

Section 8: Submission to Allah; Abraham's Arguments

Submission to Allah brings peace – Abraham's reasoning for the unity of Allah.

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 71 – 72

قُلْ أَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلَى أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ
كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانٌ لَهُ أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَى الْهُدَى ابْتَغَا
قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى وَأْمُرْنَا لِنُسَلِّمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

وَأَنْ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

71. "Say: 'Shall we call, besides Allah, on that which neither profits nor harms us, and shall we be returned back on our heels after that Allah has guided us? Like someone whom Satans have lured (and) bewildered in the earth, (while) he has companions who invite him to the guidance (saying): 'Come unto us'. Say: 'Verily (it is) the guidance of Allah which is the (true) guidance, and we are commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds'."

72. "And that Establish prayer and be in awe of Him, and it is He unto Whom you shall be mustered'."

The verse addresses the Prophet (S) to tell the disbelievers who invite people to idolatry whether they should worship the things that neither benefit them nor harm them, and, by abandoning the best religion, turn back on their heels after that Allah has guided them and has shown them the straight path. The

verse says:

"Say: 'shall we call, besides Allah, on that which neither profits nor harms us, and shall we be returned back on our heels after that Allah has guided us?...."

The continuation of the statement of the verse implies that if they return to idolatry they will be like a person whom Satan have seduced and bewildered on the earth; although he has companions who, inviting him to the guidance, tell him to go toward those friends.

But he does not accept their invitation and does not go toward them. He has been so influenced by Satan that he is deprived of recognizing his own interests.

The verse says:

"... Like someone whom Satans have lured (and) bewildered in the earth, (while) he has companions who invite him to the guidance (saying): 'Come unto us ' Say: 'Verily (it is) the guidance of Allah which is the (true) guidance,"

The only guidance that causes prosperity and comfort is Allah's guidance that calls human beings to monotheism. We are dependants to that very guidance and do not avoid obeying it. We do not follow your invitation.

We accept and follow that invitation that calls us toward Islam (submission) and guides us to trust our affairs to the One Who is 'The Lord of the worlds'.

"... and we are commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds '."

The meaning of the second verse of the above verses is linked to the meaning of the previous verse. It enjoins us to maintain the prayer and avoid committing sins of Allah so that we do not confront His punishment.

He is the Lord unto Whom all human-kind will be mustered on the Day of Judgment when everybody will receive the reward or the retribution of one's own deeds. The verse says:

"And that 'Establish prayer and be in awe of Him, and it is He unto Whom you shall be mustered'."

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 73

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

73. "And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth with the Truth; and the day He says 'Be!' and, it is. His word is the Truth, and to Him belongs all sovereignty on the day, when the trumpet will be blown; knower of the Unseen and the visible, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware."

In this verse, the idea saying that 'the Trumpet will be blown only once' is pointed out, while in **Surah-Zumar. No.39. verse 68** it is said that the Trumpet will be blown twice. The first blow will be the destroyer of everything, and the second one will be the raiser of people for the Resurrection.

In the previous verses, the words were about submission before Allah and establishing prayer. Now, in this verse, the reason of that meaning is mentioned. It implies that the creation entirely is with Him, and He is All- Wise, All-Aware, and He is cognizant of all things.

"And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth with the Truth; and the day He says 'Be!' and, it is. His word is the Truth, and to Him belongs all sovereignty on the day, when the trumpet will be blown...."

Creation has been done wisely and purposefully. This idea has been mentioned in several verses of the Qur'an, including **Surah Sad, No. 38 verse 27** where it says:

"And we did not create the heaven and the earth and what is between them in vain....."

Therefore, there is no hinderance for Allah's Will.

"...He says 'Be!' And, it is...."

Unseen and visible, or concealed and manifested, are the same for Allah. The verse, as His Attributes, says:

"... Knower of the Unseen and the visible....."

The basis of the sovereignty of Allah is on His Wisdom and knowledge.

On the Day of Resurrection, the splendor and appearance of Allah's Power will be manifested to everybody, since ordinary means are not effective there. For this very reason, His Power will be manifested more.

Thus, since the Creator and Administrator of the world of existence is both wise and aware, then do obey Him. The verse says:

"He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware."

