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Section 8: Korah's (Qarun) Ruin

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 76

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ فَبَغَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ
لَتَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ

76. “Verily Korah was of the people of Moses, but he oppressed them; and We had given him of the treasures so much that its keys would have been a burden to a company of men endowed with strength. Once his people said to him: ‘Do not exult, for Allah does not love the exultant’.”

Mentioning the historical examples is a gazing-stock for the coming generations.

Having a good background is not a proof for being good in the future or renunciation of the present deviations.

The wonderful story life of Moses and his struggle against Pharaoh was explained in a part of former verses of this Surah, and what had to be said about them was stated sufficiently.

In another part of the verses of this Surah, the struggle of the Children of Israel against a rich arrogant man among them called Korah is referred to. He was a wealthy man who was the manifestation of wealth accompanied with pride, deceit, and contumacy.

In principle, during his lifetime, Moses struggled against three important oppressive tyrannical powers: Pharaoh, who was the sample of governmental power, Korah, who was the manifestation of wealth, and Sameri, who was the example of art, deceit, and elusion.

Although the most important struggle of Moses (as) was against the governmental power, the recent two struggles have importance for themselves and contain some great instructive lessons.

It is said that Korah was a close relative of Moses (as), (his cousin (son of a paternal uncle), or uncle, or son of his maternal aunt); and, from the point of information, he had a considerable knowledge about the matters of Torah.

At first he was one of the believers, but, later, pride and wealth drew him towards disbelief and sent him into the depth of the ground, made him fight against the messenger of Allah, and his amazing death became a lesson for all. The explanation of this event will be discussed later in the concerning verse.

The Qur'an says:

“Verily Korah was of the people of Moses, but he oppressed them...”

The cause of this oppression and disobedience was that he had obtained a great deal of wealth, and since he had not enough capacity and strong faith, this abundant wealth deceived him and drew him towards deviation and arrogance.

The Qur'an continues saying:

“...and We had given him of the treasures so much that its keys would have been a burden to a company of men endowed with strength...”

The Arabic word /mafatih/ is the plural form of /maftah/ in the sense of ‘a place wherein something is stored’, like the chests that properties are stored up in them.

Thus, the concept of the verse is that Korah had so much gold, silver and precious properties that a group of strong men could move its box with difficulty.

And, regarding that the Arabic word /‘usbah/ means a body of men (from ten to forty) who are with together and are strong enough and they have held each other like nerves, makes it clear that how heavy the jewels and precious properties of Korah had been.

The term /tanu’/ is derived from /nu’/ which means: to raise with difficulty and heavily, and it is used for a heavy burden that when a man is carrying it, because of heaviness, it causes him to sway this side and that side.

What was said in the above about the Arabic term /mafatih/ is something that a very large group of commentators and lexicologists have accepted, while some other commentators have said that the term /mafatih/ is the plural form of /miftah/ which means key. They say that the keys of the treasures of Korah were so heavy that several strong men could carry them with difficulty.

Those who have chosen this meaning have got in trouble to themselves to adjust it that how it is possible to be so many keys of treasures, and, however, the first commentary is more clear and more correct.

Now, it is better to see what the Children of Israel told Korah. The Holy Qur'an implicitly says: remember when his people told him not to have so much joy flourished with pride, negligence and arrogance, because Allah does not like the proud exultant.

The verse says:

"...Once his people said to him: 'Do not exult, for Allah does not love the exultant'."

Surah Al-Qasas - Verse 77

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا
أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

77. "And seek by means of what Allah has given you, the abode of the Hereafter, and do not forget your portion in this world, and be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, verily Allah does not love the mischief-makers."

Every body ought to suffice to his own share in this world and let the rest for Hereafter. Wealth and property can become a means for the prosperity in Hereafter.

In this verse, next to the advice mentioned in the previous holy verse, there are four other expressive and instructive exhortations here for Korah which form a complete five-ring collection.

At first, it says:

"And seek by means of what Allah has given you, the abode of the Hereafter..."

