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Section 7: Ministry of Lot

Surah Hud – Verse 69

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ
بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيدٍ

69. “And certainly Our messengers (the angels) came to Abraham with glad tidings. They said ‘Peace!’ He answered ‘Peace!’ and he did not delay to bring a roasted calf.”

Now is time to focus on one of the highlights of the life of Abraham, the iconoclastic champion. Of course, only that part of his story, which deals with the story of the people of Lot and punishment of this unruly people is being discussed here.

The Qur'an says that Allah's messengers (angels) came to Abraham, bearing good tidings, though they had come to deliver a message to Abraham (as) before.

The verse says:

“And certainly Our messengers (the angels) came to Abraham with glad tidings...”

There are two hypotheses incompatible with each other, as to what message those angels were carrying:

First; the message relates to tidings regarding the birth of Ismail and Isaac which were great good tidings for him.

Secondly, Abraham, who was tired of the unruliness and corruption of the people of Lot, became happy on hearing of the mission of the angels to destroy them.

When the messengers arrived they gave him the greetings of ‘Peace’ and he answered them likewise. Before long he had brought them a roasted calf.

The verse says:

“...They said ‘Peace!’ He answered ‘Peace!’ and he did not delay to bring a roasted calf.”

The inference drawn from the sentence is that one of the rules of hosting a guest is that a meal should be prepared for him at the earliest possible time, after his arrival, for he can be both tired and hungry, especially when he is a traveler.

Surah Hud – Verse 70

فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا
إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ لُّوطٍ

70. “But when he saw their hands extended not towards it, he mistrusted them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: ‘Fear not; we have been sent against the people of Lot’.”

Abraham’s (as) fear is different from the kind of fear and weakness found in ordinary men when facing problematic situations, for he was the archetypical iconoclast in history who was never afraid of anything. Nevertheless focusing one’s attention on possible dangers and on being a possible target is another matter.

The verse says:

“But when he saw their hands extended not towards it, he mistrusted them, and conceived a fear of them. They said: ‘Fear not; we have been sent against the people of Lot’.”

At any rate, since Lot (as) and his tribe was one of the groups under Abraham’s command, he had to be briefed before their annihilation.

Surah Hud – Verse 71

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَلَبَسَّ رِثَاها بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ

71. “And his wife was standing (by) and she laughed when We gave her the glad tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and after Isaac, of Jacob.”

There are several possibilities mentioned as to the reasons for the standing by of Abraham's wife; when the verse says:

“And his wife was standing (by) and she laughed when We gave her the glad tidings (of the birth) of Isaac, and after Isaac, of Jacob.”

a– for worshipping

b– for serving the guests

c– for witnessing the comings and goings of individuals and the discussions.

Her laughter was either because she understood that their abstinence from eating was not a sign of danger for Abraham, or, as has been pointed out in some commentaries, Sarah, Abraham's wife, was an elderly woman who had long passed her child bearing days when she suddenly heard this unbelievable news.

However, while in this mood, she realized that the Divine Will was that she would have a child.

However, each group of the Divine angels were commissioned to accomplish a particular affair. These group of angels followed two objectives. One of which was the extermination of the corrupt people of Lot, and the other was to give the good tidings of a child to be bestowed upon Abraham (as) and Sarah.

Surah Hud – Verse 72

قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتِي أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ

72. “She said: ‘Voe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Verily this is a wonderful thing!’”

Sarah, who had given up hope of having children, with a tone of tremendous wonder, exclaimed implying that alas for her. Might she give birth to a child despite her old age and despite the fact that her husband too was old? That was a truly amazing matter.

The verse itself says:

“She said: ‘Voe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? Verily this is a wonderful thing!’”

That same Allah Who had made the fire cold for Abraham (as) and had made him win over the idol-worshippers, is definitely able to make an infertile old woman fertile and an old man sire a child.