However, by the blown of the Trumpet, the order of the universe will be ruined, but the reckoning and the exact records will remain fixed and proper.

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 74

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ آزَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا آلِهَةً إِنِّي أَرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

74. "And (remember) when Abraham said to his father 'Azar: 'Do you take idols for gods? Verily I see you and your people in manifest error' ."

The Arabic word /'ab/ ordinarily means 'father', but it is also applied with the sense of mother's grandfather, uncle, and educator.

According to the statement of the Messenger of Allah (S) who said:

"Ali and I both are the fathers of this community".

It is understood that 'Azar was Abraham's uncle, not his father. Abraham's ancestors were totally monotheists. This meaning has also been cited by 'Tabarsy, 'Alusi and Suyuty, the sunnite scholars, saying that 'Azar was not Abraham's father. Moreover, Abraham supplicated for his father and mother:

"O our Lord! grant me and my parents protection ..." ¹

This is in the case that no Muslim is rightful to supplicate for a pagan, even if the disbeliever is his family member. Abraham's seeking forgiveness for his uncle, 'Azar, had also been before the time that his belief in polytheism became manifest.

So, when Abraham (as) realized that 'Azar was not a person to accept the truth, he (as) denounced from him and departed. The Qur'an in this regard says:

"And 'Ibrahim asking forgiveness for his sir was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him." ²

From what was said above, it is understood that the word /'ab/, mentioned in this verse, does not mean father. Besides, the name of Abraham's father, as recorded in history books, has been 'Tarukh', not 'Azar.³

In the meantime, some Islamic traditions denote that father and the ancestors of the Prophet of Islam (S) up to Hadrat 'Adam wholly were monotheists. It has been narrated from the Prophet himself (S) who said:

*"Ceaselessly Allah, the Sublime, transported me from the purified Coins of men into the purified wombs (of mothers), and never had He polluted me with the filth of paganism ".*⁴

A large number of Sunnite and Shi'ite commentators have pointed out this tradition in their books. A few of them are: Tabarsi; in Majma'-ul-Bayan; Neyshaburi, in Qara'ib-ul-Qur'an; Fakhr-i-Razi; in Tafsir-ul-kabir; and 'Alusi; in Ruh-ul-Bayan.

There are some points that should be noted here carefully:

1. In the style of invitation to the Truth, close relatives should be invited first.

"And (remember) when Abraham said to his father 'Azar: ..."

2. In facing and treating others, the scale is the Truth, not the age, nor being experimented, nor abundance of people. Therefore, Abraham has clearly explained the Truth for his uncle, who was older than him, and has warned him, too.

3. Idolatry is a deviation that both alert consciences and intellect criticize it.

... 'Do you take idols for gods? ..."

"... Verily I see you and your people in manifest error !"

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 75

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ

75. "And thus did we show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure."

The Qur'anic word /malakut/ is derived from /mulk/ to which two particles of emphasis and exaggeration are added. The holy phrase: ***'The dominions of the heavens and the earth'***, mentioned in the verse, means the true and absolute ownership of the heavens and the earth.

It is cited in Atyab-ul-Bayan upon the commentary of the Qur'an that the worlds are divided into four categories: 'Lahut' (the world of Divine Essence of which none knows save Allah), Jabarut, (the world of incorporeal beings), 'Malakut' (the world of bodies), and 'Nasut' (the world) of generation and corruption with changes and transformations).

Mu'jam-ul- Wasit, an Arabic Dictionary, announces that /Malakut/ is the world of secrets, orders, wonders, and the world of Unseen'.

'Alusi says that 'the dominions of the heavens' means 'their wonders'. By seeing the dominions of the heavens and the earth, Abraham was fairly acquainted with the way of treatment, creation, wisdom, and Lordship of Allah.

"And thus did we show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure."

According to the statement of Imam Baqir (as); Allah bestowed such a light and ability upon the eyes of Abraham that he could see what was inside the depth of the heavens and the earth.⁵

Of course, whoever recognizes the Truth and invites others to it, without being afraid of anything, Allah bestows upon him 'a heavenly light', (like Abraham (as) whom the holy verse referred to).

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 76

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ

76. "So when the night outspread over him, he saw a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said: 'I do not like the setting ones.'"

