

Section 22: The Progeny of Adam Will Bear Witness Against Itself

Surah al-'Araf – Verse 172

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

172. “And (remember) when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves, (and said): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes! We do bear witness.’ (This We did) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily we were unaware of this’.”

The Qur'ānic term /ʿurriyah/ means small children, but it is often used for all the children of a person.

The circumstance of Allah's taking covenant from the children of Adam has not been stated in this verse.

As some Islamic traditions indicate, after the creation of Adam, all his progenies came out from his back in the form of some intelligent particles and were addressed by the Lord.

They confessed to the Lordship of Allah. Then, all of them returned back to the loin and soil of Adam, in order to come into this world gradually and naturally. This world is called the world of 'Tharr' and that covenant is called the 'covenant of 'Alast' or 'the world of pre-existence'.

The purpose of the world of 'Tharr', maybe, is the same world of talents, and the covenant of innate disposition and creation.

That is, at the time of departure of Adam's children from the loins of fathers into the wombs of mothers in

the shape of sperm, which are not more than some minutes, Allah sets the talent and nature of monotheism and seeking truth in their constitution and this divine secret, as an innate sense, is settled in the institution and natural disposition of everybody.

The help of Allah reflects in their intellect in the form of a self-cognizance fact. Allah has asked them through the tongue of creation, and they have answered through the same tongue, too.

We should know that Allah has established monotheism in the innate disposition and constitution of humankind.

The verse says:

“And (remember) when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves, (and said): ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said: ‘Yes! We do bear witness.’ (This We did) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘Verily we were unaware of this’.”

Thus, human beings can observe the sense of theism in the depth of their own selves, since they have confessed it in the world of pre-existence.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verses 173-174

أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ
الْمُبْطِلُونَ

وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصِلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

173. “Or lest you should say: ‘Verily our fathers were idolaters from before and we were descendants after them (following them). Will You then destroy us for what the vain-doers did?’”

174. “And thus do We explain the Signs, and that they may return.”

In this verse, the Qur’ān has pointed to another aim of this covenant. It implies that Allah has taken this covenant for the sake that they do not say that their fathers were idol-worshippers before them and when they were some children.

So, they could do nothing but following them. Therefore, they said, they should not be punished for the sins committed by some vain-doers. Here is what the verse says:

“Or lest you should say: ‘Verily our fathers were idolaters from before and we were descendants after them (following them). Will You then destroy us for what the vain-doers did?’”

Admonition

A great part of the Qur’ān, which consists of many verses in different suras of it, is about the incidents happened among the early nations; such as: the events of Adam and the children of Adam, those of the people of Noah, Hūd, Sūlih, Abraham, Lot, Yusuf (Joseph), Jacob, Jethro, Moses, Pharaoh and the like of them.

The aim of stating them has not been simply for referring to the history or telling some stories. They have been stated for **the admonition** of the servants of Allah and advising them through some exhortations in order that they become aware that how graceful and merciful Allah has been with the believers and the pious, so that He has saved them from destructions and calamities, while the people of idolatry, blasphemy, injustice and corruption have faced with many difficulties and destructions.

Thus, regarding this meaning, in the second verse of the holy verses mentioned in the above, the Qur’ān says:

“And thus do We explain the Signs, and that they may return.”

The verse means that as Allah stated these verses for you, they are stated and explained for other nations, too, in order that all people reason the Truth by them and return from falsehood towards the Truth.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 175

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي ءَاتَيْنَاهُ ءَايَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ
الْغَاوِينَ

175. “And recite unto them the tale of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he withdrew (himself) from them, and Satan pursued him, and he became one of the perverse.”

The verse refers to the story of a man from the Children of Israel. At first, that man was among the believers and those who practically carried out the divine verses and sciences, but later, as a result of Satan’s temptation, he went astray. In the concerning religious sources, the name of this person has been recorded ‘Bal‘am Bā‘ūr’.

As it has been narrated from Ali-ibn-Mūs-ār-Ridā, the eighth Imam (as), that Bal‘am knew ‘the Greatest Name of Allah’, by which his supplication used to be answered. But finally he went to the court

of Pharaoh and turned to be an infidel, while, before that, he was one of the studious preachers of the religion of Moses (as).

The Qur'ān does not directly point out his name in the text, but it mentions his action. Imam Bāqir (as) says that his circumstance adapts to any one who prefers the low desire to the truth.¹

Such people are found in any time and the subject is not allocated to Bal'am only. The story of Bal'am has been cited in the Torah, too.

