership' and its role in the course of human destiny, implying that on the Hereafter Day He shall call each people along with their 'Imams' 'Leaders'.

The verse says:

“On the Day We shall call every people with their Imam (leader)...”

That is, those people who, in any age, accepted the call of their contemporary prophets and their emissaries, will be with their leaders, while those who bowed to the leadership of the Satan or the Imams of aberration or tyrannical rulers and pioneers, will be accompanied by them.

This exposition, while reflecting one of the means of the development of man, serves as a dire warning to all the human beings that they should show maximum vigilance in the course of the selection of leaders, not allowing just anyone to take their lead.

The Role of Leadership in Islam

It is narrated in a famous quotation from Imam Baqir (as), that whenever he discussed upon the 'principal pillars' of Islam, he used to place the 'leadership issue' (Wilayah) as the fifth, and the most important of the pillars, while, placing the 'daily prayers', which is meant to establish one's personal relationship with the Creator, and 'fasting', which is the secret of campaign against passions, and paying of the poor-dues (Zakat), which is a relationship of people with people, and, finally, 'Hajj', which relates to the social aspects of Islam, consist of the other four pillars.

The 'Imam' (as), then, goes on to say:

"Nothing is as important as the issue of leadership (Wilayah)",

for the execution of other four principles depends, entirely, on the issue of leadership and can be realized solely in the light of this principle.

It is also for this reason that we have in another famous quotation from the Prophet (S) in a famous traditions he said:

"He who passes away without having an 'Imam', a 'leader', his death belongs to the category of 'paganism'."

There are numerous examples throughout history when a nation has gained the first row in the world in rank and position under the guidance of a great and an eligible leader, while, the same nation has suffered a devastating blow, and its eventual down fall has been brought about as a result of a weak and incapable leadership that may be beyond recognition.

In interpretation of this verse in Islamic sources, there are numerous quotations introduced, all of which enlighten thoroughly the meaning of the verse, indicating that the purpose of this verse is 'Imamat', 'leadership', as follows:

1) In an authentic documented tradition, quoted from Imam Ali-Ibn-MuṣṣarRida (as) by Shi'ah as well as Sunni sources, we read that, the 'Imam' (as), quoting from the prophet (S), narrated by his forefathers, upon the commentary of this verse, said:

"On that Day, every nation will be called along with its contemporary Imam, 'leader', and the Book of their Lord, as well as the course of practice of their prophet." 1

2) And, we have it also quoted by Imam Sadiq (as) saying:

"Do you not express your praise and gratitude to Allah? When the resurrection day comes, the Lord will call every nation along with the one whose leadership it has accepted. We will be called along with the Prophet (S) and you will be along with us. Where do you think you will be taken to then? By the Lord of

Ka'bah to Paradise."

The Imam reiterated the last sentence three times.

3) Hadrat-i-Rida has said in a detailed tradition:

"The issue of 'Imamat' (leadership) exhibits the position of the prophets and is a heritage of the forerunners. It tackles with the issue of substitution of Allah and the prophetic mission of the Prophet (S) as well as the position of Amir-ul-Mu'mineen (as) along with the replacement by Imam Hassan, as well as Imam Hussayn (as)."

Then he said:

"The Imam introduces those issues which are as 'allowed' by Allah as they are, and the ones which are regarded 'forbidden' by the Lord as such.

The Imam seeks to establish the limits which are ordained by Allah and he defends the Lord's religion, and invites (the people) to the path of Allah through wisdom, good admonitions, and self-explanatory proofs. And, finally, the Imam is the rein and head of the religion, order of Muslims, the benefit to the believers in the world and their glory."

Again, he remarked:

"The 'Imam' is the flourishing root of Islam and the 'prime branch' of it. The 'Imam' is an honest friend, a kind and friendly father, a truly-loyal brother and a companion, just like an affectionate and honest mother towards her young child, and a refuge for Allah's servants."

Then, he said:

"The 'Imam' is the Lord's trustee on the earth and among His people. He is the Lord's proof for His servants and is His substitute in the cities. He calls (the people) to Allah and defends His sanctuaries." 2

4) Quoting Ibn Abbas, Muj ahid says:

"The Messenger of Allah (S) has remarked: 'As the day of resurrection comes about, the Lord commands Gabriel to sit down at the gate of the Paradise, and do not let any one in unless he possesses the admission card and passage of Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as)'." 3

There are two types of leaders mentioned in the Qur'an. The first one includes the leaders of 'light' and 'guidance'; while the latter comprises of leaders who lead to the Fire and misguidance. The second group compel people to follow their lead by force, threats, allurements, and humiliation.

