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Section 4: Reward for the Righteous – Angles Give Abraham the Tidings of a Son

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 45 - 48

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

ادْخُلُوهَا بِسَلاَمٍ ءَامِنِينَ

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَاناً عَلَي سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ

لاَ يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُم مِّنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

45. "Verily, the pious ones shall be amidst gardens and watersprings."
46. "(They will be addressed:) 'Enter you therein in peace, secure'."
47. "And We remove whatever rancour may be in their breasts. (They will be as) brothers upon coaches, face to face."
48. "No toil there shall afflict them in it, nor shall they be ever cast out of it."

Through these holy verses, Allah has stated eight heavenly rewards for the people of virtue. They are: gardens, springs, health, security, removal of all hatred, brotherhood, face to face coaches, being aloof

from any kind of harm or toil, and immortality.

The Qur'an says:

"Verily, the pious ones shall be amidst gardens and watersprings."

"(They will be addressed:) 'Enter you therein in peace, secure'."

In the previous verse, we read that except those sincere believers selected by Allah, all people will be targeted by the Satan's temptations. In these verses the Qur'an implies that if man does not reach the heights already achieved by those who are devoted and selected, but attains the objectives for the hierarchy of virtues, he will still be covered by the kinds of Divine blessings.

The Qur'an says:

"And We remove whatever rancour may be in their breasts. (They will be as) brothers upon coaches, face to face."

What is of importance in this stage is the assembling of all blessings in one unit. In this world one finds gardens in one place, while there may be no springs therein, sometimes there are streams to be found there but there is no security over there; at times all are present with together, though there may not be authenticity or sincerity furnished there.

At times, it happens that all those blessings are coupled with different kinds of hardships and are tedious to obtain. At other times, when all blessings are brought together, one has to abdicate them all and leave them behind. However, what differentiates Hereafter from this world is that all material, spiritual, social and psychological blessings are eternal in Heaven.

The verse says:

"No toil there shall afflict them in it, nor shall they be ever cast out of it."

Attention: The Arabic term /qill/ mentioned in verse 47 signifies secret infiltration. Therefore, evil characteristics set in their roots secretly in human beings. The Qur'anic terms /surur/ amd /sarir/ are derived from the word /sur□r/ which means 'throne'. One concludes that accession to the throne is pleasant and causes one's rejoicing.

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 49 - 50

نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

وَاَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الاَلِيمُ

49. "(O Prophet!) Inform My servants (that) verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful,"
50. "And that My chastisement is the painful chastisement."

Now, it may be possible that some sinners and deviant individuals sink in their own depression, saying:

"We wish we could also reap parts of such blessings."

It is at this moment that Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful, opens up the gateways of Paradise to them, but with some conditions.

Addressing affectionately and with utmost caressing His Prophet, He says:

"(O Prophet!) Inform My servants (that) verily I am the Forgiving, the Merciful,"

Note

In these holy verses, the blissful Qur'an divides all people into 4 categories:

The devotees (prophets and the saints) over whom 'Iblis has no domination.

The pious ones who will be dwelling in Paradise.

The repenting sinners whom the Prophet (S) talks about their amnesty in this verse.

The disobedient sinners who have been warned as against their severe and painful chastisement.

The verse says:

"And that My chastisement is the painful chastisement."

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 51 - 52

وَنَبِّـئْهُمْ عَن ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلاَماً قَالَ إِنَّا مِنكُمْ وَجِلُونَ

51. "And inform them of the guests of Abraham."

52. "When they entered upon him and said: 'Peace', he said: 'Verily we are scared of you!'"

From this verse on, the Qur'an discusses some instructive parts of the history of great prophets and the disobedient nations as clear examples of the devotee servants and the followers of Satan.

It begins with the story of 'Ibrahim's guests, saying:

"And inform them of the guests of Abraham."

These uninvited guests were the same angels who anonymously called on 'Ibrahim first, and said /salam/ (peace) to him.

The verse says:

"When they entered upon him and said: 'Peace', he said: 'Verily we are scared of you!'"

'Ibrahim got ready to receive them, as is the case with a great and kind host, and prepared immediately a proper food for them. But when he spread the dinner table, the unknown guests did not stretch their hands to take food.

Abraham terrified by this act and, without concealing his terror, he explicitly told them that he was afraid of them:

"Verily we are scared of you.".

This kind of fear was because of a tradition prevalent at that time and at later times, even at the present among some nations that whenever someone eats out of someone else's bread and salt, he would feel safe from his side for he feels he owes him something.

It was for this reason that when the angels did not eat the food, 'Ibrahim reasoned it as the sign of having ill-intentions, rancour, and enmity with regard to him.

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 53 - 54

قَالُوا لاَ تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّـرُكَ بِغُلاَمٍ عَلِيمٍ

قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَي أَن مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فَبِمَ تُبَشِّـرُونَ

53. "They said: 'Be not afraid! Verily we give you the good news of a son endowed with

knowledge."
54. "He said: 'Do you give me such good news (of a son) while old age has touched me? Of what do you give me good news?"

One of the examples of the Divine blessings and Divine outrage is the story of prophet 'Ibrahim (as) in which we have the angels, on one hand, giving good news of a son to him, while on the other hand, we have their news concerning the annihilation of the people of Lot as well, when by the latter Abraham was worried.

However, before long the angels stopped 'Ibrahim from worrying, commending him not to be frightened, for they were giving him good news of fathering a wise son.

