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Section 6

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 57

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى كُلُواْ مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَـكِن كَانُواْ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

57*. "And We outspread the clouds to shade you, and We sent down 'manna' and 'quail' upon you,*
(*saying*)*: Eat of the good things We have provided for you'.*
(*But they rebelled*)*; to Us they did no harm, but they were putting themselves to destruction."*

Abundant Bounties!

As it is understood from **Surah AL-Maidah, verses 20 to 22,** when the Children of Israel were saved from the hostility of the Pharaoh and his army, *Allah* commanded them to move toward the Holy Land of Jerusalem and enter in it.

But the Israelites did not obey the command saying:

"...in this land are a people of exceeding strength: never shall we enter it until they leave it: if (once) they leave then shall we enter ", **(the Holy Qur'an 5: 22).**

Those rebellious people's disobedience did not stop there. They even told Moses (as):

"...Go thou, and thy Lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here (and watch) ", **(SurahAl- Maidah No. 5. verse 24).**

Moses became very displeased with their words and told the story of his grievance to the Lord. Finally, it was appointed that the Children of Israel wander through the desert (of Sinai) in distraction for forty years.

A group of those people regretted their wrong action and returned to the Lord repenting of that sin. Then, He bestowed His bounties on them again, a part of which is referred to in the verse under discussion, where it says:

"***And We outspread the clouds to shade you,...***"

It is obvious how happy a wandering passenger, who has been walking under the hot sun in the desert that he has to pass through without any shelter from morning till evening, is when he receives the welcome shade of clouds!

True, it is probable that shady clouds sometimes appear in the sky of the deserts, but the verse clearly declares that the event was not an ordinary thing that occurred for the Children of Israel. It was the favour of *Allah* that often showered upon them and they enjoyed it.

At the same time, during that long span of time, the passengers in that hot dry desert needed food and sustenance. That problem was also solved for them by the Merciful Creator, as the verse continues saying:

"..And we sent down 'manna' and 'quail' upon you,..."
"...(saying): 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.'..."

In order that you may enjoy of the pure delicious nutritious sustenance and not disobey Him. Yet, they were not thankful to Him.

"...(But they rebelled); to Us they did no harm, but they were putting themselves to destruction."

The terms 'manna' and 'salwa' are differently interpreted by different philologists and commentators. However, the fact is: 'manna', and 'salwa' refer to the heavenly provisions the Israelites were provided with, without any strain or burden on their part.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 58-59

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُواْ هَـذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُواْ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَداً وَادْخُلُواْ الْبَابَ سُجَّداً وَقُولُواْ حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُواْ رِجْزاً مِّنَ السَّمَاء بِمَا كَانُواْ يَفْسُقُونَ

58. ***"And (remember) when We said, 'Enter this city (Jerusalem) and eat of the plentiful therein, wherever you desire, and enter the gate with humility and ask forgiveness,***
We shall forgive you your sins, and give more (the portion of) those who do good'."

59. ***"But those who were unjust substituted a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them, so We sent down upon those who were unjust a torment from heaven for what they used to pervert."***

The Israelites' Intensive Obstinacy

Here we are dealing with another aspect of the life of the Children of Israel concerning their entrance in the Holy Land. It says:

"***And*** (***remember***) ***when We said: 'Enter this city*** (***Jerusalem***)***..."***

The term /qaryah / in our ordinary speaking usually means: 'a village or a town', but in the Qur'an it is applied for any place where people are gathered to live in, whether it is a city, town, or village. The meaning, here, is Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

Then it adds:

"...and eat of the plentiful therein, wherever you desire..."
"...and enter the gate with humility and ask forgiveness..."
"...We shall forgive you your sins, and give more (***the portion of***) ***those who do good"***

It should be noted that the term / hittah / philologically means: 'a putting down', and, here, it means: 'a petition for the putting down of a leavy burden of sin from them and asking *Allah* to forgive their faults.'

The Lord commanded the Israelites to say that phrase with their whole hearts and spirits for the purpose of asking, thereby, for the putting down of their heavy burdens from them, because they needed to be put down from them before entering the Holy Land.

And, they were promised that they would be forgiven their sins if they did perform the command accordingly. Maybe, it is for the same reason that one of the doors of Heaven is entitled ' Bab-ul-Hittah ' (the door of forgiveness). Abu Hayyan Andulusi says that the objective meaning of /bab/, here, is one of the doors of Jerusalem which is known as ' Bab-ul-Hittah'. 1

The verse finally proclaims that as for the doers of good, besides forgiving their sins, there will be endowed some additional bounties and rewards upon them, too. It says:

"...and give more (***the portion of***) ***those who do good."***
****

However, *Allah* ordered them to express this phrase sincerely as a sign of their repentance and request for forgiveness in order to show their humility unto Him. The Lord promised them that He would forgive them their sins if they followed through with the command. In that case, He would also increase His favour and reward for the good doers among them along with the forgiveness of their faults.