5) Ab Basir once told Imam Sadiq (as):

"I witness that verily you are my Imam."

The Imam replied:

*"Every group will be mustered with their own Imam in the Hereafter."*⁴

6) And, again, the same Imam remarked:

*"He who rejects or refuses to accept one of the living 'Imams', he has certainly rejected the 'Imams' (and 'leaders') of the past."*⁵

Incidentally, the issue of 'Imamat', (leadership) and 'Wilayat' (mastership) are the subject-core of life, and are within the context of one's very life, and it is not to be regarded as a marginal or merely an ideological issue side-lined by others.

The issue of 'leadership' may make people either happy or wretched. Therefore, the result of selection of a leader and obedience to him is a burning one till the threshold of the Hereafter.

The Hereafter is not only the tribunal for individuals, but it is also the great court set-up for nations, peoples, parties, schools of thought, and for governments.

Then, the verse implies that the people will be categorized into two different groups in the doomsday. Those whose record of deeds is delivered to their right hand, and this is done with their pride, joy, and pleasure when they read it joyfully, and no cruelty is done to them.

And, he, who has not found a way to be saved in the world and who has not been led well, he will not seek his way out into the Paradise in the hereafter.

The verse says:

"...then whoever is given his book in his right hand; then these will read their book (joyfully)..."

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the Arabic term /fati/ signifies a thin noodle which is spilt within a date-stone and which here implies an 'insignificant' amount.

Therefore, the chastisement in the resurrection day is a hundred percent just and fair, for, on that Day one receives punishment and reward commensurate with his amount of sin or decent act he has undertaken to perform, even it is very insignificant.

The verse says:

"...and they will not be treated unjustly in the least."

Surah Isra' – Verse 72

وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا

72. “And, whoever is blind in this (life), he will (also) be blind in the Hereafter and (even) more erring from the way.”

Those who have turned a blind eye to the face of the truth in this world, will be likewise and even more misled in the Hereafter.

They will neither be led in this world to the way of guidance, nor do they find the way to Heaven and prosperity in Hereafter, for they have turned a blind eye to all the realities, thus they have deprived themselves from all of the blessings which the Lord had bestowed upon them.

As the world Hereafter is a grand reflection of this world, it would by no means be astonishing to find that such blind-folded people enter the doomsday scene in their like manner.

The verse says:

“And, whoever is blind in this (life), he will (also) be blind in the Hereafter and (even) more erring from the way.”

Explanations

In addition to those who rise up from death as deaf and dumb in the resurrection day, there will also be seen scenes where people are as blind, which case has its roots in their ‘inwardly blindness’ in this world.

Some Islamic quotations denote that whoever is required to go on a ‘Hajj pilgrimage’ but he does not perform the ceremonies on site, or he who reads the Qur’an but he does not practice accordingly, will be mustered blind in Hereafter.⁶

Being inwardly blind is a worse situation than being a really blind by eyes. As Hadrat Ali (as) remarks:

“The worst kind of blindness, is the blindness at heart.”

He (as) has also stated:

“The worst (and the hardest form) of blindness is (when) someone is blind unto our excellence.”⁷

Cases of blindness on the resurrection day, have also been reiterated in other verses as well, among

which one may refer to verse 97, of the Surah 'Isra' which says:

“We shall muster them on the Day of Resurrection upon their faces, blind, dumb, and deaf whose dwelling shall be Hell...”

And again verse 125 of Surah TaHa, No. 20, indicates the rising blind from the dead on the resurrection day as the consequence of being inwardly blind and neglectful to the Divine verses in this world and turning away from accepting the truth.

Imam Baqir (as) remarks:

“Whoever does not acquire the true spiritual benefit by witnessing the creation, is far worse blinded in the Hereafter which he has not witnessed.” 8

Question: We have it in some verses that on Hereafter Day the sinners are commanded to read their record. How would that be feasible and compatible despite such verses with regard to their conditions of blindness?

Answer: Their case of blindness is confined to one of the passing stages of the resurrection day; they will regain their eye-sight in other phases, witnessing clearly those cases and facts which they have failed to grasp in the world.