It points to the fact that, in spite of the imagination of some ill-disposed persons, wealth and property is not a bad thing; the important thing is that we must see in which way it is used. If it is applied in the way of seeking the good abode of the Hereafter, what is better than that? If it is a mean of pride, negligence, injustice, oppression, and sensuality, what, then, can be worse than it?

This is the same logic that Amir-ul-Mu'minin Ali's famous sentence reminds about the world.

He said:

"...If one sees through it (the world), it would bestow him sight, but if one has his eye on it, it would blind him."¹

And Korah was a person who had the power of performing a lot of social good affairs with those abundant properties he had; what was use of it when his pride did not let him see the facts?

By the second advice, it is added that he should decrease his portion from this world: the verse says:

“...and do not forget your portion in this world...”

This is a fact that every person has a proper limit share of this world, viz., the amount of properties he uses for his body, clothing, and residence is a definite amount, and the additional ones are never consumed by him; therefore, one must not forget this fact.

How much food can a person eat? How many pieces of clothing can he wear? How many houses and how many cars can he have? And how many shrouds does he take with him when he dies? The rest, however, is the share of others and man is the depository of them.

How nice Hadrat Amir-ul-Mu'minin Ali (as) stated when he said:

*“O’ son of Adam! Whatever you earn beyond your basic needs you will only keep vigil over it for others.”*²

There is another interpretation upon the abovementioned sentence cited in Islamic narrations and the statements of the commentators which adapts to the above interpretation and, perhaps, both of them are its purpose.

It is that Ma'any-ul-'Akhbar, narrates from Amir-ul-Mu'minin Ali (as) who upon the commentary of the Qur'anic sentence:

“...do not forget your portion in this world...”

said:

*“Do not forget your health and strength, and your opportunity, and your youth, and your mirth, and by means of these (five bounties) seek out the Hereafter.”*³

According to this commentary of the holy verse, the abovementioned statement is a warning to all human beings that they should not lose the opportunities and capitals, because they pass on like cloud.

The third advice is as follows:

“...and be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you...”

This is also a fact that one must always expect the good of Allah and ask for any kind of goodness and all kinds of expectation from Him. In this condition, how can he ignore the explicit demand of others and pass by all of these clear things inattentively?

In other words, as Allah has bestowed them to you, you ought to bestow (some of them) to others. A similar meaning to this is mentioned in Surah An-Nur, No. 24, verse 22 in connection with forgiveness

and remittal.

It says:

“...And they should pardon and overlook. Do you not like that Allah should forgive you?...”

This sentence can be rendered like this that sometimes Allah gives man some great bounties so that he does not need them all in his personal life. Allah gives him a powerful wisdom which is useful not only for running a person but also for running a country.

He gives him knowledge that not only an individual but also a society can take benefit from it. He gives him a wealth which is appropriate for great social programs.

The implication of these kinds of Divine merits is that the totality of them does not belong to you, but you are the agent of Allah in giving them to others. Allah has bestowed this merit on you that He manages His servants by your hand.

Finally, the fourth advice is as follows:

“...and do not seek to make mischief in the land, verily Allah does not love the mischief-makers.”

This is also a fact that many of the faithless rich people, sometimes as the result of the madness of avariciousness and sometimes because of self-superiority, commit mischief and draw the society into deprivation and poverty.

They usually take everything in their own authority. They wish people to be some servants and slaves for them, and whoever protests they try to destroy him, and if they cannot, they desert him through slander by means of their secret agents. Thus, they draw the society towards corruption and decadence.

Now it is understood that these advisers tried, at first, to break the pride of Korah.

In the second stage, they warned him that the world is a means, not an aim.

In the third stage, they warned him that he could use only a small part of what he had.

In the fourth stage, they reminded him this fact that he should not forget Allah had been good to him, then he had to be good to others either, else his merits would be taken from him.

In the fifth stage, they told him to avoid making mischief in the earth, which is the direct result of former four principles.

It is not completely definite that who these exhorters were but it is certain that they were some knowledgeable, pious, aware, exact, and brave men.

Some commentators have thought that probably Moses (as) himself did it but it is very improbable,

because the Qur'an in previous verse says:

"...When his people said to him..."