Therefore, an aware leader should usually warn people of unexpected dangers. The verse says:

“And recite unto them the tale of him to whom We gave Our signs...”

Whatever high a person promotes he should not become proud, since there is a probability of falling. Usually, the final result of the end of the work is important, not the beginning of it. The higher a situation is, the more dangerous it can be. The verse continues saying:

“...but he withdrew (himself) from them...”

Yes, the one who takes detached from Allah, will become the prey of Satan. The verse ends as follows:

“...and Satan pursued him, and he became one of the perverse.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 176

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ
تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَتْرُكُهُ يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ
الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

176. “And had We willed, We would certainly have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his lust. So his parable is like the parable of a dog; if you attack it, it lulls out its tongue, or if you leave it, it lulls out its tongue. Such is the parable of the people who belied Our Signs. Therefore, relate (unto them) the stories, that they may ponder.”

The previous subject has been completed in this expressive verse. It implies that if Allah had wished, He could have forcedly kept him alongside the path of right with an exalted rank, by the way of those holy verses and practical sciences. The verse says:

“And had We willed, We would certainly have exalted him thereby...”

But it is certain that forcedly keeping persons alongside the path of truth does not agree with Allah's way of treatment, which is the custom of choice and free will, and it is not the sign of personality and greatness of a person. So, immediately next to it, the Qur'an, implying that Allah left him to himself, adds:

"...but he clung to the earth and followed his lust."

Then, the Qur'an resembles this person to a dog which, like some thirsty animals, often draws its tongue out of its mouth. The verse says:

"...So his parable is like the parable of a dog; if you attack it, it lulls out its tongue..."

As a result of attaching the intense lust and clinging to the pleasures of the material world, such a person may get a state of unlimited and endless thirst that he always goes after mammonism. This state, in him, is like the state of a rabid dog that, because of its sickness, it has a false thirst and it never drinks to satiety.

Then, the Qur'an implies that this parable is not allocated to this particular person, but it is for all those who reject the verses of Allah. The verse says:

"...Such is the parable of the people who belied Our Signs..."

This story should be told for them, maybe they think about it and then they take a correct way for themselves. The verse continues saying:

"...Therefore, relate (unto them) the stories, that they may ponder."

Bal'am Ba'ura, a Mammonish Scholar, Gone Astray!

A great deal of Islamic narrations and statements, as was pointed out before, indicate that the person referred to in this verse had been a man by the name of Bal'am-Ba'ura who lived at the time of Moses (as).

He was counted as one of the well known scholars of the Children of Israel, so that Moses used of him as an effective and strong preacher. He became so exalted in this way that his prayers before Allah were answered.

But, as a result of accepting the promises of Pharaoh and inclining to him, he went astray, thus far that he joined the camp of the opponents of Moses (as), and therefore, he lost all his spiritual ranks.

Surah al-'Araf – Verses 177-178

سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَنْفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ

مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِي وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ

177. “How evil is the parable of the people who belied Our Signs, but they were doing injustice to themselves.”

178. “Whomever Allah guides, he is rightly guided, and whomever He leads astray, these are the losers.”

Through these two holy verses, in fact, the Qur’ān has concluded a general and common result from the story of Bal‘am and other mammonish scholars. The verse says:

“How evil is the parable of the people who belied Our Signs...”

They did not do any injustice to Allah, but they used to do injustice to themselves. The verse says:

“...but they were doing injustice to themselves.”

What injustice is greater than this that they gave their spiritual capitals and scientific informations, which could cause the honour of them and their societies, to the possessors of wealth and power, selling them for a little price.

But, beware that delivering from these kinds of faults and satanic ways is not possible except with the Divine assistance. Therefore, the one whom Allah guides and makes His aid the companion of his way, is the real guided one. The verse says:

“Whomever Allah guides, he is rightly guided...”

And those whom Allah, as a result of their own evil deeds, leads astray, or gives them victory and success for their satanic temptations, are the real losers. The verse continues saying:

“...and whomever He leads astray, these are the losers.”

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 179

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ

179. “Indeed We have created for Hell many jinn and humans; they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are as cattle, rather they are more astray. These are the heedless ones.”

The Signs of Hellish People

Through this verse and the next couple of verses, where the qualities of each group are hinted out, People have been divided into two groups. These two groups are: the hellish people, and the inhabitants of Paradise.

At first, with oath and emphasis, the Qur’ān states about the inhabitants of Hell as follows:

“Indeed We have created for Hell many jinn and humans...”

Allah has created all human beings pure and sinless, but, by means of their own evil deeds, some groups of them make themselves candidates for Hell. The end of these people is dark and inauspicious. There are some other people who make themselves candidate for Paradise. The end of such people is happiness and felicity.

