

Section 10: Jonah's People

Surah Yunus – Verse 93

وَلَقَدْ بَوَّأْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ مَبُوءًا صِدْقٍ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا حَتَّى
جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

93. “And certainly We lodged the Children of Israel a goodly lodging, and provided them with good things, so they did not differ but after the knowledge came to them, Verily your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment concerning that in which they used to differ.”

The ultimate victory of the Children of Israel and their eventual return to the Holy Land after their liberation from the men of Pharaoh, are explained in this verse as follows:

“And certainly We lodged the Children of Israel a goodly lodging...”

The objective meaning of the phrase /mubawwa'a sidqin/ (a goodly lodging) can be considered as alluding to the land of Egypt or the lands of Syria and Palestine.

Then the Qur'an adds that Allah provided them with the good things to eat but they did not appreciate the real value of this blessing. Contrarily, they sowed the seeds of discord and quarreled with each other, and this they did not until the knowledge was made available to them.

The verse says:

“...and provided them with good things, so they did not differ but after the knowledge came to them...”

Eventually, Allah will arbitrate among them as to what they disagreed upon on the Day of Resurrection. If

they do not experience the punishment for their discord today, they will experience it in the future.

The verse continues saying:

“... Verily your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgment concerning that in which they used to differ.”

Surah Yunus – Verse 94

فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ

94. “So if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed unto you, then ask those who read the book (sent) before you. The Truth hath indeed come to you from your Lord, so be not of the doubters.”

How is it that the Qur’an implies: O! Prophet, if you have any doubts about the Qur’an, ask the People of the Book, despite the fact that he (S) had never had any shadow of a doubt in this respect? Reason does not admit that a prophet might doubt the revelation sent to him.

However, its meaning can be gathered in the same Surah, verse 104. Here Allah, the Exalted, has addressed the Prophet (S) while this meaning addresses the whole people. The implication of it is that if the people are hesitating, they must ask those who have read the Qur’an.

To support this argument, there is a verse at the end of the current Surah in which Allah, the Gracious, addressing the people from the tongue of the Prophet (S), says:

“O you people if you are in doubt as to my religion.”

With this verse, Allah, the Gracious, made it transparent that the Prophet (S) had not been skeptical and His objective in addressing the Prophet (S) is really intended for other people.

Likewise, there are other verses that apparently address the Prophet (S) although, in reality, the addressees are people other than the Prophet (S) as well.

The verse says:

“So if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed unto you, then ask those who read the book (sent) before you...”

Incidentally, some of the great commentators of the Qur’an have stated that this doubt is of the type

which is based upon supposition and probability and not upon certainty and through defining rules, like the verse which says:

“If the Beneficent (Allah) had a son...”¹.

Although the verse, ***“He begets not, nor is He begotten...”***, categorically rules out the issue of Allah having a child. This proposition is in fact a conditional proposition.

That is, were you to have the slightest doubt in this respect, you should ask those knowledgeable People of the Book, because they are sure that you tell the Truth.

Imam Sadiq (as) is narrated who said that Hadrat Muhammad (S) never doubted and never asked the People of the Book.

And finally, besides the explanation offered in the above, the verse demonstrates the fact that the reasons for the appointment of the Prophet (S) and whatever is revealed to him are not confined to his call to prophecy and his offering of miracles.

There are allusions made to him in the Books of the preceding prophets and though those books are misrepresented and their authenticity questionable, there are numerous tidings here and there, amounting to sixty cases which are available to the People of the Book.

The holy sentence which says: ***“...The Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord...”*** signifies: by means of the revelations and exhaustive proofs it has been proved to you that what has been passed to you is an authentic and genuine truth which leaves no room for any sort of skepticism.

Thus, be firm in your beliefs in which case you should have no doubts, not refuting and denying the Divine verses, and continue your course. The verse continues saying:

“...The Truth hath indeed come to you from your Lord, so be not of the doubters.”

Surah Yunus – Verse 95

وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَتَكُونُوا مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

95. “Nor be of those who belied the Signs of Allah, (for) then you shall be of the losers.”