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 78

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيْتُهُ عَلَيَّ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ
مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

78. “Said he (Korah): ‘I have been given this (wealth) only because of a knowledge that is in me.’ Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations that were mightier in strength than he and greater in amassing (wealth)? And (then even) the guilty shall not be asked about their sins.”

To boast for one's knowledge is a manner of people like Korah.

The pride for having knowledge changes man so selfish that he accepts the function of no one and nothing any more:

“...‘I have been given this (wealth) only because of a knowledge that is in me’...”

We must think of wealth and power as Divine bounties, not the fruit of our own knowledge and effort.

With that very state of pride and haughtiness, which originates from his abundant wealth, Korah used to say as the Qur'an announces:

“Said he (Korah): ‘I have been given this (wealth) only because of a knowledge that is in me.’...”

Korah used to say implicitly that it was not their business that what he did with his wealth. He said he did not need any one to guide him how to use his wealth, because he himself obtained it with his own knowledge and awareness.

Moreover, Korah implicitly added that certainly Allah knew him eligible of having wealth that He had given it to him and He had also taught him the way of using it. Then, he said, he knew better than others what to do, and it was not necessary that they interfere in his affairs.

Besides all of these, I have taken trouble, tolerated pains, and was deeply afflicted in order to gather this wealth; why do they not also take trouble if they have eligibility and ability? I am not bothering them; and if they are poor, it is the better that they remain hungry until they die.

These are the decade and disgrace logics that many faithless wealthy people often express in reply to

those who advise them.

This point is also worthy noting that the Qur'an has left this matter secret that in obtaining this wealth to which knowledge of his does Korah emphasize?

Is it the knowledge of alchemy, as some commentators have said?

Is it the knowledge of commerce, agriculture, and the arts of industry?

Or is it his special administration by which he could obtain that enormous wealth? Or it refers to all of them?

It is not improbable that the verse has a vast meaning and encompasses all of these things.

(It is not known, of course, that the knowledge of alchemy, the knowledge by which gold is made from copper and the like, is a fable or a reality.)

Here, the Qur'an gives a harsh answer to Korah and others like him.

It says:

"...Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations that were mightier in strength than he and greater in amassing (wealth)?..."

Korah says that whatever he has is by means of knowledge, but he has forgotten that there were many persons who were more knowledgeable, stronger and wealthier than him while they could not escape from the punishment of Allah.

The fair-minded ones of the Children of Israel had told Korah that it was Allah Who had given him that wealth but this impolite and bold man answered them:

"...I have been given this (wealth) only because of a knowledge that is in me'...",

while Allah, in the above verse, manifests his strength in the fact of His Will.

At the end of the verse, he is warned again by a very short sentence, where it says:

"...And (then even) the guilty shall not be asked about their sins."

In principle, there will not be any time for asking and answering. It is a decisive, painful, violent and sudden divine punishment.

That is, today the aware men of the Children of Israel advise Korah and give him respite to contemplate and give answer, but when the argument is completed and the Divine punishment comes, surely there will not be any respite for contemplation or uttering some vain and haughty words. As soon as the Divine

punishment comes, they will be destroyed.

There will arise a question here inquiring that what is the objective of the question that the guilty are negated from? Is it in this world or in the next world?

Some of the commentators have chosen the first one while some others have taken the second, and there is no matter that both of them to be the objective of it; i.e. neither they will be asked in the world at the time of sudden punishment so that they bring some excuses and count them faultless, nor in the Hereafter, because in that place everything is manifest and as the Qur'an says:

“The guilty ones shall be recognized by their marks...”⁴

Thus the verse under discussion is consistent with the verse which says:

“And on that Day neither man nor jinn shall be asked about his sin.”⁵

There comes forth another question here which is not consistent with the holy verse that says:

“So, by your Lord, We shall surely question them all (in the Hereafter),”⁶

This question can also be answered in two forms: the first is that there are different places of standing in the Hereafter. In some of them the guilty are questioned while in some others every thing is clear and there is no need of questioning.

Another thing is that question is of two kinds: the question of investigation, and the question of blame. In the Hereafter there is no need of ‘the question of investigation’, because all things are manifest, but the reproach question is found there and this is a kind of punishment for the guilty.