The verse says:

"They said: 'Be not afraid! Verily we give you the good news of a son endowed with knowledge."

However, Abraham knew that, from the point of the natural laws, the birth of such a child by him was a remote matter. Yet, there is nothing impossible for the Power of Allah. So, regarding the normal circumstances and natural laws, he said:

"He said: 'Do you give me such good news (of a son) while old age has touched me?..."

Then Abraham continued his statement by saying:

"...Of what do you give me good news?"

Is this news from Allah's side or is it you who are giving me the news by yourselves? State clearly so as I can be sure.

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 55 - 56

قَالُوا بَشَّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلاَ تَكُن مِّنَ الْقَانِطِينَ

قَالَ وَمَن يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلاَّ الضَّآلُّونَ

55. "They (the guests) said: 'We give you good news of the Truth. Therefore, be you not of the despairing ones'."
56. "He said: 'And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?'"

Let us take didactic lessons, sweet and bitter ones, from history. The best histories are the ones which concern the life of the prophets (as) and the best historians are the prophets themselves.

Sometimes the angels appear in the form of human beings by the Divine Will and get in touch with man, among which one may refer to this very story of Hadrat Abraham (as) in which the angels felt that Abraham became scared.

Therefore, the angels did not give any further chances to Abraham to wonder or hesitate more. They told him explicitly and decisively that they were carrying the news of the Truth to provide him with. The kind of good news coming from Allah, and by His order, is the Truth, and nothing but the truth, that is why it is identical with the Truth and is certain as well.

The verse says:

"They (the guests) said: 'We give you good news of the Truth…"

Following that and to stress further presuming 'Ibrahim having not been overtaken by any fear and depression, they declared: Now that such is the case, do not be among the desperate.

The verse continues saying:

"…Therefore, be you not of the despairing ones'."

Nonetheless, Abraham quickly alienated this thinking from their minds that he might be overtaken by hopelessness from the Divine grace. On the contrary, his sole astonishment concentrated on the issues of natural laws. Therefore, he explicitly stated in an interrogative sentence, implying who on earth despairs from Allah's grace except those who are misled?

The verse says:

"He said: 'And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?'"

These are those seduced people who have not rightly come to know Allah and have not realized the dimensions of His indefinite powers.

That Lord Who creates such an amazing and smashing being called 'man' out of some tiny particles of dust, and brings into existence such a prestigious child out of insignificant semen. He Who turns and transforms burning fires into a rose-garden. Who can then doubt the ability of such a Lord or despair from His grace?

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 57 - 58

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ

قَالُوا إِنَّآ أُرْسِلْنَآ إِلَي قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ

57. "He said: 'What is your business, then, O' you (Divine) messengers?'"
58. "They said: 'Verily we have been sent unto a guilty people (to annihilate them)',"

Before starting their mission, the angels used to brief the Divine leaders about their own missions.

Therefore, after hearing about this good news, Abraham (as) started thinking as to the fact that the angels, under those circumstances, had not merely come there to give him simply the news of having a son.

Definitely, they had come to achieve a more important mission, and the conveying of the good news could be regarded only as a part of that mission.

It was for this reason that he went on asking them:

"He said: 'What is your business, then, O' you (Divine) messengers?'"

The angels responded that they had been sent to a sinful nation to annihilate them.

The Qur'an announces their answer, as the verse says:

"They said: 'Verily we have been sent unto a guilty people (to annihilate them)',"

Thus they made him understand that they had come to destroy the sinful people of Lot, for the angels were not sent down to that nation but for their destruction.

Surah Al-Hijr – Verses 59 - 60

إِلاَّ ءَالَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

إِلاَّ امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَّرْنَآ إِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ

59. "Save the family of Lot, We shall surely rescue them all."
60. "Except his wife, of whom we decreed that she should be among those who remain behind (in the chastisement)."

Hadrat-i-'Ibrahim (as) and Hadrat-i-Lot (as) did not recognize the angels in their first encounter.

Therefore, Abraham said:

"Verily we are scared of you!", 1

and Lot said:

"Verily you are an unknown people." 2

Certainly, these angels became as Lot's guests while appearing in the form of some handsome youths with smart and beautiful faces, and that prophet got worried about such guests because of the corruption which was prevalent in that society.

And it was for this reason that the angels, knowing about the curiosity of Abraham, especially in such matters and issues, would not be content with such a brief answer, instantly added that such an offensive nation is no other than the Lot's people.

They also remarked that they were sent on the mission to wipe out that evil-begotten and shameless villains, pounding them thoroughly and to exterminate them altogether, except Lot's family members whom they should rescue all.

The verse says:

"Save the family of Lot, We shall surely rescue them all."

However, as the Arabic phrase /' alal□t/ (the family of Lot) with an emphasis on /'ajma'in/ (them all), included all of his family members encompassing even his misguided wife, who cooperated with the pagans, and perhaps with the awareness of 'Ibrahim of the matter, the angels immediately made her an exception to the rule, and said:

"Except his wife, of whom we decreed that she should be among those who remain behind (in the chastisement)."

Explanations

The Arabic term /qabirin/ is the plural of /q abir/ which means; 'the remaining ones' and the remaining soil is called dust.

One may conclude from the concept of the noble verse that she (Lot's wife) was among those who had

got to stay in the town and was to be killed like other inhabitants of the town.

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1. The current Surah, verse 52
2. Ibid, verse 62

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