The previous holy verse advised against maintaining any skepticism about the Qur'an. This noble verse addresses itself to refutation of the verses.

Many a time if skepticism remains unchallenged, it will lead to refutation. The verse says:

“Nor be of those who belied the Signs of Allah, (for) then you shall be of the losers.”

All investigation and analysis that had been applied to skepticism in the previous verse, may equally propound here as well, for refutation is worse than skepticism. There have been numerous verses and traditions which inform of the certainty the Prophet (S) possessed.

Therefore, the target and the addressees of such warnings are mankind, and not the Prophet (S) in person. How can someone, who has led others to believe in something with certainty, be himself a skeptic, or refute that same thing?

Surah Yunus – Verses 96 – 97

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

وَلَوْ جَاءَتْهُمْ كُلُّ آيَةٍ حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ

96. “Verily those against whom the Word of your Lord has proved true will not believe,”

97. “Even if every Sign come unto them, until they see the painful chastisement.”

Allah tells the Prophet (S), here, that there is a group among his opponents who are fanatic and obstinate and who cannot be expected to become believers.

They have become so brainwashed in their thinking, and have been led astray to such an extent that they have lost their human consciences, becoming individuals who may not be impressed or influenced.

However, explaining the subject with this connotation, the Qur’an says that Allah’s commandment had been proven and was unequivocal to them, though they will not become believers.

The verse says:

“Verily those against whom the Word of your Lord has proved true will not believe,”

Even if all Allah’s verses and symbols had dawned upon them, they would not become believers unless they witnessed the Divine Punishment with their own eyes, at which time, their faith would be of no avail.

The verse says:

“Even if every Sign come unto them, until they see the painful chastisement.”

Surah Yunus – Verse 98

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ ءَامَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا ءَامَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ
عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

98. “Why was there not a township which believed, so that their belief should have profited them, except the people of Jonah (Yunus)? When they believed, We removed from them the Penalty of Ignominy in the life of the world, and gave them enjoyment for a while.”

Allah, the Gracious, had said in the previous verses, Pharaoh’s repentance when he witnessed the Punishment was not accepted.

In line with this account, the Qur’an recounts the story of the nation of Jonah before the Punishment was imposed, asking the question why is it that the people of every settlement do not become believers when their faith would bring them dividends and is to their advantage?

Allah, the Gracious, likewise has declared that accepting faith at the time when the punishment is imposed and death is near is of no avail. However, when the nation of Jonah witnessed the early signs of the Punishment they started to believe, and Allah relieved them from it, and allowed them to enjoy their lives until the end of their lifetimes, and reap the fruits of His blessings.

The verse says:

“Why was there not a township which believed, so that their belief should have profited them, except the people of Jonah (Yunus)? When they believed, We removed from them the Penalty of Ignominy in the life of the world, and gave them enjoyment for a while.”

According to Hadrat Sadiq (as), Hadrat Jonah (as) had been preaching for 33 years, starting at the age of 30 until the age of 63. However, he only was successful in converting two people to the religion of monotheism. He then cursed the people for their recalcitrance.

One of these two believers was a sage and philosopher. When he noticed the prophet’s cursing the people and his departure, he went up to them and warned them in a loud voice.

The people who were impressed, under his guidance, left the town distancing themselves from their children, and they cried and repented before Allah until they were forgiven. On his return, Jonah (as) had noticed that township had not been annihilated. He asked the reason and was told the story.²

Therefore, faith and repentance in sufficient time removes Divine Punishment, while prayer and supplication both removes the Punishment and generates success and happiness. (Regarding the

Surah Yunus – Verse 99

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعاً أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُوا
مُؤْمِنِينَ

99. “And if your Lord had willed, whoever is on the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Will thou then compel the people till they become believers?”

Man is free and faith is based upon one’s voluntary choice; it is not to be accepted under compulsion or by imposition.

Allah is Omnipotent and Omniscient, employing His power in such a way that it does not run contrary to His Knowledge. And as His omniscience requires mankind to be free, He never compels them to accept faith by force.

The Prophet (S) has compassionately insisted that people accept the faith on the basis of voluntary acceptance and not through compulsion.