It is just like the question that the father asks from his degenerate son and says:

“Did I not serve you so much? And was the recompense of those service treachery and corruption?”

(While both of them are aware of the affairs and the purpose of the father is to blame the son.)

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 79

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ

79. “So he went forth unto his people in his adornment. Those who aspired for the life of this

world said: ‘We wish we had like what Korah has been given! Verily he owns a great fortune’.”

When the power and wealth are in the hand of some negligent persons and they are the cause of boasting, gaudiness, and luxury; and showing the wealth and property to others boastingly, this manner is one of the qualities of Korah.

The boastful wealthy persons usually afflict with kinds of madness, one branch of which is ‘the madness of exhibiting wealth’. They take pleasure to show their own wealth to others. They feel peace of mind when they ride a good precious mount and pass through the crowd of the poor while, by making dust unto their faces, they despise them.

This showing wealth is often a calamity for their lives, because it fosters grudge in people’s hearts.

This evil action may have a motive such as: ‘Allurement of covetous persons’ and the like, but they do this deed even without this motive. This is a kind of desire, not a program and plan.

However, Korah was not an exception from this law, but he was considered as a clear example of it. The Qur’an has stated it through a sentence in this verse.

It says:

“So he went forth unto his people in his adornment...”

The application of the Arabic word /fi/ (in) in the phrase: ‘in his adornment’ expresses this fact that he used all his own ability and power in order to show his final adornment and his ultimate wealth, and with no words, it is clear that how large activities he can do by this wealth.

Of course, there are many stories or legends cited in history upon this field which are not necessary to be mentioned.

But, as usual, here people were divided into two groups: 1) The majority of people who were some mammonish persons and when they saw that gazing scene, their hearts shook, and gasped moaning, and they wished they could be in the place of Korah, even for one day, or one hour, or one moment.

They thought what a sweet and attractive life they could have, and how a happy and pleasant world it were for them!

The Qur’an says:

“...Those who aspired for the life of this world said: ‘We wish we had like what Korah has been given! Verily he owns a great fortune’.”

They said that praise be upon Korah and upon his abundant wealth! What a rank and grandeur! And what a glory it is that history does not contain anything similar to that! This is a God-given glory...and

some statements like them.

In fact, here the furnace of the trial of Allah became hot. From one side, Korah is in the middle of the furnace and he has to be examined for his arrogance; and, on the other side, the mammonists of the Children of Israel are around this furnace.

The painful punishment, of course, is the punishment that exists after such an exhibition and from that height he falls down into the depth of the ground.

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 80

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلْقَاهَا
إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ

80. “And those who were given (true) knowledge said: ‘Woe to you! Allah’s reward is better for him who believes and acts righteously, and none shall attain it save the patient’.”

The real knowledge draws man towards Hereafter, piety, and righteous deed. An aware learned man is he whom the dazzling glare of the world might not attract, and his manner can advise the mammonist ones and affect them.

However, besides this large group of mammonist, whom were referred to in the previous verse, there were also several learned, thoughtful, pious, and faithful people present there whose level of thought was above and superior than these affairs.

Those were some men who did not estimate the personality of their people with the criterion of gold and force. They were those who did not seek the values in the material potentialities, and always used to laugh at these kinds of exhibitions mockingly, and belittled these empty minds.

Yes, a group of such men attended there, as the Qur’an says:

“And those who were given (true) knowledge said: ‘Woe to you! Allah’s reward is better for him who believes and acts righteously...”

Then, they added:

“...and none shall attain it save the patient’.”

Those who prove steadfastness against exiting dazzling glare of the ornaments of the world; those who stand firm like mountains in the Divine trials for wealth, property, fear, and calamity, yes these ones are

eligible for the Divine rewards.

It is certain that the purpose of the Qur'anic phrase:

“Those who were given (true) knowledge”

is the faithful learned men of the Children of Israel among whom there were some great men such as ‘Yusha’.

It is interesting that against the Qur'anic sentence:

“Those who aspired for the life of this world”,

mentioned in the previous verse, about the first group, the Qur'an does not apply the sentence:

“Those who aspired for the life of Hereafter”,

but it emphasizes only on ‘knowledge’, because ‘knowledge’ is the main origin and root of faith, steadfastness, eager and love to the Divine reward, and the abode of Hereafter.