Surah Hud – Verse 73

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

73. “They said: “Do you wonder at Allah’s decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O people of the House! Verily He is Praise worthy, Glorious. ”

One day, Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) gave greetings to a group of people which returned his greetings, saying:

“Our greetings to you and may Allah’s favor and blessings be with you, the Ahl-ul-Bayt, and may His forgiveness and His paradise also be upon you as well.”

Ali (as) said:

“Do not add anything to what the angels said to Abraham (as), therefore, the phrase ‘And may Allah’s favour and blessings be with you’ would suffice.”

The verse says:

“They said: “Do you wonder at Allah’s decree? The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O people of the House! Verily He is Praise worthy, Glorious. ”

Question: Considering the fact that in the above verse, the angels addressed Abraham’s wife using the phrase Ahl-ul-Bayt, and since, naturally, everyone’s wife is considered as part of one’s household, why is it then that in the verse of Tathir in the Surah Al Ahzab, No. 33, verse 33,1 the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (S) are not included in his household?

Answer: Regarding only the literal meaning of the word, it would be natural for the word Ahl-ul-Bayt to include reference to one’s wife.

However, we have firm grounds regarding the fact that someone can be excluded from this denotation even when normally they would be included in its purview, like in the verse saying: “*Verily he is not of your household*”² where Noah’s son is not counted as a member in Noah’s household.

Sometimes it also happens that there could be a reason to include someone who would normally not be considered as a member of the household, as has been said of Salman:

“Salman belongs to our household (Ahl-ul-Bayt)”

There are numerous narrations concerning the verse of Tathir which say that the blessed Prophet (S)

had taken certain people under his cloak calling them his Ahl-ul-Bayt, while he did not allow his wife, the pious Umm-us-Salamah, to enter.

This Divine favor and blessings were not confined to that time and place. It has continued in this family, too. What Divine blessing can be superior to that bestowed upon the Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams (as) who have emerged from this household?

Surah Hud – Verse 74

فَلَمَّا زَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَىٰ يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ

74. “So when fear had passed from Abraham and the glad tidings reached him, he began disputing with Us concerning the people of Lot.”

Perhaps Abraham’s (as) plea is the same one mentioned in Surah ‘Ankabut, No. 29, verse 31, where, in addressing the angels, he asked how they would overturn the land when Lot (as) still remained among them.

They answered that they were well aware of their status, so they would save Lot and his followers. The verse says:

“So when fear had passed from Abraham and the glad tidings reached him, he began disputing with Us concerning the people of Lot.”

The angels removed his anxiety and in directly addressing Sarah they reinforced the good tidings of them being graced with progeny. Concern and anxiety in the face of possible danger are safety-orientated issues while having children has an emotional dimension. Safety issues relate to society as a whole and children are related to the household.

Surah Hud – Verses 75 – 76

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ

75. “Verily Abraham was indeed for bearing, tender-hearted, penitent.”

76. “O Abraham! Forsake this! Indeed the decree of your Lord has come to pass and surely there is coming (upon) them an irreversible chastisement.”

Patience is a highly praised characteristic that enables someone to forbear any infliction in times of crisis and not try to avenge it. This is why Abraham wished to haply remove the punishment from the people of Lot.

This good quality is very prominent in prophets, godly benevolent authorities, and knowledgeable people, for were it not to exist, they would not be able to tolerate the difficulties and troubles of their people, and therefore, they would not be able to achieve their objectives which would include guidance.

The Qur’anic term /’awwah/ means supplication and humility before Allah, along with crying and weeping.

The verse says:

“Verily Abraham was indeed for bearing, tender-hearted, penitent.”

Here, Abraham shows compassion for the people of Lot, who are rather inextricably entangled with having to suffer this awesome penalty.

The Qur’anic term /munib/, mentioned in the first verse, denotes repentance and returning, and at the same time concentrating on Allah, for Abraham appealed to Him to forgive and not to condemn the people of Lot.

However, Allah, the Blissful and Glorious, is so perfectly patient, forgiving, indulgent and compassionate that His servants can not even remotely conceive its extent. The crucial determining factor in all this, however, is that it all depends upon the suitability of the servant in point, which, when lacking in suitability sparing them is of no avail.

