

Section 9: The Ministry of Moses

Surah Hud – Verses 96 – 97

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ

96. “And indeed We sent Moses with Our Signs and a manifest authority,”

97. “Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs; but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not rightly guided.”

The Champion Against Pharaoh

After finishing the story of Shu‘ayb (as) and the people of Madyan, the Qur’an turns to part of the story of Musa bin Imran and his campaign against Pharaoh, which is the seventh story of the prophets referred to in this Surah.

The story of Moses (as) is more frequently mentioned in the Qur’an than that of any other prophet. In over thirty suras, the adventures of Moses, the Pharaoh and the Children of Israel have been mentioned more than one hundred times.

The special aspect of the story of Moses, when compared to that of the other prophets, is that while the other prophets launched their campaigns against misguided and seduced people, Moses, apart from campaigning against them, also had to fight against the Pharaonic system, the oppressive, as well.

However, we must keep in mind that in this part of the story, we focus on one aspect of Moses’ story,

which, though small, yet carries an important lesson for all mankind.

At first, the verse implies that Allah (s.w.t.) sent Moses (as) empowering him with the performance of miracles and endowing him with a powerful argument.

The verse says:

“And indeed We sent Moses with Our Signs and a manifest authority,”

Moses was sent armed with impressive miracles and a powerful argument to Pharaoh and his people. However, the followers of Pharaoh, who felt that their illegitimate interests were being jeopardized, were not ready to submit themselves to him, and accept his miracles and his logic.

Thus, they followed Pharaoh’s command. However, Pharaoh’s command could never have guaranteed their happiness and was not conducive to their development and their salvation.

The verse says:

“Unto Pharaoh and his chiefs; but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not rightly guided.”

Surah Hud – Verse 98

يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوَرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ

98. “He shall go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them into the Fire, and evil is the place (they will be) led to.”

The Arabic term /wird/ means ‘the water which one enters into’. Originally it referred to movement towards water and approaching it. However, gradually, it came to mean ‘to enter’ in all cases.

At any rate, those who are leaders or Imams in this world would be pioneers by leading others towards Paradise or Hell in the Hereafter. A just Imam or an enlightened leader leads people towards Paradise, and the person leading others in the direction of injustice, leads others towards the Hell Fire.

The verse says:

“He shall go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them into the Fire, and evil is the place (they will be) led to.”

Surah Hud – Verse 99

وَأَتَّبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِئْسَ الرِّفْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ

99. “And they are followed by a curse in this world and on the Day of Judgment, and woeful is the gift which shall be given (them).”

Those who become followers of Pharaohs and despots are always associated with infamy and curses and their notorious names are always recorded in the books of history as people seduced by evil.

Thus they will be at a loss both in this world and in the next, and what a bad gift (i.e. the curse of Allah and being distanced from Him) is that which is going to be their share.

The verse says:

“And they are followed by a curse in this world and on the Day of Judgment, and woeful is the gift which shall be given (them).”

Surah Hud – Verse 100

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْقُرَى نَقُصُّهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَائِمٌ وَحَصِيدٌ

100. “(O’ Our Apostle!) This is of the tidings of the towns (which) We relate to you; some of them are still standing and some have been mown down.”

The act of telling didactic stories which are correct and documented is often a divinely inspired act which we must not ignore. Qur’anic stories are the most truthful and the most correct of stories for their story teller is Allah.

The holy verse says:

“(O’ Our Apostle!) This is of the tidings of the towns (which) We relate to you; some of them are still standing and some have been mown down.”

Incidentally, in some cases, Allah recounts that He had exterminated those disobedient people leaving only their traces behind. However, in other cases, He mentions that He had wiped out those evil doers completely together with all their effects.

However, story telling in the Qur'an has an important role and carries with it significant repercussions.

First of all the stories are impressive and attractive.

Secondly it paves the way for accepting the influence of rational and demonstrative reasoning.