By the way, the application of the sentence:

“Those who were given (true) knowledge”

is a severe answer to Korah who considered himself a knowledgeable one. The Qur'an implies that these are true knowledgeable whose level of thought is very high, not the arrogant, obstinate and proud Korah. Thus, we see that the origin and root of all blessings and bounties returns to real knowledge.

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 81

فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنْتَصِرِينَ

81. “And We caused the earth to swallow up him and his house, then for him there was no group to help him against (the wrath of) Allah, nor could he defend himself.”

Man can spiritually move alongside two curves: toward upward that he reaches ascension and toward downward that he goes down deeply into the lowliness.

The final end of amassing wealth is often miser, pride and destruction.

By this action, Korah caused his disobedience to reach its climax, but regarding this matter there has

been recorded in history and narrations another event that is the sign of Korah's ultimate impudence, it is as follows:

One day Moses (as) told Korah that Allah had commanded Moses to take the right of the needy (Zakat) of his property. Then Korah with a simple calculation understood how great amount of money he had to pay in this way. He refused it, and in order to exonerate himself, he struggled against Moses (as).

Once he stood among a rich group of the Children of Israel and said:

"O people! Moses has intended to devour your properties. He brought the command of prayer and you accepted it; you accepted all other things, too; do you also bear to give him your property?"

They said:

"No. But how can we stand against him?"

Here, Korah thought of a Satanic action. He said:

"I have thought a very good way for it. In my opinion, we must produce a file of the act of indecency for him. We must send for a bad woman among the prostitutes of the Children of Israel and tell her to go to Moses and accuse him that he had a liaison with her."

They approved it and sent for that kind of woman and told her whatever she demanded they would give her for the act that she might attest that Moses had a liaison with her. The woman accepted that suggestion.

This was from one side, on the other side Korah went to Moses and said it was better that he (as) would gather the Children of Israel and recite the commands of Allah for them. Moses accepted it and gathered them in one place.

People said to Moses to reiterate the ordinances of his Lord. Moses said that He had commanded him that they should not worship any one other than Him, they should regard for kinship, and do so and so; and in regard for an adulterer He has ordered that if it was an adultery (fornication with a married one) he had to be stoned.

At this time, those rich people of the Children of Israel who had conspired said:

"Even if that man is you yourself!"

He (as) answered:

"Yes, if it is I myself."

Here, they made their shamelessness that reached its climax and said:

“We know that you have committed this action yourself and you have associated with that woman who is a prostitute.”

Then, they immediately sent after that particular bad woman and told her to say her attestation. Moses addressed her and said:

“I administer you an oath by Allah to say the reality clearly.”

By hearing this statement, the bad woman shook severely, trembled and was touched at heart. She said:

“Now that you say so I tell the truth manifestly. These people invited me and promised to pay me a heavy reward that I accuse you; but I bear witness that you are pure and you are the messenger of Allah.”

Another narration indicates that that woman said:

“Woe on me! I have committed many wrong actions, but I have not denigrated the messenger of Allah.”

Then she showed the two purses of money that they had given her and said whatever was to say.

Moses (as) fell prostrated and wept, and it was then that the command of the punishment of Korah, the evildoer, was issued.

This very narration denotes that Allah gave the command of /xasf/ (swallow) at Moses disposal.⁷

In this regard, the Qur'an says:

“And We caused the earth to swallow up him and his house...”

Yes, when inordinacy contumacy and humiliation of the poor believers, as well as plotting against the pure messenger of Allah, reaches its peak, the Power of Allah works and puts an end to the life of the plotters. It destroys them so severely that their life becomes a gazing-stock for all.

The act of /xasf/, which here means: to sink, and being concealed into the earth, has happened many times during the history of man. It occurs when a horrible earthquake comes and the ground splits and swallows a city or some villages. But this one was different with other instances. Its main prey was only Korah, his house, and his treasures.

