

## The Case of Prophet Yunus (a.s.)

Another verse which is considered to be incompatible with the concept of *'ismah* is about Prophet Yúnus (a.s.).

### [Chapter 21 \(al-Anbiya'\) verses 87–88:](#)

*And (remember) Yúnus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never have power over him (naqdira). Then he called in the darkness [of night, sea, and fish]: "There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of the unjust ('alimeen).*

So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers.

The common translation of the words *naqdira* and *'alimeen* make these two verses incompatible with the concept of *'ismah*.

1. The first question against *'ismah* in this passage is about the action of Prophet Yúnus: he left his people when the punishment subsided without him knowing about it. Was Yúnus angry at Allah?

The most that this verse says is that Yúnus went away in anger; it does not say that he was angry with Allah. So we have no choice but to interpret this verse by saying that Yúnus left the people while he was angry with them for not believing him.

2. The second question is about the sentence: "He thought that We would never have power (*naqdira*) over him." Some people have taken the word *naqdira* in the meaning of "having power," thus imply that Yúnus went away in anger thinking that God "would never have power over him".

Firstly, if this meaning is to be taken seriously, then Yúnus would become a *kafir*, an unbeliever!

Secondly, the word *naqdira* (which is from *qadr*) has been used many times in the Qur'an for "restricting of the provision" by Allah. For example, in chapter 13, verse 26, Allah says, "**Allah expands and straitens (yaqdiru) the provision for whomsoever He pleases.**" Or, for instance, in chapter 89, verses 15–16, Allah says: "**As for man: when his Lord tries him by treating him with honour and**

***giving him an easy life, he says 'My Lords honours me.' But when He tries him by straitening (qadara) his provision for him he says, 'My Lord has disgraced me.'***”

In conclusion, we can say that the first sentence of the passage under discussion means: And (remember) Yúnus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never straiten [the provision] over him.” This, at most, means that Yúnus thought that because he was God's prophet, his Lord would never straiten his provision for him; he had taken Allah's provision for granted. It has nothing to do with issue of Allah having no power over him.

3. If Yúnus had committed no sin by leaving his people, then why did he say that, “surely I am one of the ***‘alimeen***, the unjust”?

As mentioned earlier in the case of Prophet Adam (a.s.), the word ***‘ulm*** does not necessarily imply “injustice” and “sin”. It also means “to make haste” and “to come to harm”. Any of these two meanings are compatible with the concept of ***‘ismah*** and also correct in the case of Prophet Yúnus.

The verse would then mean as follows: “There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of those who make haste” or “There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of those who come to harm”.

This explanation is further supported by the next verse in which Allah says, “So We responded to him and delivered him from the grief, and thus do We deliver the believers.” The ***‘ulm*** mentioned in the prayer of Yúnus is explained by Allah as ***‘al-ghamm***—grief”, and not as sin or injustice; that is why Allah said ***‘najjayna***—delivered” and not “forgiven”.

---

**Source URL:**

<https://www.al-islam.org/fr/infallibility-prophets-quran-sayyid-muhammad-rizvi/case-prophet-yunus#comment-0>