After that, the verse summarizes the qualities of the hellish group in three phrases. The first quality is that:

“...they have hearts with which they do not understand...”

Their second quality is that they have clear eyes for seeing the truth but they do not observe the feature of the facts and pass by them like some blind persons. The verse says:

“...and they have eyes with which they do not see...”

Their third quality is that they have safe and sound ears, but they do not hearken to the truth and right words, and, like the deaf, they deprive themselves from hearing the divine truth. The verse says:

“...and they have ears with which they do not hear...”

In fact, they are like cattle, because the privilege of man to animals lies in vigilant thought, clear-insightfulness, and the hearing ears that, unfortunately, these hellish people have lost all of them. The verse says:

“...they are as cattle...”

They are, of course, worse than cattle and more astray. The verse continues saying:

“...rather they are more astray...”

Cattle have not the talents and possibilities that human beings have. Men, with the intellect, clear-insightedness, and the hearing ears that they have, can gain all kinds of progress and development.

But, as a result of sensuality and tending toward mean things, they may leave these faculties and talents in vain. Such people are some neglectful persons, and therefore, they wander in the deviated path of life. The verse finally says:

“...These are the heedless ones.”

They are nigh to the fountain of water of life, but they are crying of thirst. The gates of felicity are open to them, but they do not even look at them.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 180

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

180. “And to Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call on Him by them, and leave those who blaspheme His names. Soon they shall be requited for what they were doing.”

The Qur’ānic phrase /’asm’ul husn/ has been mentioned three times in the whole Qur’ān, which are: the verse under discussion, Surah Al-‘Isr’, No. 17, verse 11. and Surah Tāh, No. 20, verse 8.

All the names of Allah are beautiful, and He possesses all the Virtues and Names. Yet, in Islamic literature, emphasis has been laid on 99 Names. It has been narrated that whoever calls on Allah by these names, his prayer will be answered, if it be the will of Allah (s.w.t.).

In this holy verse, the Qur’ān points to the situation of the inhabitants of Heaven and explains their qualities.

In order that people come out of the row of the hellish persons, at first it invites them to pay a careful attention to the Beautiful Names of Allah, when it says:

“And to Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call on Him by them...”

The purpose of ‘the beautiful names’ is the attributes of Allah which are wholly good and wholly ‘beautiful’.

The objective meaning of ‘calling on Allah’ by the Beautiful Names is not only to utter those names simply by the tongue, and to say, for example, O’ knower of the Unseen, O’ Almighty, and O’ the Most Merciful of all merciful, but, in fact, the purpose is that we try to settle these qualities in our selves as much as possible.

In other words, we should have His attributes and make our manner similar to that of Allah with our limited attempt.

Upon the commentary of this verse, there has been cited a tradition from Imam Sādiq (as) who has said:

“By Allah, we are the beautiful names.”

This statement points to the fact that there is a strong ray from those divine attributes reflected in their beings, and that the cognition of them helps to the cognition of His Pure Essence.

Then the Qur’ān warns people to avoid perverting the Names of Allah and to leave those who blaspheme them. It says:

“...and leave those who blaspheme His names. Soon they shall be requited for what they were doing.”

The objective meaning of ‘blaspheming His Names’, here, is that we do not pervert their pronunciations and their concepts. We also should not qualify Him with the attributes which are not suitable to Him, like the action of the Christians who believe in Trinity, or that we adapt His attributes to His creatures.

Surah al-‘Araf – Verse 181

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْدِلُونَ

181. “And of those (whom) We have created are a people who guide (others) by the Truth and establish justice therewith.”

The objective meaning of the Arabic word /‘ummaḥ/ (community), mentioned in this holy verse, is the people of Muhammad (S), who are the best community among all communities. It is also cited in the Islamic traditions, recorded by the Sunnis, that the objective meaning of the word is the adherents of Ali-ibn-Abiṭālib (as).

Some Islamic traditions indicate that Muslim believers will be divided into seventy three groups that only one group of them are the blessed.²

Therefore, the pivot of guidance and government should be but the Truth, even though the number of

the advocates of the Truth and guidance may be small. The verse says:

“And of those (whom) We have created are a people who guide (others) by the Truth...”

And we must also know that those persons are worthy that, besides accepting guidance, try to establish a system of Truth. Mere cognition of the Truth is not enough, but practice and distribution is important, too. The above holy verse concludes as follows:

“...and establish justice therewith.”

1. Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, the commentary.

2. Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, the commentary; and Tafsir-ul-Burhān

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