Strange! Pharaoh sinks in the waves of Nile; Korah sinks in the depth of the ground; water, which is the source of life, is commissioned to destroy the people of Pharaoh; and the ground, which is the place of comfort, becomes the graveyard of Korah and Korah-like people.

It is certain that Korah was not the only inhabitant of that house. It was he and his entourage; he and his

confederates, he and his unjust cruel friends. All of those people sank into the depth of the ground.

The verse continues saying:

“...then for him there was no group to help him against (the wrath of) Allah, nor could he defend himself.”

Neither those who received rations from him, nor his loyal friends, nor his wealth and properties, could save him from the Divine punishment, and all of them sank into the ground.

Surah Al-Qasas – Verse 82

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيَكَآءُ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلَا أَن مِّنَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيَكَآءُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ

82. “And (by seeing Korah’s annihilation) those who yearned for his position the day before were saying: ‘Ah! That Allah enlarges the sustenance for whomever He pleases, of His servants, or restricts it. Had not Allah been gracious to us, He might have made the earth swallow us, too. Ah! (know) that the unbelievers do not prosper’.”

Sometimes it happens that a supplication is not accepted or a desire is not obtained, and this very thing is the greatest grace and favour of Allah upon man.

This noble verse illustrates the surprising change of the spectators who yesterday were enraptured and rejoiced by seeing the glorious rank of Korah and desired that they were in his place forever, or at least, for a moment. This scene is, indeed, wonderful and instructive.

The verse says:

“And (by seeing Korah’s annihilation) those who yearned for his position the day before were saying: ‘Ah! That Allah enlarges the sustenance for whomever He pleases, of His servants, or restricts it...”

They said that it was proved for them that day that no one has anything from him and whatever exists is from the side of Allah. Neither His grant is the reason of His consent and pleasure from a person, nor his restriction is the reason for the absence of his value before the presence of Allah.

It is by means of these very properties that He puts individuals and nations under examination and makes their conducts and morals manifest.

Then, they thought that if Allah accepted their invocation and put them in the place of Korah yesterday, what could they do that day?

Therefore, they decided to thank for that bounty of Allah and said:

“...Had not Allah been gracious to us, He might have made the earth swallow us, too...”

“...Ah! (know) that the unbelievers do not prosper’.”

Now we see the truth with our own eyes and understand the result of pride and negligence as well as the end of disbelief and lust. We also realize that how terrible these kinds of lives are which have a charming landscape!

By the way, it is understood from the recent sentence of this story that the end of proud Korah was that he died with infidelity and faithlessness, though one day he was in the row of the readers of Torah and was counted among the learned men of the Children of Israel, and he was one of the close relatives of Moses (as).

Some points

The story of Korah, the sample of a proud rich man, has been stated in the Qur'an through seven verses in a very interesting way, and it removes the curtain from the facts of many lives of human beings.

This story makes it clear that the pride and lust of wealth sometimes draws man towards kinds of madness; the madness of exhibiting the wealth and showing it to others, and the madness of taking delight from despising the poor.

And also the same pride and unlimited love to gold and silver sometimes causes man to commit the most hideous and shameful sins. For example, he stands against the pure prophet of Allah, and struggles against the Truth, and even he charges the most shameless accusations to the most sincere men, and he may even use of his wealth in taking from some bad women to reach his aim.

Pride originated from wealth usually does not let man to hearken the advice of some godly advisers and the benevolent statements.

They have provided this imaginary splendid life while in their city, and sometimes on their close neighbourhood, there are some deprived persons who usually sleep hungry at night; and it is surprising that their conscience has become so feeble that they do not feel the least inconvenience from this painful situation.

Sometimes their animals have the most comfortable life, and they enjoy even the existence of teacher, physician, and proper medicine while there are some oppressed people living in their neighbourhood who have the worst conditions of life; or they are sick, moaning in the bed because of pain while they have neither a physician nor any medicine.

When we discuss these affairs about some particular persons in a society, and sometimes about a particular country, it means that it is a country as that of Korah opposite to other countries, of the world, as we see, in our time, about America and many countries of Europe.