Once the limits are exceeded, the mercy changes to rigor and this must be so of necessity, for mercy from the point of view of the sharp teeth that Allah gave to a panther is the other side of oppression from the point of view of the sheep in its jaws.

The people of Lot had no more potential to be guided, and if they were left to continue, their evil acts would have permeated other spheres as well, just like a corrupt organ which, if not excised, would affect other organs, thus spreading the infection further. Therefore, in response, the angels said:

“O Abraham! Forsake this! Indeed the decree of your Lord has come to pass and surely there is coming (upon) them an irreversible chastisement.”

At that point Abraham realized that there was no more room for mercy, he gave up pleading for them

and the angels of death went forth to do their work executing the Divine order and exterminating the people of Lot.

Surah Hud – Verse 77

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ

77. “And when Our messengers (the angels) came to Lot, he was grieved for them and felt straitened to protect them. He said: ‘This is a distressful day’.”

When the angels came, Lot was engaged in farming outside the town. He noticed some handsome, well-dressed young men arrived. He became afraid that his people might take to them when they entered the town.

He thought that it would be best to invite them to his house, which he did, and his invitation was accepted. As he was taking them home, he was worried that his people might pass by and notice them. He wanted them to go back where they came from, saying:

“You should know that you are going to a despicable and evil people”.

At this point, Gabriel said:

“That’s one”.

The reason why Gabriel said this was that Allah had told the angels that they should not hasten to destroy the people of Lot until Lot himself had testified to their evil three times. As they kept on going, for the second time Lot told them:

“Really, you are going towards an evil people.”

Gabriel this time said:

“That’s the second time”.

As Lot arrived at the gate of the town, he said for the third time:

“You are going among an evil people from among Allah’s creatures.”

Gabriel said:

“That’s the third time”.

Lot entered the town followed by his guests. One by one they entered the house, and when Lot's wife noticed their handsomeness she wanted to call the people and tell them about it. She climbed up on the roof of the house and lit a fire. When the evil people of the town came, she told them that there were some very handsome young men in the house.

Lot was at his wits end trying to find a way to get rid of these people, to save his guests from being the objects of their evil intentions and to protect his honor. He was having a hard time, because he was in a quandary as to what he should do. He murmured:

"This is a very difficult day."

On the one hand, how could he protect his guests from the wretchedness and evil of those people? On the other hand, how could he eradicate the evil that they had caused? And finally, what should he do about the spy on the inside, his wife, who was willing to reveal anything secret in his house to the enemy outside?

As the Qur'an says:

"Allah sets forth an example to the Unbelievers, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them nothing before Allah on their account, but were told: 'Enter you both the Fire along with (others) that enter!'"³

Surah Hud – Verse 78

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يَهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ

78. "And his people came rushing towards him, And aforetime they had been practicing abominations. He said: 'O my people, here are my daughters they are purer for you. So fear Allah, and do no degrade me with my guests! Is there not among you one upright man?'"

The Arabic term /yuhra'un/ derived from /'ihra'/ means intensive driving. That is, the uninhibited passion of this rebellious people goaded them on towards Lot's (as) guests.

The meaning of the term /at-har/, in this verse, is not that sodomy has something pure about it but that marriage is purer. It means that for the sinner who is pursuing the gratification his sexual instincts, it is preferable to get married than to commit sin.

It is worthy to note that one's potentialities can flourish when caught in the midst of anxieties and

difficulties. If the Divine angels would have introduced themselves to Lot (as) on their arrival, there would have been no need for moaning, sighing, crying for help and appealing to the emotions of the public, nor would there have been any need to offer a marriage proposal.

The verse says:

“And his people came rushing towards him, And aforetime they had been practicing abominations. He said: ‘O my people, here are my daughters they are purer for you. So fear Allah, and do no degrade me with my guests! Is there not among you one upright man?’”

Question: Why would a prophet propose his daughter for marriage to an unbelieving idol worshipper?

Answer: Perhaps he might suggest that conversion be a condition for the marriage so that the marriage could facilitate and strengthen the belief in Allah.

