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Section 17: The Physical Eyes Can Never See Allah

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 142

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلاَثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتْمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرٍ فَتَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَقَالَ مُوسَى لاَخِيهِ هَارُونَ اخْلُفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ وَلاتَتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

142. ***"And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten (more),so the appointed time of his Lord was completed forty nights. And (before going there) Moses said to his brother Aaron: 'Be my successor among people, and set the (people's) affairs right and do not follow the way of mischief-makers'."***

In Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 50, the statement denotes that Allah (s.w.t.) appointed forty nights for Moses (as): ***"And (remember) when We appointed forty nights for Moses...",*** but here, in this verse, the appointment is thirty nights added with ten more nights.

As Imam B□qir (as) said:

"The philosophy of that manner was to try the Children of Israel". 1

The length of this time has been forty nights and days, yet the reason that the verse says 'forty nights', maybe, is that supplications are often performed at night. Or, perhaps, its reason is that in old times the formation of calendar was based on the appearance of the moon at night. The number of nights has also been used in counting days. The verse says:

"And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten (more), so the appointed time of his Lord was completed forty nights..."

There are some secrets hidden in this figure, i.e. 'forty'. This figure has a special position in the cultures of different religions. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S), was appointed to prophethood when he was forty years old. He kept aloof from Khadijah for forty nights in order that the heavenly food to be sent down and the preparation of the birth of Hazrat Zahr (as) to be supplied.

The descent of Divine revelation unto the Holy Prophet (S) was ceased for forty days.

The people of Moses (as) were wandering bewildered in the deserts for forty years.

At the time of Noah, it rained for forty days.

To learn forty Islamic traditions by heart causes this person to be raised among the experts of Muslim law in Hereafter.

The preparation of spiritual perfection of man develops until the person becomes forty years old. After that the affairs are more difficult and the accounts are more delicate.

The recitation of Surah Al-Hamd done for forty times unto a sick person can be effective in his healing.

Whoever drinks wine, his prayers will not be accepted for forty days, though the one must establish those prayers.

Allah may forgive a person upon whose dead body forty believers testify that he has been a good person.2

However, the explanation of forty nights of the appointed tryst of Moses is referred to in the Turah, Exedus.

Some Islamic literature denotes that thirty nights out of this forty nights were the whole nights of Zilqa'dah, and the added ten nights happened at the beginning nights of Zil-Hajjah.3

In any case, the event of the tryst of Moses (as) was as follows:

"...And (before going there) Moses said to his brother Aaron: 'Be my successor among people, and set the (people's) affairs right and do not follow the way of mischief-makers'."

The Tradition of Rank

A large number of commentators from both great Islamic sects have referred to the known 'Tradition of Rank' when explaining the verse under discussion. There is a difference, of course, that Shi'ite commentators have taken it as one of the reputable proofs for the immediate vicegerency of Ali (as).

The text of the tradition denotes that many of the companions of the Prophet (S) have detailed the process of the Battle of Tab k as follows:

The Prophet (S) set out towards Tabk when he appointed Ali-ibn-Abitlib (as) in his place. Ali (as) said to the Porphet (S) whether he left him among children and women (and did not let him go with him (S) to the battle-field to struggle).

The Messenger of Allah (S) answered him whether he was not content to be in the same rank to him (S) as Aaron was to Moses except that there would be no prophet after him.

It was not only in the Battle of Tabk that the Prophet (S) expressed this meaning, but also in several occasions, other than that, this statement was heard from him, (S) including the followings:

1- One day, the Prophet (S) told 'Umm-us-Salamah:

"O' 'Umm-us-Salamah! Ali's tissue is the same as my tissue and, his blood is the same as my blood. The example of him unto me is like the example of Aaron unto Moses."

2- Ibn-'Abbas says that one day 'Umar-ibn-Khattb said that once he was in the presence of the Prophet (S) accompanied with Ab-Bakr and some of the companions of the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) was leaning on Ali (as) when he touched Ali's shoulder and said:

"O" Ali! you are the first man who believed (*in Allah*) *and you are the first person who accepted Islam."*

Then he (S) said:

"The example of you unto me is like the example of Aaron unto Moses ".

However, if we impartially examine the above-mentioned tradition, it can be understood from it that Ali (as) had been given all the positions that Aaron had unto Moses (as) and among the Children of Israel, except prophethood.