Surah Isra' – Verse 73

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أُوحِيَآ إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ وَإِذَا لَا تَأْخُذُوكَ
خَلِيلًا

73. “And verily they were about to tempt you away from what We revealed to you so that you would ascribe against Us other than that, and then they would certainly have taken you as a friend.”

Referring to the issues involved in previous holy verses regarding paganism and the pagans, here, He issues a dire warning to the blissful Prophet (S) to be on his guard against this group and their temptations, lest the slightest weakness permeates his beliefs in his campaign against paganism and idolatry, which are to be ensued decisively to the end.

The verse says:

“And verily they were about to tempt you away from what We revealed to you so that you would ascribe against Us other than that, and then they would certainly have taken you as a friend.”

In some quotations, we read that the pagans wanted the Prophet (S) to pay his respect to the idols or they asked for a one-year respite for their pursuit of their worship of the idols, in which case, the prophet (S) was about to condescend to their request.

However, the Almighty protected him. Nevertheless, such quotations are discarded and they are incompatible with the principle of infallibility and decisiveness of the Prophet (S) which has been mentioned in other verses of the Qur'an and which is his usual course in his life.⁹

The author of Tafsir Atyab-ul-Bayan states that: As we have it in the verse: /ʿan-il-laḥi ʾauhayn a/

“...from what We revealed...”

instead of /ʿamm a ʾauhayn a/, this indicates that attempts made by the pagans for changing the view of the Prophet (S), relates to his diversion of attention from a particular person and not to the revealed matters. However, who has it been the fellow whom Allah has sent His revelations about?

There is a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir and Imam Kazim (as) concerning the issue of ‘Wilayat’ (Succession) of Hadrat Ali (as), in which, the Lord has made certain recommendations to the Prophet (S) through revelations.

The Lord has revealed this verse in order to make the Prophet (S) remain heedless of the jealousy of the people and their rejection as well as their intolerant attitudes, and to invalidate the attempts of the pagans for making the Prophet (S) exceed the limits.

Surah Isra’ – Verses 74 – 75

وَلَوْلَا أَن تَبْتَئْنَاكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا

إِذَا لَأَذَقْنَاكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا

74. “And had it not been that We had established you already, you would certainly have been near to incline towards them a little.”

75. “In that case, We would certainly have made you taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death, then you would not have found any helper for you against Us.”

If such were not the case that We had protected you by bestowing upon you the power of infallibility and of Our grace, you were almost about to approach them, showing your inclination, thus putting into practice some of their wishes.

The verse says:

“And had it not been that We had established you already, you would certainly have been near to incline towards them a little.”

In such a case, We would make you taste twice the penalty of the world and the Hereafter. That is, whatever amount of punishment We have procured for the sinners in this world and in the hereafter, and after their death, We would similarly double it for you.

This statement provides justifications for the evil and grand nature of the sin as well as that of the position of the sinner. That is, the greater the position of the sinner, the greater the sin and, hence, the greater its punishment would be.

The verse says:

“In that case, We would certainly have made you taste a double (punishment) in this life and a double (punishment) after death, then you would not have found any helper for you against Us.”

Imam Rida (as) and Ibn Abbas have both been quoted as saying that the Messenger of Allah (S) enjoyed the ‘*position of infallibility*’ and was ‘*immune against all sins*’¹⁰.

Nevertheless, this verse, which is addressed to the Prophet (S), aims at dissuading the faithful from showing the slightest inclination towards the pagans in all commandments of Allah.

In the meantime, this verse is not incompatible in any way with the Prophet’s (S) infallibility.

The sentence,

“you would certainly have been near to incline toward them”

does not imply committing sin.

Moreover, the sentence:

“...Had We not established...”,

is conditional. That is, if We had not provided protection, perhaps you were going to be inclined. However, as that protection was provided that inclination was non-existent.

In other cases also conditionality ‘if’ does not imply decisiveness in fulfilling the action, as in verses 44 to 46 of Surah Al-Haqqah which mean if he falsely attributes, We cut off his main vein.

Other similar case includes verse 65 of Surah Az-Zumar, No. 39 which says:

“...surely if you associate (with Allah), your work will certainly come to naught...”

which implies that the act has not been performed.