Thirdly, it offers another proof of the miraculous nature of the Prophet (S) as an uninstructed individual who brings such news.

And fourthly, it offers instructive lessons for its audience.

Surah Hud – Verse 101

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَا أَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيبٍ

101. “And We did no injustice unto them, but they were unjust unto themselves. When the decree of your Lord came, their gods, whom they invoked other than Allah, availed them not anything and they increased them naught but perdition.”

The Arabic term /tatbib/ is derived from /tabb/ which means ‘sequential loss and gradual death and destruction’.

To punish the oppressor is not called oppression. On the contrary, it is identical with justice. One’s own destiny lies in his own hands, which is his own willful conduct.

No one can be man’s savior but Allah.

None is able to stand against the Will of Allah.

The verse says:

“And We did no injustice unto them, but they were unjust unto themselves. When the decree of your Lord came, their gods, whom they invoked other than Allah, availed them not anything and they increased them naught but perdition.”

Surah Hud – Verse 102

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرْيَ وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ

102. “And such is the grasp (of punishment) of your Lord when He grasps the townships that are unjust. Verily His grasp (punishment) is painful, severe.”

It is certain that Allah’s punishment is quite hard and painful.

The verse says:

“And such is the grasp (of punishment) of your Lord when He grasps the townships that are unjust. Verily His grasp (punishment) is painful, severe.”

This is a general Divine law and an eternal tradition which says that every nation inflicts oppression, violates Divinely established limits, and ignores the leadership, admonitions and guidance of Allah’s prophets, it will be eventually arrested and annihilated by Divine punishment.

Surah Hud – Verses 103 – 104

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَجْمُوعٌ لَهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ
مَشْهُودٌ

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مَعْدُودٍ

103. “Surely in that is a sign for him who fears the chastisement in the Hereafter, that is a Day (when) mankind are to be gathered to, and that Day witnessed (by all).”

104. “And We do not postpone it, but to an appointed term.”

In the previous noble verses, it was explicitly stated that as a general rule those who deny the truth will be dealt with accordingly, and will receive their deserved punishment.

This subtle verse of the holy Qur’an also states that these instructive accounts and the awful, painful events which our predecessors experienced, are some signs toward the path of truth for those who fear the punishments of the Hereafter to seek the truth and follow Divine guidance.

The verse says:

“Surely in that is a sign for him who fears the chastisement in the Hereafter...”

In every aspect, this fleeting world is very insignificant as compared to the Hereafter even in punishment and reprisal. The next world is much more expansive in extent, and those who believe in the

Resurrection will be trembling when they confront these worldly Signs.

Towards the end of the verse, the Qur'an refers to two characteristics of the Day of Resurrection, by saying that it is the Day which is going to be witnessed by all, in such a way that all human beings will be present and see it for themselves.

The verse says:

"...that is a Day (when) mankind are to be gathered to, and that Day witnessed (by all)."

In view of the fact that some persons may claim that such a Day is a remote probability and it is not clear as to when it will arrive, so the Qur'an hastens to add that that Day will not be postponed except for a limited amount of time.

This will be only done for the sake of expediency so that the people of the world may apprehend those scenes elucidated in the Qur'an for their education and that the programs of the prophets can be implemented as far as possible.

The verse says:

"And We do not postpone it, but to an appointed term."

Surah Hud – Verses 105 – 107

يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلِّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَقُوا فَفِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِمَا يُرِيدُ

105. "The day (when) it comes, no soul shall speak but by His leave. Then some of them shall be wretched, and some happy."

106. "Then as for those who are wretched (they) shall be in the Fire, for them therein will be moaning and sighing."

107. "They will abide therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases. Verily your Lord is the (Mighty) Doer of what He intends."

On the Day of Resurrection, the Reckoning Day, silence will prevail everywhere except for those who are permitted to speak.

In the foregoing verses, allusion was made to the Day of Resurrection and the general assembly of people in that great Court. Here, the Qur'an informs us of a part of the fate of people on the Day of the Judgment.