They have provided the most glorious life for themselves by exploitation of the people of the third world and those of poor countries, so that sometimes their extra food stuffs are wasted and if they were gathered in a correct way, they would be enough to satiate millions of hungry men. Sometimes they even pour their extra wheat into the sea.

When we say 'poor countries' it does not mean that they are really poor, but they are, in fact, some thief-stricken and robbed people. Sometimes the best and the most valuable means are in their disposal, but these great plunderers take all of those precious capitals and cause them to be poor.

These are some people with qualities of Korah who have built the foundation of their castles of cruelty upon the ruin houses of the oppressed; and the situation of the world will be in the same form unless the oppressed of the world unite and send them, like Korah, to the depth of the ground. Those oppressors drink wine and laugh joyfully while these oppressed ones must always be sad and do weep.

Of course, it must not be considered from what was said that Islam has a negative position in the face of wealth and opposes it. It must not be understood that Islam admires the poor and invites Muslims to poverty or takes it as a means for reaching the spiritual accomplishments.

On the contrary, Islam emphasizes on wealth as an effective means, and in Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 180 wealth has been rendered into *ixayr* (**goodness**).

Imam Baqir (as) has said:

*"The world is a good help for obtaining the Hereafter."*⁸

The verses under discussion, which reproach the proud rich Korah the most severely, is an expressive evidence for this subject; but Islam approves a wealth by which the abode of Hereafter can be sought, as the learned men of the Children of Israel told Korah:

"And seek by means of what Allah has given you, the abode of the Hereafter..."⁹.

Islam approves a wealth in which there is good unto all and it contains the meaning of:

"...be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you..."¹⁰

Islam admires a wealth in which this meaning is seen that the Qur'an says:

"...and so not forget your portion in this world..."¹¹

Finally, Islam seeks for a wealth which is not the cause of mischief on the earth, forgetting the human

values, being involved in the race of amassing wealth and ‘multiplication of properties and children,’ and does not draw man toward ‘self-admiration’ and ‘humiliating others’, and even opposing the Divine prophets.

Wealth must be a means for the benefit of others, for filling the present economic gaps, for using as a remedy upon the worrying wounds of the deprived and applying for removing the needs and difficulties of the oppressed.

Being interested in such a wealth, with such aims, it is not an attachment to the world; it is an attachment to the Hereafter. As it is said in a tradition that one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (as) came to him and said as a grievance that they were after the world and were interested in it, (and they were afraid of becoming mammonists).

Imam Sadiq (as) (who knew the purity and virtue of that man) said:

“What do you want to do with this wealth of the world?”

The man answered:

“I want to supply the expenditure of myself and my household, help my relatives, spend in the way of Allah, and perform pilgrimage (Hajj) and lesser pilgrimage (‘Umrah).”

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“This is not to seek the world, this is to seek the Hereafter.”

Here, the corruption of the belief of two groups is made manifest: a group of people who are apparently Muslims but they are unaware of the teachings of Islam and introduce Islam as the supporter of the tyrant oppressors; and a group of self-interested enemies who want to show the feature of Islam wrongly and try to introduce it as a religion opposite to wealth and adherent of poverty.

They want to say in principle, a poor nation cannot live freely and honourably; poverty is the means of dependence; poverty is the source of disgrace both in this world and the next; and poverty invites man to sin and pollution.

A tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“The needlessness that hinders you from injustice (and violating others’ right) is better than the poverty that makes you commit sin.”¹²

The Islamic communities must try and do their best to become rich and needless from others (none Islamic nations), so much that they become independent and stand on their own feet. As the result of poverty, they must not devote their modesty, honour and independence for depending on others, and know that this is the noble line of Islam.

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1. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, sermon 82
 2. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, saying 192
 3. Ma'aniy-ul-'Akhbar, narrated by Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 4, P. 139
 4. Surah Ar-Rahman, No. 55, verse 41
 5. Ibid, verse 39
 6. Surah Al-Hijr, No. 15, verse 92
 7. Durr-ul-Manthur, Tafsir-i-Al-Mizan, Vol. 16, P. 84
 8. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. 12, P. 17
 9. The current Surah, verse 77
 10. Ibid
 11. Ibid
 12. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Vol. 12, P. 17

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