Maybe the meaning of the term /banati’/ is ‘people’s daughters’ as the prophet is considered the father of the nation and is speaking on their behalf. Or maybe, at that time, such marriages were common for the sake of convenience and expediency.

Explanations

1– Sometimes the norms of human society degenerate to such an extent that people hasten towards committing sins being seduced by their unruly lower selves.

2– To prevent people from doing what is forbidden, we must at first open up and show the true path to them so that they do not seek pleasure by committing sins.

3– The meaning of the term ‘chastity’ is not isolation. On the contrary, it means purity in normal social intercourse.

4– Marriage is the sole and only correct context for sexual gratification, other methods are unclean and sinful.

5– Considering sin as a commonplace matter does not exempt man from his responsibility in dissuading others from performing forbidden acts.

6– Showing hospitality is such an important matter that the noblest of men have tolerated a tremendous degree of suffering for its sake.

7– Homosexuality has been forbidden, considered abominable, and has been rejected in previous religions and is incompatible with one’s manliness, development and chastity.

Surah Hud – Verses 79 – 80

قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ

قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ

79. “They said: ‘You know we have no right to your daughters, and verily you know well what we desire’.”

80. “He said: ‘Would that I had the power against you or I might take refuge in a strong support’.”

One’s deviation from the right path leads man to the point where he considers the forbidden act of sodomy as a correct and virtuous act and the religiously acceptable act of marriage as a vice and as wrong conduct.

In other words, man is transformed as a consequence of sin, where the most natural way for him may seem to be the ugliest and the most vicious way becomes the most attractive.

The verse, concerning the people of Lot, says:

“They said: ‘You know we have no right to your daughters, and verily you know well what we desire’.”

In our holy religion, homosexuality is considered as one of the capital sins that require religious punishment. It consists of lashes, execution or both commensurate with the act, and is to be applied upon those who have committed the act according to the testimony of just witnesses.

Muslim leaders and those in positions of responsibility must prevent it by all means. This is why Lot (as) says that if he had faithful companions, he would have fought against those mean people, to defend his guests, or at least he would have taken them to a safe place to shelter them.

The verse says:

“He said: ‘Would that I had the power against you or I might take refuge in a strong support’.”

The Sin of Sodomy in the Qur’an and Traditions

There are many accounts in the Glorious Qur’an about the vicious and detestable act of this deviant people, all of which exhibit the magnitude and intensity of the sin. 4

The Islamic literature highlights the grievous consequences for such behavior revealing how serious a sin it is in the religion of Islam. For example, it is said that if an adolescent commits or is the object of the act of sodomy, Allah's heavens start trembling and He will not speak to those involved on the Day of Resurrection.

Imam Sadiq (as) has said that if someone can be stoned to death twice, that person would be he who had committed the act of sodomy. We can also find in another Islamic from Imam Sadiq (as) quoting the Prophet (S) who said:

"He who performs a sexual act with an adolescent, will enter the Day of Judgment in a state of uncleanness, Allah will be outraged, the perpetrator will be deprived of His favor and He will prepare a place in Hell for such a person and what an awful place it is!"

Again he said:

*"If a male is involved in sex with another male, Allah's heavens will tremble."*⁵

Numerous narrations severely denounce transvestites, i.e. men and women who make themselves up to look like the opposite sex which predisposes them to the act of sodomy.

Surah Hud – Verse 81

قَالُوا يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرَبَ أَهْلَكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ
مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرَاتَكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ
بِقَرِيبٍ

81. "They (the guests) said: 'O Lot! Verily we are messengers of your Lord! Never shall they reach you! So travel with your family in a part of the night, and let none of you look back, but your wife. Surely she shall be smitten by that which smites them. Verily their appointed time is the morning: Is not the morning nigh?'"

The Arabic term /'asri/ is derived from /'isra' which means 'movement by night'.