At first it implies that when the Day comes, no one can speak without Allah's permission.

The verse says:

“The day (when) it comes, no soul shall speak but by His leave...”

On that Day, people will go through various stages, each one having its own specifications. In some stages no questions are to be asked, even our mouths will remain shut, only those organs which have been involved and have been imprinted by the performance of their owners would bear testimony by a mute tongue.

However, in other stages, the silence imposed upon the mouths would be removed and mankind will start speaking with Allah's permission, confessing their sins. The guilty will blame each other, and try to attribute their own sins to others, holding them responsible for their deeds.

Towards the end of the verse, the Qur'an divides all people into two categories, saying that some people are stone hearted and some are soft hearted, some are happy while others are unhappy.

The verse continues saying:

“...Then some of them shall be wretched, and some happy.”

This toughness and stone heartedness, on the one hand, and the contentment and happiness on the other, are no more than the consequences of individual behaviors, words, deeds and intentions in this world.

It then expounds upon the state of the wicked, stone hearted and vicious as well as the state of those prosperous and happy individuals in a concise, self explanatory sentence by saying that those who became wicked and stone hearted will be in agony, moaning and crying all the time.

These reflect the conditions of those who are deeply regretful, the kind of crying which saturates them to the point that shows their utmost discomfort because of the severity of their punishment.

The verse says:

“Then as for those who are wretched (they) shall be in the Fire, for them therein will be moaning and sighing.”

It adds further that they will permanently stay in the Hell Fire until the heavens and the earth endure or unless Allah wishes otherwise, for Allah does whatever He wishes.

The verse says:

“They will abide therein so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases. Verily your Lord is the (Mighty) Doer of what He intends.”

Surah Hud – Verse 108

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سَعِدُوا فَبِالْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرَ مَجْذُودٍ

108. “And as for those who are happy, they shall be in Paradise, abiding therein, so long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord pleases: a gift without a break. 1”

The Means of Happiness and Wretchedness

Happiness, which is considered as a lost paradise for man, results from the provision of the means of development for an individual or a community. The opposite of it is wretchedness in which the conditions conducive to progress, development and victory are unfavorable.

However, one must keep in mind that the primary source of happiness and prosperity as well as wretchedness lies in man’s own will. It is he who can provide the means necessary for his own self actualization as well as that of his community. And it is he who can fight the causes of wretchedness or submit to it completely.

The logic of the prophets proclaims that the two are not inherent in man’s nature and even the shortcomings of environment, family and heredity can be transformed through one’s own determination.

If, on the other hand, we deny the principle of man’s free will and take a deterministic approach in our attitude towards him, we will have to consider his happiness and wretchedness as inherent in him or as the effects of determinism which is definitely condemned in the literature of the prophets as well as in the school of rationalism.

Interestingly, in narrations attributed to the holy Prophet (S) and the Imams of the Ahl-ul-Bayt (as), one reads that the means which provide grounds for one’s happiness or wretchedness have been indicated.

The study of these Islamic narrations leads man to contemplate the Islamic way of thinking about this important problem, and gives him guidelines to help him seek objective realities and the true means of

happiness instead of taking recourse in superstitious beliefs and wrong traditions.

Imam Sadiq (as), quoting his great grandfather, Amir-ul-Mu'mineen (as) says:

*“The truth of the matter regarding prosperity is that the last stage of man’s life ends with righteous deeds, and the fact of the matter concerning wretchedness is that the last stage of one’s life comes to an end with a vicious act.”*²

And again the Prophet (S) declares:

*“Four conditions, if fulfilled, result in happiness and four conditions pave the way for wretchedness. The former consists of a wife with decent conduct, a spacious home, a worthy neighbor, and a good horse, while wretchedness consists of an evil doing wife, a bad neighbor, an awfully small house and a bad horse.”*³

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“Perfect happiness comes about when one’s whole life is spent serving Allah.”*⁴