The verse says:

“And if your Lord had willed, whoever is on the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Will thou then compel the people till they become believers?”

Surah Yunus – Verse 100

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

100. “And it is not for a soul to believe except by the Will of Allah, and He appoints uncleanness (of infidelity) on those who do not ponder.”

People are neither compelled to accept the faith (according to the previous verse) nor can they succeed in accepting the faith without His guidance and Divine Providence.

The verse says:

“And it is not for a soul to believe except by the Will of Allah...”

Divine favor and Divine Providence shine their light upon the sage and those people who use their reasoning and he who does not meditate and reason under his own volition, will suffer His Punishment and will abide in wretchedness.

The verse continues saying:

“...and He appoints uncleanness (of infidelity) on those who do not ponder.”

Sound reasoning provides the basis for faith and having no faith exhibits ignorant and irrational behavior.

Surah Yunus – Verse 101

قُلْ اَنْظُرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُغْنِي الْآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

101. “Say: ‘Observe you what is in the heavens and the earth! But neither Signs nor warnings avail a people who do not believe’.”

In the previous verses the issue in question was that faith is a voluntary matter; it is not a matter that springs up in emergency situations, nor is it compulsory. It is for this reason that the means of acquiring faith is shown in this verse.

Addressing the Prophet (S), the Qur’an implies that he should say to the unbelievers to carefully observe the wonderful, profound system at work in the skies and on the earth each part of which exhibits the magnitude, power, knowledge and wisdom of Allah.

The verse says:

“Say: ‘Observe you what is in the heavens and the earth!...’

The above sentence explicitly rules out the issue of fatalism and the lack of freedom of will. It indicates that accepting faith is consequential upon studying the world of existence which is a task left entirely in our hands.

The Qur’an adds, however, that despite all these verses and clues to the Truth, is it not surprising that some groups do not become believers, for those verses and clues, warnings and admonishments not only are of no benefit to those who lack preparedness for embracing the Truth, but they are not useful for those obstinate people who will not become believers either.

The verse continues saying:

“...But neither Signs nor warnings avail a people who do not believe’.”

Surah Yunus – Verse 102

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قُلْ فَاَنْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ

102. “Do they then expect (anything) but the like of the days of those who passed away before them? Say: ‘Wait you then, verily I also with you, will be of those who wait’.”

This verse is in the form of a question with a threatening tone. It declares that obstinate and faithless people expect to see a destiny other than that of former nations which suffered the painful Divine Punishment; the doom of Pharaohs, the Nimrods, Shaddads, and their assistants and advocates.

The verse says:

“Do they then expect (anything) but the like of the days of those who passed away before them?...”

Towards the end of the verse, in order to warn them, Allah commands the Prophet (S) to tell them that now they are on such a track, and are not ready to reconsider their fate, that they should wait and look out for it as he was.

The verse continues saying:

“...Say: ‘Wait you then, verily I also with you, will be of those who wait’.”

They wait in order to avoid and deny Allah’s call, and we wait for the evil and painful destiny which awaits them like that of the former oppressive nations of the past.

Surah Yunus – Verse 103

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كَذَلِكَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نُنَجِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

103. “Then (when Our wrath fell) We deliver Our messengers and those who believe. Thus it is binding on Us (that) We deliver the believers.”

Our common sense tells us and we witness the fact that the good and evil are sometimes placed in the

same category indiscriminately.

The Qur'an warns us also in verse 25 of Surah Al-Anfal that we must fear the calamities which not only are inflicted upon the oppressors but also upon the faithful as well. How is it, then, that this verse states that Allah saves the faithful in time of trouble?

The verse says:

“Then (when Our wrath fell) We deliver Our messengers and those who believe...”

The answer to this verse is that if the faithful remain silent when they are among the disbelievers and the guilty, Allah's punishment will encompass all of them. However, if the believers act according to their divine duty, which is forbidding the wrong, Allah may save them in time of trouble.

The verse continues saying:

“...Thus it is binding on Us (that) We deliver the believers.”

1. Surah Al-Zukhruf, No. 43, verse 81

2. Majma'ul-Bayan, and As-Safi.

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