The phrase /'illamra'ataka/ (but your wife) has been exceptioned, either is derived from /ahluka/ which means: 'Do move your whole family by night except your wife,' or it has been exceptioned from /la yaltafit/ meaning that none of them should look behind or pay attention to what was going on behind them except his wife, who, while leaving with him was worried about those corrupt people and would end up lingering behind and, consequently, became a victim of the Divine punishment.

When the divine angels noticed Lot's anxiety under the tormenting conditions he was in, they unveiled the secret telling him that they were messengers from Allah, that he should stop worrying and know that those people would not be able to bother him any more.

The verse says:

“They (the guests) said: ‘O Lot! Verily we are messengers of your Lord! Never shall they reach you !...”

Becoming aware as to who his guests were and what their mission was, provided him with the utmost comfort and ease of mind, he then realized that his time of troubles was about to be over and he would be free from association with the depravity of this vicious and scandalous tribe, the time for rejoicing was at hand.

The guests ordered Lot to take his family that night and leave that land immediately, for good. However, they were told to be careful not to look back. The only person who violated this order was Lot's wife, who, guilty of inclination towards the corrupt ones disregarded the order and was dealt the same punishment as the Sodomites.

The verse says:

“...So travel with your family in a part of the night, and let none of you look back, but your wife. Surely she shall be smitten by that which smites them...”

The angels last words to him were that the time for imposing the penalty will be in the morning. As the last hours of the night approached, they told them to get up and depart from the town as soon as they can, because the morning time was near.

The verse says:

“...Verily their appointed time is the morning: Is not the morning nigh?”

Surah Hud – Verses 82-83

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَابًا مِنْ سَجِيلٍ مَنْضُودٍ

مُسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ

82. “When Our command came, We turned it (their township) upside down, and rained on it stones of baked clay, layer on layer.”

83. “Marked with your Lord, and it is not far off from the unjust ones.”

The Arabic term /sijjil/ means a piece of baked clay which is neither as soft as clay nor as hard as stone.

The Arabic word /mandud/ means one on top of the other in succession. The objective of stones being marked either is that every piece of stone was meant for a particular person, or it means that those stones were different from the ones on the earth.

This holy verse explains the end result of the people of Lot.

The people of Lot used to live during the time of Abraham (a.s), and Lot (as), their prophet, was sent among them to propagate and disseminate the same religion of monotheism. Accompanying Abraham (as) he went to Palestine then to a land called ‘Mu’tafikat’, where the people used to worship idols and openly sodomize.

Lot (as) started struggling against this corruption and social pathology. The more he struggled, the less he met with success until he was threatened with expulsion if he did not stop preaching.⁶ Thereafter the angels of Divine punishment and death came down and after informing Abraham and Lot (as), completed their mission turning the land of this corrupt tribe upside down.

According to verse 13 of the Surah Al-Hijr, a blast occurred and overwhelmed the people of Lot.

Perhaps, it was this horrible blast which turned the region upside down, stones were thrown out from within the earth and fell upon their heads similar to volcanic eruptions and the subsequent explosions which occur.⁷

Explanations

1. The punishment of those who go against human nature is the overturning of their cities and environment.

The verse says:

“When Our command came, We turned it (their township) upside down...”

2. Oppressive people cannot escape Divine punishment as Allah’s anger can turn rain into stones and pelt them to death.

The verse says:

“...and rained on it stones of baked clay, layer on layer.”

Those nations who have a permissive attitude towards homosexuality such as is found in the West, must expect Allah's punishment and the upturning of the region where this corruption takes place.

The verse says:

“Marked with your Lord, and it is not far off from the unjust ones.”

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1. It says: “...Verily Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.”
 2. Surah Hud No. 11, verse 46
 3. Surah At-Tahrim, No. 66, verse 10
 4. Refer to Surah Al-A'raf, verses 79–80–83, Surah Hud verse 82, Surah Al-'Anbiya verse 74, Surah An-Naml verse 54.
 5. Refer to Usul-i-Kafi, Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, Bihar ul 'Anwar, Nahj ul Balaqah
 6. Surah Ash-Shu'ara, No. 26, verse 167
 7. Al-Mizan, the
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