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24. The Ethos Of Prophet John (Yahya)

Prophet John was born 5585 years after the Fall of Adam. He is the son of Prophet Zachariah. His mother is Eisha, the daughter of Imran and sister of Virgin Mary. Her mother gave birth to him while she was six months pregnant. Prophet John is one of the greatest of Bani-Israel Prophets as the Quran says:

"Peace be on him on the day he was born and on the day he dies, and on the day he is raised to life." (***19: 15***)

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

As a child, when he went to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Baytul-Moqaddas, he found the servants of the House of God dressed in coarse garment engaged in prayer. Upon his return he asked his mother to sew a coarse garment. His mother too, sewed for him a coarse garment of camel wool. He went back to the Mosque, engaged in prayer benefiting from the sermons of his father, Zacharia. The Quran Says:

"And dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient." (***19: 14***)

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا

He had wept so much out of fear of God that his cheeks were scarred with tears. He never married.

"An honorable and chaste and a Prophet from among the good ones." (***3:39***)

وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

John was ordained Prophet when he was only seven years old.

"And We granted him wisdom while yet a child." (***19: 12***)

وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

John then left Baytul-Moqqadas for the Bank of Jordan River where he invited the family of Israel to Moses Law in Judea. He baptized in the Jordan River every one whom he admonished not to commit sin with his sermon. When Mary brought Jesus to Jordan, he went to John saying: Baptize me. John said: it is I who have need of baptism from you. But Jesus said: Let it be so now. Then John gave him baptism.

Herod, the king, was in love with Herodia the wife of his brother, Philpus. He asked John to give him permission to cohabit with her. John considered it as opposed to Moses Law. Hence Herod became furious deciding to kill John. However, he was fearful of people's rebellion. Therefore, he ordered to put him in jail. Then he cohabited with his sister-in-law. Herod used to celebrate his birthday every year. On the same occasion, he threw a party with all preparations. At this time Herodia had made everything possible to look beautiful. She entered the party, danced and fascinated Herod in such a way that he said: I will give you everything you wish even if it is half of my kingdom. Having consulted her mother, Herodia said: I wish for John's head. Herod too signed a decree to behead John. Several persons went to Jail, beheaded John, put his head on a tub and brought it to Herod.

His Virtues As Mentioned In The Holy Quran

"... he was one who guarded against evil and dutiful to his parents, and he was not insolent, disobedient." (***19:13-14***)

وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا. وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا.

وَكانَ تَقيًّا: وَكانَ تَقيًّا أي مُخلِصًا مُطيعًا مُتَّقيًا لِما نَهى اللَّهُ عَنهُ وَكانَ مِن تَقواهُ أَنَّهُ لَم يَعمَل خَطيئةً وَلَم يَهَمَّ بِها.

وَبرًّا بِوالِدَيهِ: وَقَضى رَبُّكَ أن لا تَعبدُوا إلا إيّاهُ وَبالوالِدَين إحسانًا.

وَلَم يَكُن: جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا.

"There did Zakariya pray to him as his Lord; he said: My Lord! Grant me from Thee good offspring; surely Thou art the Hearer of prayer. Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a Word from Allah, and honorable and chaste and a Prophet from among the good ones."
(***3:38-39***)

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ. فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

سَيِّدًا، 2- حَصُورًا، 3- نَبيًّا مِن الصّالِحينَ.

سَيِّدًا في العِلمِ وَالعِبادَةِ وَقيلَ في الحِلمِ وَالتَّقوى وَحُسنِ الخُلقِ وَقيلَ كَريمًا على رَبِّه، وَقيلَ: فَقيهًا عالِمًا، وَقيلَ: مُطيعًا لِرَبِّه: وَقيلَ: مُطاعًا، وَقيلَ: سَيِّدًا لِلمُؤمِنينَ بِالرِّياسةِ عَليهِم. رَئيسًا في طاعَةِ اللَّهِ عَلى أهلِ طاعَتِه.

إِنَّهُ يَحصُرُ نَفسَهُ عَنِ الشَّهواتِ. إِنَّهُ لا يَدخُلُ في اللَّعبِ والأباطيل.

وَ نبِيًّا مِنَ الصّالِحينَ: أي رَسُولا شَريفًا رَفيعَ المَنزِلةِ مِن جُملةِ الأنبياءِ.

Dislikes To Play

Children said to John, son of Zacharia: Come and play with us. John said: We have not been created to play.

قالَ الصِّبيانُ لِيَحيى بنِ زَكَريا: اذْهَب بِنا نَلعَبَ، فَقالَ: ما لِلَعبٍ خُلِقنا.

Meeting Jesus Christ

When meeting, Jesus said to John: Ask forgiveness for me, for you are better than I. John said to Jesus: You ask forgiveness for me, for you are better than I. I sent peace upon myself whereas God has sent peace upon you. It was here that the virtue and excellence of both became known.