Abraham's Dispute with Pagans

When Abraham was disputing with the polytheists, he wanted to show condescension and softness in discussion, in order to reject the belief of the opposite party. He did not believe, of course, in what he told them because it was against his infallibility.

Stating '*O my people!*', in the second verse after the abovementioned one, is a sign of condescension in saying '***This is my Lord!***'. It was also for this reason that when he saw the setting of the moon and the sun, he said: "... ***Surely I am quit of that you associate (with Allah)***' ..." (verse 78), and he did not say 'that I associate'.

A thing that has rising and setting is objective to some regularity, not in a position of subjugating them. A thing that has movement is 'creatable' and a creatable thing cannot be God. At first, Abraham temporarily expresses its acceptance in order that he can reasonably reject it later.

Such reasoning, in deed, is one of the best methods of preaching and awakening the innate dispositions, actuating the minds and thoughts, and paying attention to sentiments.

Again, it causes us to understand that the true beloved is the one who is not captive to place, time and varieties, and also is not temporary, limited, and numerous.

"So when the night outspread over him, he saw a star. He said: 'This is my Lord.' But when it set, he said: 'I do not love the setting ones.'"

Surah Al-'An'am, Verses 77 - 79

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَأُنَّ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

77. "Then when he saw the moon uprising, he said: 'This is my Lord!' But when it set, he said: 'If my Lord does not guide me I shall surely be of the people gone astray.' "

78. "And when he saw the sun uprising, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is greater!' But when it set, he said: 'O my people! Surely I am quit of that you associate. (with Allah) '."

79. "Verily I have turned my face (myself wholly) toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth, being upright, and I am not of the idolaters."6

When Abraham saw that people used to worship idols and adored the sun, the moon and stars, he decided to aware them of their fault and to open the window of their insight. He tried to show them the way of thinking and reasoning, so that they could realize that none of the things they were worshipping had eligibility of being worshipped, since all of them were creatable.

Abraham (as) said:

"This is my Lord!"

This phrase is the statement of a person who intends to show condescension to his opponent. He (as) knows that the opposite party's belief is wrong, but, without showing any religious prejudice about his own creed, he narrates that person's wrong idea in order to encourage him towards the truth and to clear out his heart from falsehood.

Thus, by reasoning in the next sentence, Abraham (as) has proved the invalidity of the belief of the opposite party.

Abraham (as) told those people:

"I do not love the setting ones "

He meant he did not like worshipping those gods which were covered with such curtains, because those qualities belonged to the corporeal substances. They were some evidences to their being creatable.

"... he said: 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall surely be of the people gone astray '."

Abraham stated this sentence as a warning to his people. He (as) announced that whoever takes the moon, which, like other stars, is a setting one, as his god, is among the astray ones. And, there is no guide to the truth save the Grace and Mercy of Allah.

"And when he saw the sun uprising, he said: 'This is my Lord; this is greater!'... "

Abraham, seeing the sun, said that it was greater (than the others). He has also stated this phrase to show condescension and softness from himself to his opposite party, but after that he said:

"... 'O my people! surely I am quit of that you associate (with Allah)!'."

He implied that he disliked those corporeal substances which they had taken as partners of their Creator.

Then, Abraham (as) continued saying:

"Verily I have turned my face (myself wholly) toward Him Who created the heavens and the earth....."

That is, I have believed in the One Who has created the heavens and the earth. These phenomena themselves indicate that Allah, the Creator, has brought them forth and runs their different circumstances and regularities Himself.

He (S.w.T.) specifies their way and appoints the times of their risings and settings. Hence, I have turned my self wholly to His Lordship sincerely, and I am not one of the polytheists.

"... being upright, and I am not of the idolaters."

The Qur'anic term /hanif/ (upright) is derived from /hanafa/ with the sense of 'sincere' and 'without any deviation'.

Also, the Arabic word /fatara/ (created) originally means: 'cleared'. It may refer to some meaning which is found in the modern science. It suggests that, at first, the universe had been in the form of a single mass. After that, the mass cleft into some separate parts and the celestial bodies came into existence one after another.

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 80

وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

80. "And his people disputed with him. He (Abraham) said: 'Do you dispute with me about Allah while He has guided me? And I do not fear of what you associate with Him; unless my Lord wishes for something. My Lord includes everything in His knowledge. Will you not then remember?'"