But, as we know and are acquainted with the stubbornness and obstinacy of the Children of Israel, some of them even refused to utter the phrase and mockingly they said another incongruous word (Hinta) 'wheat' instead of it. Then, the Qur'an says:

"But those who were unjust substituted a saying other than that which had been spoken unto them..."
"...so We sent down upon those who were unjust a torment from heaven for what they used to pervert."

Divine Punishment in some form or other awaits those who unwarrantedly and unjustly change the word of *Allah* and His covenant, to something other than the original presented to them.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 60

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَى مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِب بِّعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْناً قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ
كُلُواْ وَاشْرَبُواْ مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلاَ تَعْثَوْاْ فِي الأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

60. ***"And (remember) when Moses sought water for his people, so We said: 'Strike the rock with your staff.' Then there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Each (group of) people knew their (respective) drinking-place. 'Eat and drink of Allah's provision, and commit you not evil in the earth, doing corruption'."***

The Miracle of Water Gushing Forth in the Desert!

Again in this verse, *Allah* has pointed out one of the important favours bestowed upon the Children of Israel, saying:

"And (remember) when Moses sought water for his people..."

When Moses (as) prayed for water, *Allah* accepted his plea as the Qur'an says:

"...so We said: 'Strike the rock with your staff.'..."
"...Then there gushed forth from it twelve springs..."

Each of those springs flowed for a definite tribe so that among all of the tribes of Israelites:

"...Each (group of) people knew their (respective) drinking place..."

There are a variety of ideas about what kind of stone that rock was and how Moses (as) was supposed to strike that rock, and in what form the flow of water appeared from it. What the Qur'an says is not more than that Moses (as) struck the rock with his staff and then twelve springs gushed forth there from.

This incident is referred to in Exod 17: 1-6, with the only difference being that the number of twelve springs that gushed forth from the rock is not mentioned. However, the Lord, on one hand, sent ' Manna' and 'Salwa' (quails) for them, and, on the other hand, provided them enough water, easily available, and told them:

"...'Eat and drink of Allah's provision, and commit you not evil in the earth, doing corruption'."

In fact, the Lord advises them, as a showing of gratitude for these great bounties, that at least they should lay stubbornness and obstinacy aside and stop hurting prophets (as).

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 61

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَن نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىَ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنبِتُ الأَرْضُ مِن بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَى بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ اهْبِطُواْ مِصْراً فَإِنَّ لَكُم مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآؤُوْاْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُواْ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَواْ وَّكَانُواْ يَعْتَدُونَ

61. ***"And (remember) when you said: 'O' Moses! never can we (always) endure one sort of food, so beseech your Lord for us, to produce for us of what the earth groweth, -its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions'. He (Moses) said: 'Would you have in exchange what is worse for what is better? Enter a city, thus you shall get that which you demanded! , Abasement and humiliation were stamped upon them and they incurred wrath from Allah; that was because they went on rejecting Allah's Signs and slaying the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed, and went on transgressing."***

Demanding a Variety of Food

To continue the description mentioned in the former verses about the different bounties *Allah* bestowed on the Children of Israel, here in the verse under discussion, the unthankfulness and ingratitude of the Israelites for those great favours is illustrated.

The verse indicates how obstinate they were, so much so that perhaps no people can be found in the history of the human race similar to them from the point of being ungrateful for Divine favours.

At first it says:

"And (remember) when you said: 'O' Moses! never can we (always) endure one sort of food,..."
"...so beseech your Lord for us, to produce for us of what the earth groweth,- its pot-herbs, and cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions'..."

But in reply to them:

"He (Moses) said: 'Would you have in exchange what is worse for what is better?.."

Now that it is so:

"...Enter a city, thus you shall get that which you demanded!'..."

Then, the Qur'an adds that:

"...Abasement and humiliation were stamped upon them, and they incurred wrath from Allah..."
"...that was because they went on rejecting Allah's Signs and slaying the prophets unjustly..."
"...That was because they disobeyed, and went on transgressing."

Why were the Israelites Stamped with Abasement and Humiliation?

As the above verse indicates, they incurred humiliation and wretchedness because of two things: the first was because they went on disobeying the orders of *Allah* and straying from the path of monotheism to that of infidelity.

The second factor was that they used to kill the righteous and apostles of *Allah.* This hard-heartedness and heedlessness of the Divine laws and even against most human laws that even today clearly continues among the Jews might be the cause of that humiliation and abasement.

Right now, as we are writing these lines, the territory of Lebanon is being invaded savagely by this hard-hearted tribe where thousands of men and women, among whom are innocent, old persons, infant babies, hospital patients and the like, are unjustly and tyrannically being slain in a pitiable way.

Their bodies are lying lifelessly on the ground in wait of burial. We are sure that this tribe will certainly have to pay the penalty for their cruelty in the future.

1. At-Tafsir-ul-Kashif, vol. 1, p. 109

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