Thus, the slightest backing down from divine principals and values is not allowed, since that will be regarded as a victory for the enemies.

In Islamic sources, we read:

“When the above three verses were revealed, the Prophet (S) invoked:

“O’ Lord! Do not leave me on my own even within the space of one blinking of eyes!”

This very meaningful prayer of the Prophet (S) provides an important lesson for all of us, showing that all must seek refuge to Allah and rely on His grace while one notes that even ‘Immaculate prophets’ have not been able to resist slipping and stumbling, much less in our case in face of all satanical temptations.

Surah Isra’ – Verse 76

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ لِيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبَثُونَ خِلافَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

76. “And verily they were about to startling you from the land so as to expel you from it; and then, they would not have tarried after you but a little.”

It is said that this verse and the following one have been revealed about the people of Mecca who gathered and decided to expel the Prophet (S) from Mecca.

After that, this decision was seconded and changed into the verdict for the execution of the Prophet (S) in Mecca, then the house of the Prophet (S) was surrounded in all directions. As we know the Prophet (S) was miraculously saved and started to Medina, which marks the beginning of Hijrah (the Exodus).

In the previous verses, of course, we noted that the pagans wanted to influence the prophet (S), making him deviate from the right path, when Allah’s grace came to his help, disrupting their plans.

But, following that, they embraced on a new plan to thwart his call. They planned to oust him to a distant spot which was out of reach. This plan was also thwarted.

The verse says:

“And verily they were about to startling you from the land so as to expel you from it...”

The noble verse implies that you were about to be ousted skillfully according to their well-calculated plan from this land.

Then the Qur'an issues a dire warning to them meaning that if they succeeded they would have entangled themselves in a severe Divine punishment. Thus, they would not remain there much longer after you.

The verse says:

"...and then, they would not have tarried after you but a little."

For this was a very great sin, whereby people might seek to oust and expel their compassionate leader and their savior from their city, thereby, showing their ungratefulness towards the greatest blessing of Allah.

Such a people are not entitled to live and a devastating penalty would, therefore, call on them. This event happened for soon, after a short time, in the 'Battle of Badr', many of them were killed, while a few of them were able to escape or to embrace the faith.

Thus, one notes that the mere presence of the Prophet (S) among the people may obstruct the Divine punishment. In case they oust him from amongst themselves, or distance him, they are certain to perish instantly.

The blissful Qur'an does two things simultaneously. While it informs us about the invisible world, it also provides the Prophet (S) with information with respect to the frustrations and failures of the conspiracies of his enemies, hence, condoling him.

Surah Isra' – Verse 77

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا

77. "(This was Our) way with those of Our messengers whom We sent before you, and you shall not find any change in Our way."

Providing support for the prophets as well as extermination of the pagans and oppressors, have been among the courses of treatment of the Lord.

It has been mentioned in verse 13, of Surah 'Ibrahim, saying:

"And those who disbelieved told their Messengers: 'We will certainly expel you from our land, or else you return to our creed.' Then their Lord revealed to them: 'Certainly We will perish the unjust'."

Therefore, He announces that this punishment is not solely exclusive to the Arab pagans; this procedure

of Ours has been in action with regard to the prophets who were sent before you as well, and no changes have taken place with regard to this course of action.

The verse says:

“(This was Our) way with those of Our messengers whom We sent before you, and you shall not find any change in Our way.”

This course of action stems from a clear source of logic, whereby, such an ungrateful people who break up their source of guiding light they, in fact, ruin their own safeguard fortresses.

Certainly such a nation is not worthy of the Divine grace, and they will be encompassed by the due chastisement. We know that the Lord does not discriminate unjustly between his servants, and He gives similar punishments for equal set of acts in equal conditions. And, such is the significance of unchanged ability of Allah’s way of treatment.

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1. Majma‘-ul-Bayan and Safi
 2. Tuhaf-ul-‘Uqul, and ‘Athar-ul-Sadiqin, Harf-ul-Alaf
 3. Manaqib Ibn Maqazili, p. 131
 4. Tafsir Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn
 5. Bihar, vol. 23, p. 95 and ‘Ikmal-ud-Din
 6. Tafsir Kanz-ud-Daqayiq
 7. Tafsir Kanz-ud-Daqayiq
 8. Tauhid Sadīq
 9. Tafsir Al-Mizan
 10. Jamaul Jam’a, Tafsir Safi

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