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

*“The faithful who are wise are the happiest ones (on the earth).”*⁵

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“The most fortunate of people are those who associate with brave godly men.”*⁶

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

*“A good temper is one of the prime sources of one’s happiness.”*⁷

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) remarks that one’s happiness lies in his attaining religion and the practice of it for the Hereafter.⁸

The Prophet of Allah (S) says:

*“Verily a Muslim man’s happiness lies in his child resembling him, having a beautiful and God-fearing wife, a large house and a good horse (to ride).”*⁹

As for wretchedness, Imam Rida (as) in a tradition says:

*“Allah has allocated wretchedness for liars and culprits.”*¹⁰

Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) once was asked:

“Who is the worst villain and the most vicious person?”

To which he answered:

*“He who exchanges his religion for another person’s worldly life.”*¹¹

The holy Prophet (S) said:

“Shall I not tell you who the most vicious villain is?”

They answered:

“Yes, O’ Prophet of Allah!”

He said:

*“He who is empty handed in this world together with the punishment of the Hereafter.”*¹²

We would like to take refuge in Allah from such a villain age.

Comparing the paths shown towards one’s happiness and wretchedness in the above quotations and their objectivity, with the superstitious beliefs which still attract large numbers of people in this era of the atom and space travel, one is led right away to the reality that Islamic instructions are quite logical and extremely well calculated.

And what a great number of people have there been who have become entangled in the complications arising from such superstitions preventing them from effectively living their daily lives bringing them only misfortune and pain.

Regarding happiness and wretchedness, Islam obliterates all superstitious beliefs, and guides us in everything that we do strengthening and clarifying our ethical responsibilities, attitudes, conduct, and way of thinking.

Surah Hud – Verse 109

فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِمَّا يَعْبُدُ هَؤُلَاءِ مَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِنَّا
لَمُوفُونَ نَصِيبَهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنْقُوصٍ

109. “So be not then in doubt as to what these (men) worship. They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before (them), and verily We shall pay them back (in full) their portion undiminished.”

One result which can be inferred from the stories of the previous generations is that the prophets and

those following them, those who were truly faithful, should not fear the abundance of the enemies and with no hesitation try to defeat the unjust idol worshippers they are confronted because the helps of Allah are certain.

Therefore, He says to His Prophet that he should not have the shadow of a doubt as to what these people worship for they only follow in the footsteps of their ancestors and do not, in fact, really worship anything at all.

Thus their destiny is no better than that of their forefathers. They shall be compensated in full and Allah will not give them short of what is their due (of punishment). And were they to return to the true path, their share of Allah's reward will be preserved.

The verse says:

“So be not then in doubt as to what these (men) worship. They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before (them), and verily We shall pay them back (in full) their portion undiminished.”

In actual fact, this verse depicts that whatever we have read about past generations had not been fairy tales or myths and their realities have not been confined to only the previous generations. They constitute eternal examples for all men, past, present, and future, though they may take place in different circumstances and with different forms.

In the meantime, though this sublime verse is addressed to the Prophet (S), it targets the people so that they may not be in doubt or be hesitant.

1. Although Allah's Will has no limits even to expel the people in paradise, if we focus our attention on the climactic highlight of the last verse and the promises given in other verses, we can conclude that He would not do such a thing and when one enters Paradise he will remain there permanently.

2. Bihar ul 'Anwar, vol. 68, p. 364

3. Bihar ul 'Anwar, vol. 104, p. 98

4. Nahj ul Fasahah, p. 375

5. Ghurar ul Hikam, vol. 2, p. 397

6. Madinat ul Balaqah, vol. 2, p. 462

7. Nahj ul Fasahah, p. 57

8. Ghurar ul Hikam, vol. 4, p. 144

9. Bihar, vol. 73 p. 149

10. Bihar, vol. 5, p. 154

11. Bihar, vol. 72, p. 270

12. Bihar, vol. 100, p. 70

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