إِنَّ يَحيى وَعيسى التَقيا، فَقالَ لَهُ عيسى: استَغفِر لي أنتَ خَيرٌ مِنّي فَقالَ لَهُ الآخَرُ اسْتَغْفِر لي أنتَ خَيرٌ مِنّي، فَقالَ لَهُ عيسى: أنتَ خَيرٌ مِنّي سَلَّمتُ عَلى نَفسي وَسَلَّمَ اللَّهُ عَليكَ، فَعُرِفَ واللَّهِ فَضلَهُما.

His Meal And Garment

One day, the holy Prophet entered the assembly of his companions while they were speaking of the virtue and excellence of Prophets. One of them said: Moses is above all in excellence. Another one said: Jesus Christ is above all. The other said: Ibrahim is above all. The holy Prophet said: Why do you not

speak of the martyr, the son of martyr who wore garment of wool, eat from tree out of fear of sin. Ibn-wahah said: The holy Prophet means John, the son of Zacharia.

خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّه صَلَّى اللَّه عَليهِ وَآلهِ عَلى أصحابِه يَومًا وَهُم يَتذاكَرونَ فَضلَ الأنبياءِ فَقالَ قَائلٌ: مُوسى كَليمُ اللَّه، وَقالَ قَائِلٌ: عيسى رُوحُ اللَّه وَكَلِمَتُهُ، وَقالَ قَائِلٌ: إبراهيم خَليلُ اللَّه، فَقالَ: أينَ الشَّهيدُ ابنُ الشَّهيدِ، يَلبسُ الوَبَرَ وَيَأكُلُ الشَّجَرَ مَخافةَ الذَّنبِ؟ قالَ ابنَ وَهَبٍ: يُريدُ يَحيى بنَ زَكريّا.

Seeking Advice From Jesus

Jesus son of Mary and John son of Zacharia were cousins. Jesus wore garments of wool and John garment of camel wool. Neither of them had Dirham, Dinar of servant. Neither had a shelter to live in. They used to sojourn wherever night fell. Whenever they wanted to part, John used to say to Jesus: Advise me. Jesus too would say: Never get angry. John said: I can not, for I get angry for the sake of religion. Jesus said: Do not save any money. John said: This I can do.

كانَ عيسى ابنُ مَريَم وَيَحيى بنَ زَكَريّا ابنَي خالةٍ وَكانَ عيسى (ع) يَلبَسُ الصُّوفَ، وَكانَ يَحيى يَلبسُ الوَبَرَ وَلم يَكُن لِواحدٍ مِنهُما دينارٌ وَلا دِرهَمٌ وَلا عَبدٌ ولا أمةٌ وَلا مَأوى يَأويانِ إليهِ، أينَ ما جَنَّهُما اللَّيلُ أوَيا، فَلمّا أرادَ أن يَتَفَرَّقا قَالَ يَحيى: أوصِني. قالَ: لا تَغضَب، قالَ: لا أَستَطِيعُ إلا أن أَغضَبَ، قالَ: لا تَقْتَنْ مالا، قالَ: أمّا هذهِ فَعَسى.

Weeping Out Of Fear Of God

John used to weep out of fear of God so much so that if tar was upon his eyes, it would be torn into pieces.

إنَّهُ (يَحيى) كانَ لَيَبكي مِن خَشيةِ اللَّه حَتّى لو كانَ القارُ عَلى عَينَيهِ لَخَرقَهُ.

In The Grave Dug By Himself

Zachariah lost his son, John for three days. So he went after him and found him in a grave standing and weeping over himself. Zachariah said: My son! I have been after you for three days but you have dug a grave, standing in it and weeping? John said: Were it not you who gave me the news that between paradise and hell there was a plain which can not be crossed save by the weeping of weepers? Zacharia said: Weep, O my son! Then they both started weeping.

فَقَدَ زَكريّا ابنهُ يَحيى ثَلاثةَ أيامٍ فَخرَجَ يَلتَمِسُهُ في البَرّيةِ فإذا هُوَ قَد احْتَفَرَ قَبرًا وَأَقامَ فيهِ يَبكي عَلى نَفسِه، فَقالَ يا بُنيَّ أنا أَطلبُكَ مِن ثَلاثةِ أيّامٍ وَأنتَ في قَبرٍ قَد احتَفَرتَهُ قائِمٌ تَبكي فيهِ؟ فَقالَ: يا أبتِ ألستَ أنتَ أخبَرتَني أنَّ بينَ الجَنَّةِ وَالنّارِ مَفازةً لا تُقطَعُ إلا بِدُموعِ البَكّائينَ؟ فَقالَ لَهُ: ابْكِ يا بُنيَّ. فَبَكيا جَميعًا.

