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Question 15: What is bada' and why do you believe in it?

Reply: In Arabic, the word "*bada'*" literally means "manifestation" and "appearance", and in the parlance of Shi'ah scholars it applies to the change in the natural course of someone's destiny as a result of his or her righteous and wholesome behavior. The question of *bada'* is one of the lofty summits of the dynamic Shi'i school, which springs from the logic of revelation and intellectual investigation.

From the viewpoint of the Holy Qur'an, man is not always hindered from deciding on his destiny; rather, the path of felicity is open for him, and by reverting to the right path and meritorious conduct he can change the ultimate destination of his life. The Qur'an points to this truth as a universal and permanent principle as follows:

"إن الله لا يغيّر ما بقوم حتى يغيّروا بأنفسهم."

"Indeed Allah does not change a people's lot, unless they change what is in their souls."[1]

It also says elsewhere:

﴿ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَى آمَنُواْ وَاتَّقَواْ لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاء وَالأَرْضِ ﴾

"If the people of the towns had been faithful and God-wary, We would have opened to them blessings from the heaven and the earth."[2]

And regarding the change in the destiny of Hadrat Yunus (Jonah) (*'a*), it says:

"فلولا أنه كان من المسبحين للبث في بطنه إلى يوم يُبعثون."

"And had he not been one of those who celebrate Allah's glory, he would have surely remained in its belly till the day they will be resurrected."[3]

Apparently, the latter verse indicates that Prophet Yunus (*'a*) would have remained in that particular prison (belly of whale) till the Day of Resurrection were it not for his meritorious conduct (glorifying Allah) which resulted in changing the course of his destiny and safety.

This truth has also been acknowledged by the Islamic traditions. In this regard, the Holy Prophet (S) says:

إن الرجل ليحرم الرزق بالذنب يصيبه ولا يردّ القدر إلا الدعاء ولا يزيد في العمر إلا البرّ.

It is due to his sin that one is deprived of his sustenance, and there is nothing that can change one's destiny and fate except supplications and there is nothing that can prolong one's lifespan except good deeds.[4]

From this and similar *hadith*s, it can be deduced that on account of man's sins and disobedience, he is deprived of sustenance but his meritorious acts like supplication can change the course of his destiny and his good deeds can prolong his lifespan.

Conclusion

It can be inferred from the verses of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* that the destiny of so many a man is determined, within the framework of his common behavior, on the basis of natural cause and effect and ordinary order of the interplay of actions, and man may be informed by one of the *awliya'* of God, prophets or Imams, for example, if this kind of conduct of this person continues, he will face the stated fate, but due to a sudden shift, a different behavior would surface and result in a change in his destiny.

This truth which stems from the logic of revelation, *Sunnah* of the Prophet (S) and sound intellectual investigation is referred to by the Shi'ah scholars as *bada'*.

It is worth noticing that explaining *bada'* is among the salient features of Shi'ism, but this word is also found in the writings of the Ahl as-Sunnah and the speeches of the Holy Prophet (S). For example, the Prophet (S) has used the term "*bada'*" in the *hadith* below:

"الله جل وعز أن يبتليهم."

"The *bada'* of Allah, the Glorious and Dignified, is to examine them."[5]

It is necessary to note that the idea of *bada'* does not mean that the change will occur in God's

knowledge because God is aware from the beginning of the natural course of man's behavior and of the effect of the transformative elements which cause *bada'*, and He does point to this fact in the Qur'an:

"يمحوا الله ما يشاء ويُثبت وعنده أم الكتاب."

"Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes and with Him is the Mother of the Book."[6]

Therefore, at the occurrence of *bada'* God, the Exalted, manifests to us the truth, which has been known to Him from the very beginning of existence. As such, Imam as-Sadiq (*'a*) says:

"ما بدا الله في شئ إلا كان في علمه قبل أن يبدوله."

"*Bada'* has never happened unless God is aware of it from the very beginning of existence."[7]

The philosophy behind bada'

No doubt, if man knows that he has access to changing his own destiny, he will be at the threshold of building a better future and will endeavor with a better spirit and greter efforts to improve his conduct in life.

In other words, just as repentance {*tawbah*} and intercession {*shafa'ah*} save man from feeling of hopelessness and getting bored in life, the truth of *bada'* brings to him mirth and joy and makes him full of optimism for the future. With this outlook, man knows that he can, through the decree of God, the Exalted, change his destiny and move toward a better future and more splendorous destiny.

1. Surah ar-Ra'd 13:11.
2. Surah al-A'raf 7:96.
3. Surah as-Saffat 37:143-144.
4. Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 5, p. 277; Mustadrak al-Hakim, vol. 1, p. 493; and a similar narration in At-Taj al-Jami' li'l-Usul, vol. 5, p. 111.
5. Majd ad-Din Mubarak ibn Muhammad al-Juzri, An-Nihayah fi Gharib al-Hadith wa'l-Athar, vol. 1, p. 109.
6. Surah ar-Ra'd 13:39.
7. Usul al-Kafi, vol. 1, "Kitab at-Tawhid," "Bab al-Bada'," hadith 9.

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