Abraham (as) continued his dispute with his people, the idolaters. Pointing to that circumstance, the Qur'an says:

"And his people disputed with him. ..."

Then, in answer to them, Abraham told them why they argued with him and opposed him about Allah while He had guided him unto the path of monotheism under the light of some logical and clear evidences. The verse says:

"... He (Abraham) said: 'Do you dispute with me about Allah while He has guided me? ...'"

It is clearly understood from this verse that Abraham's people, who were idol worshippers, tried hard and did their best to pervert him from his belief as much as it was possible for them.

That was why they threatened him to the retribution and wrath of their gods and idols. They frightened him (as) of them because of his opposition with them.

This meaning is understood from the rest of the verse. The Qur'an, from the tongue of Abraham, says that he does not fear of the idols that they worshipped, because idols have no power to harm anyone unless Allah wishes something.

The verse says:

"... And I do not fear of what you associate with Him; unless my Lord wishes for something....:"

By saying this phrase, it seems that Abraham wants to prevent some probable happenings and to say that supposing some harms and adventures come to him when he is busy with those struggles, they do not concern the idols, but they concern the Will of Allah.

Then, Abraham continues saying that the knowledge of Allah, his Lord, is so vast and inclusive that it

envelops everything.

And, finally, in order to move their thought and contemplation, the statement addresses them, saying:

"... Will you not then remember? ' "

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 81

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

81. "And how should I fear what you have associated, while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority to you? Which of the two parties has more right to security if you have any knowledge?"

Again, the Qur'an begins reproaching their manner and belief, where it says:

"And how should I fear what you have associated...."

Why do you force me to fear from these hand made idols of yours, while it is entirely clear that they have neither gaining nor harm?

But you have not been afraid of the Lord Who is able to give human beings benefit and harm, You dare His Essence and associate some mean beings with Him, and you do worship them.

That is, how could I fear your infidelity? I hate your disbelief, therefore, I have no scare, and Allah does not take me to task for your indecent behavior. It is you who are entangled with polytheism, and therefore, it is you who should fear.

".... while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority to you?"

There have been sent down no evidence from the side of Allah to confirm what you have associated with Him. This fact is understood from this verse that whoever says a statement or follows a religion but he has no reason for it, he is in falsehood; We have reasonably known Allah and stand for worshipping towards Him.

Are we more worthy of security or idol-worshippers who prostrate before idols and persist on this wrong belief zealously? If they apply their intellect, this fact will be manifested to them and they will distinguish between right and wrong. The verse says:

".... Which of the two parties has more right to security if you have any knowledge? "

Surah Al-'An'am, Verse 82

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

82. "Those who believe and do not cloak their Faith with iniquity, those are they for whom is security, and they are guided aright."

In the previous verse, this question was referred to indicating whether the monotheists are secured from the punishment of Allah, or polytheists.

Now, in this verse, in answer to that question, the Qur'an announces that those are more secured from the punishment of Allah who have known Him and testified Him. Such people have recognized their duty and have not mixed their belief with polytheism.

"Those who believe and do not cloak their Faith with iniquity, those are they for whom is security....."

This group, who is secured from the side of Allah, has been issued the decree of being found salvation.

"... and they are guided aright."

However, according to the opinions of many commentators, and basing on some Islamic traditions and narrations, the objective meaning of the term /zulm/, mentioned in this verse, is iniquity. Their evidence is Surah Luqman, No.31. Verse13, which says:

"... Verily polytheism is a grievous iniquity."

Also, some Islamic literature denotes that, next to the Faith, putting the divine leaders aside and referring to other than them is an aspect of injustice.⁷

1. Surah 'Ibrahim, No.14, Verse 41.

2. Surah At-Taubah, No.9, Verse 114

3. Al-Mizan, Majma'-ul-Bayan, and Jawami'-ul-Jami'

4. Cited in Jawami'-ul-Jami', the commentary book

5. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 1, P. 734, Tradition 138

6. The Arabic term /baziq/ is derived from the word /bazaqa/ with the meaning of 'to cleave and cause to flow blood'. As if, rising of the sun or the moon cleaves the curtain of darkness and causes to appear a slight reddish colour around itself.

Abraham (as) disputed with both the star-worshippers and the worshippers of the moon and the sun.

7. Tafsir Nur-uth-Thaqalayn

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