Inviting People To Repentance And Piety

John was a master among his own nation. Hearts were kind and people inclined to him. People used to gather round him and he would admonish them, inviting them to repentance and piety till he was martyred. Peace be upon him.

وَكانَ سَيِّدًا في قَومِه، تَحِنُّ إِليهِ القُلُوبُ، وتَميلُ إِليهِ النُّفُوسُ وَيَجتَمِعُ إِليهِ النّاسُ فَيَعِظُهُم وَيَدعوهُم إِلى التَّوبةِ وَيأمُرُهُم بِالتَّقوى حَتّى اسْتَشهَدَ عَليهِ السَّلامُ.

The Agony Of Death

Imam Sadeq had reported that Jesus was standing near the grave of John invoking God to make him alive. His prayer was answered and John coming out of grave asked Jesus: What do you want? Jesus said: I would like you to be my company as you used to be in the world. John said: O Jesus! the agony of death has not calmed down in me as yet and you want me to come back to the world and taste the heat of death once again? He parted and went back to his grave.

عَن أبي عَبدِ اللَّه عَليهِ السَّلامُ قالَ: إِنَّ عيسى بن مَريَمَ عَلَيهِ السَّلامُ جاءَ إِلى قَبرِ يحيى بن زَكريّا عَلَيهِ السَّلامُ وَكانَ سَأَلَ رَبَّهُ أن يُحيِيهُ لَهُ، فَدَعاهُ فَأجابَهُ وَخَرَجَ إِليهِ مِنَ القَبرِ، فَقالَ لَهُ: ما تُريدُ مِنّي؟ فَقالَ لَهُ: أُريدُ أن تؤنِسَني كَما كُنتَ في الدُّنيا فَقالَ لَهُ: يا عيسى ما سَكَنَت عَنّي حَرارةُ (مَرارةُ) المَوتِ وَأنتَ تُريدُ أن تُعيدَني إِلى الدُّنيا وَتَعودَ إِليَّ حَرارةُ المَوتِ، فَتَرَكَهُ فَعادَ إِلى قَبرِه.

His Interest In Admonition

Imam Sadeq has reported: A man came to Jesus saying: O Spirit of Allah; I have committed adultery, purify me. Jesus ordered all people to go outside the city to purify such and such person. When people gathered and the man was put in the ditch, he called: Any one prone to God's punishment should not punish me. All people retreated save John and Jesus. At this time, John approached the man saying: O sinner! Admonish me. The man said: Leave no space between yourself and desire, for it will ruin you. John said: Admonish me furthermore. The man said: Do not get angry. John said: That is sufficient for me.

قالَ الصّادِقُ عَليهِ السَّلامُ إِنَّ رَجُلا جاءَ إِلى عيسى بن مَريمَ عَليهِ السَّلامُ فَقالَ لَهُ: يا رُوحَ اللَّه إِنّي زَنَيتُ فَطَهِّرني، فأمَرَ عيسى عَليهِ السَّلامُ أن يُنادى في النَّاس: لا يَبقى أحَدٌ إِلا خَرَجَ لِتَطهيرِ فُلانٍ، فَلَمّا اجتَمَعَ واجتَمَعوا وَصارَ الرَّجُلُ في الحُفرَةِ نادى الرَّجُلُ في الحُفرةِ: لا يَحُدُّني مَن للهِ تَعالى في جَنبِه حَدٌّ، فَانصَرَفَ النَّاسُ كُلُّهُم إِلا يَحيى وَعيسى عَليهِما السَّلامُ فَدَنا مِنهُ يَحيى فَقالَ لَهُ: يا مُذنِبُ عِظْني. فَقالَ لَهُ: لا تُخَلِّيَنَّ بَينَ نَفسِكَ وَبينَ هَواها فَتَردى، قَالَ: زِدني، قَالَ لا تُعَيِّرَنَّ خاطِئًا بِخَطيئةٍ، قَالَ: زِدني، قالَ: لا تَغضَبْ، قَالَ: حَسبي.

Weeping And Smiling

Abol Hasan has reported: John used to weep and did not smile.

عَن أبي الحَسنِ الأوَّلِ عَليهِ السَّلامُ قالَ: كانَ يَحيى بنُ زَكريّا (ع) يَبكي وَلا يَضحَكُ.

Simple Way Of Living

John invited people to worship God. He used to wear a garment of wool. He had no Dinar, Dirham or a house to live in. he would take a shelter whenever the night fell. He had no servant either.

فَكانَ يَدعو النّاسَ إلى عِبادةِ اللّه وَيَلبِسُ الشَّعرَ، وَلم يَكُن لَهُ دينارٌ وَلا درهمٌ وَلا بَيتٌ يَسكُنُ إليهِ، أينَما جَنَّهُ اللَّيلُ أقامَ، وَلم يَكُن لَهُ عَبدٌ وَلا أمَةٌ.

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