This meaning mentioned about the Tradition of Rank has been cited in the Sunnite sources such as: Sahih-i-Bukhri, vol. 6, p. 3; Sahih-i-Muslim, vol. 4, p. 187; Sunan-i-Ibn-i-Mjid, vol. 1, p. 42; Musnad-i-Ahmad-ibn-Hanbal, vol. 1, pp. 173, 175, 177, 179, 182.

But the very tradition, 'the Tradition of Rank', is widely transmitted with Shi'ites and it is available in the authentic books of traditions, including:

1) 'Abaqt, in book of Muhammad and Ali'.
2) The tradition of Thaqalayn, by Najmiddin 'Askary, pp. 105-127;
3) Safinat-ul-Bihr, vol. 21, p. 209;
4) Bihr-ul-'Anwr, vol. 37, p. 254;
5) Kanz-ul-Kirchi, pp. 282,283;
6) An-Nihyah, vol. 2, p. 172;
7) Kashf-ul-Qummah, p. 44;

8) Man□qib, Ibn–Abi–T□lib;

9) Al–Yaghin;

10) Al–Khar□'ij–wal–Jar□yih;

11) K□mil–ut–Taw□rikh, by Ibn–'Athir;

12) At–Tar□'if.

Surah al–'Araf – Verse 143

وَلَمَّا جَآءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنِ
انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي فَلَمّا تَجَلّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكّاً
وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقاً فَلَمّآ اَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَاَنَاْ اَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

143. ***"And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord spoke with him, he said: 'My Lord, show me (Yourself), that I may look towards You!' He (Allah) said: 'Never shall you see Me, but look towards the mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.' So when his Lord manifested (His) glory to the mountain, He sent it crashing down, and Moses fell down senseless. Then when he recovered, he said: 'Glory be to You! I turn to You (repentant), and I am the first of the believers'."***

The Qur'□nic word /dakkah/ means 'a level land', and, therefore, in this verse the text means that the mountain was turned into dust so that it became level as the land.

That Divine Power, whatever it was, pounded the mountain into dust. Was it the great atomic power, or the power of waves, or some other mystic power? It is unknown.

There were two times that observing Allah was asked for. One time Moses (as) himself asked Allah to see His True Essense. Then, in answer to him (as), this very current verse was revealed and manifested that Moses (as) had not its capacity. The verse says:

"And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord spoke with him, he said: 'My Lord, show me (Yourself), that I may look towards You!' He (Allah) said: 'Never shall you see Me, but look towards the mountain: if it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.' So when his Lord manifested (His) glory to the mountain, He sent it crashing down, and Moses fell down senseless. Then when he recovered, he said: 'Glory be to You! I turn to You (repentant), and I am the first of the believers'."

Another time was when the Children of Israel were seeking the pretext, and ignorantly asked Moses to see Allah by the eyes of head. This meaning has been referred to in verse No. 155 of the current Surah,

which will be explained later.

This fact should be noted that Allah can never be seen by the outword eyes, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter. As the verse says:

"…'Never shall you see Me,'…"

But He must be known by means of His effects, where His manifestations can be looked at. The verse says:

"…so when his Lord manifested (His) glory to the mountain, He sent it crashing down…"

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 144

قَالَ يَا مُوسَى إِنِّي اصْطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسَالاَتِي وَبِكَلاَمِي فَخُذْ مَآءَاتَيْتُكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

144*. "He said: 'O' Moses! verily I have chosen you above the people by My Messages and by My speaking (unto you). So take what I have given you, and be of the grateful ones'."*

Moses is Allah's chosen servant. So, different demands, to become senseless, repentence and the like of them do not hinder him to be chosen. The verse says:

"He said: 'O' Moses! verily I have chosen you above the people by My Messages and by My speaking (unto you)…"

Imam S□diq (as) says:

*"Allah told Moses (as): 'Do you know why did I choose you? It was because your humbleness and submission was matchless. Whenever you established prayer, you put your cheeks on the soil'."*4

After the removal of T□q□t (deity) and formation of a godly society, the turn is for the execution of law and divine ordinances. Allah commands Moses:

"…So take what I have given you…"

The bounties of Allah must be thanked for. The godly leading and religious responsibilities are amongst the bounties of Allah, for which we must thank. The verse says:

"…and be of the grateful ones'."

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 145

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الاَلْوَاحِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلاً لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُوا بِاَحْسَنِهَا سَأُوْرِيكُمْ دَارَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

145*. “And We wrote for him in the Tablets of everything an admonition, and the explanation of all things; so,* (*O’ Moses!*) *take hold of them with firmness and bid your people to take hold of the best of them. Soon I will show you the abode of the transgressors.”*

The verse indicates that, in the Tablets, Allah explained of everything some advices and admonitions sufficiently for Moses (as), and He detailed the necessary affairs of the life and religion needed for individuals and the society of his time. The verse says:

“And We wrote for him in the Tablets of everything an admonition, and the explanation of all things…”

Then, He commanded Moses to take those commandments with utmost effort and with a strong and earnest will. The verse says:

“…so, (***O’ Moses!***) ***take hold of them with firmness…”***

Moses (as) was also ordered to bid his people to act according to the best of them. The verse continues saying:

“…and bid your people to take hold of the best of them…”

Alongside this subject, Moses (as) was commanded to warn his people that opposing those commandments, and escaping from responsibilities and fulfilling the duties, would bring a dreadful result and, finally, Hell for them. Therefore, at the end of the verse, Allah says:

“…Soon I will show you the abode of the transgressors.”

It is understood from the holy phrase: ***“…of every thing an admonition…”*** that there were not mentioned all the admonitions, advices, and necessary subjects in the Tablets of Moses. At that time, the divine ordinances were revealed according to the capacity and talents of those people.

But, when the people of the world reached the last stage of the prophets’ training, the last command, which enveloped the whole material and spiritual necessities of human beings, was revealed unto the Prophet of Islam (S).

The apparent meaning of the phrase: ***"...Soon I will show you the abode of the transgressors."*** is that the abode of those who have gone out from the obedience of Allah in doing their duties is Hell.

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 146

سَاَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الاَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقّ وإِن يَرَوْا كُلَّ ءَايَةٍ
لاَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِن يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدلاَ يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلاً وإِن يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ
سَبِيلاً ذَلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِاَيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

146. ***"Soon I will*** (***allow to***) ***turn away from My signs those who are arrogant in the earth unjustly; while*** (***even***) ***if they see any sign, they will not believe in it, and if they see the way of rectitude they do not take it for a way, and if they see the way of perverseness they take it for a way. This is because they belied Our signs and were heedless of them."***

The statements, which have formed this verse and the verse after it, are indeed a conclusion drawn from the previous verses upon the fate of Pharaoh and his people, and also the arrogant persons of the Children of Israel. At first, the verse says:

"Soon I will (***allow to***) ***turn away from My signs those who are arrogant in the earth unjustly..."***

Then the Qur'n points to three parts of the qualities of these proud and arrogant people and that how they were dispossessed of the success of the truth. It says:

"...while (***even***) ***if they see any sign, they will not believe in it..."***

And, also, if they see the straight path and the right way, they do not choose it as their own way. The verse says:

"...and if they see the way of rectitude they do not take it for a way..."

After mentioning these three qualities, all of which denote to their arrogance against the truth, the Qur'n points to the reason of them and says:

"...This is because they belied Our signs and were heedless of them."

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 147

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِاَيَاتِنَا وَلِقَآءِ الاَخِرَةِ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلاَّ مَاكَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

147*. “And those who belie Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their* (*good*) *deeds are null. Shall they be recompensed except for what they used to do?”*

This verse refers to the punishment of such arrogant people. It says:

“And those who belie Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter, their* (*good*) *deeds are null...”

And at the end of the verse, the Qur’ān implies that this fate is not as a vengeance for them. It is the fruit of their own deeds, or it is the embodiment of their exact deeds that has been encarnated before them. Thus, the verse says:

“...Shall they be recompensed except for what they used to do?”

This holy verse is one of the verses which are taken as the evidence for proving the embodiment of actions, and the presence of the deeds themselves, good and evil, in the Hereafter.

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1. Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, the commentary, vol. 2, p. 61.
2. Safinat-ul-Bihār, vol. 1, p. 505
3. Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, the commentary
4. Tafsir-us-Sāfi, and’Usūl-i-Kāfi

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