

8. Examination

Allah, the Wise, has said:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

*(Who created death and life that He may try you (to prove) which of you is best in deeds; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving)*¹

Imam Sajjad (a.s.) said:

إِنَّمَا خَلَقَ الدُّنْيَا وَ أَهْلَهَا لِيَبْلُوَهُمْ فِيهَا

*(Allah created the world and its inhabitants in order to examine them in it.)*²

Short Explanation

Man faces different types of examination in the world. He is tested through fear, hunger, diseases, death of one's near and dear ones, financial constraints, false accusations, evil neighbours, and so on

Since this world is a place of deeds and examinations, blessed and happy are those who do not fail at any stage of life.

On one occasion, a person is tested by means of wealth and on another occasion by indigence. He achieves success by resorting to thanksgiving during affluence and patience during poverty. Everyone, without exception, is subjected to trials and examinations which vary only in their 'quality' and 'quantity'. Do you not see how some people, who are accustomed to boasting, lose their patience and fail miserably in the face of examinations?

1) Haroon Makki

Sahl Khorasani approached Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and complained:

“Why is it that in spite of the truth being on your side, you do not stage an uprising? At the present time, there are one hundred thousand of your Shiites, who upon your orders, would immediately unsheathe their swords for battle.”

The Imam (a.s.), with the intention of giving him a practical answer, ordered the furnace to be lighted. He then instructed Sahl to jump into the flames.

Sahl said, “O’ My Master! May God shower you with His grace and favours! Do not place me in the fire. I take back my words and request you to withdraw your instruction too.”

Meanwhile, one of the sincere companions of the Imam (a.s.), by the name of Haroon Makki, happened to arrive. Just as he entered, the Imam (a.s.) told him to take off his shoes and walk into the hot furnace. As soon as Haroon heard the Imam’s (a.s.) order, he entered the furnace and sat within the flames.

The Imam (a.s.) then turned to Sahl and started to brief him about the circumstances prevailing in Khorasan, as if he had been there to witness the events taking place.

After a while, he said to Sahl, “Get up and have a look inside the furnace.”

When Sahl peered into the furnace, he saw Haroon sitting cross-legged and unharmed inside, surrounded by the fiery flames.

“How many individuals like this one exist in Khorasan?” the Imam (a.s.) questioned Sahl.

“ By Allah! Not a single person like Haroon Makki exists in Khorasan,” replied Sahl.

The Imam (a.s.) then explained, “I shall not stage an uprising when I do not have even five sincere companions. (And do remember) we are very well aware as to when we should stage an uprising.”³⁷²

2) Buhloul Succeeds!

Haroon Al-Rashid, the Abbasid Caliph, wished to appoint a judge in Baghdad. After conferring with his courtiers, it was unanimously agreed that none, except Buhloul, possessed the right qualities for the post.

Buhloul was summoned and the post was offered to him. But Haroon declined to accept, saying that he was neither worthy of the post nor capable of undertaking the task.

Haroon said, “All the inhabitants of Baghdad are of the opinion that none except you, is worthy of the

post and you deny it!”

Buhloul explained:

“I am more aware of myself than any of you. Whatever I have stated is either true or false. If the reason I have given is true, then it would be improper of me to assume the office of judge when I am not capable. On the other hand, if I have lied to you, then a liar does not deserve to take this post.”

But Haroon insisted that Buhloul took up the responsibility. Buhloul requested that he be granted one night to reflect over the offer. The next morning, Buhloul feigned insanity and placing a staff between his legs ran through the streets and markets of Baghdad, screaming:

“Make room for my horse and keep away lest it kicks you.”

As soon as the people noticed his antics, they commented that Buhloul had gone insane. When Haroon Al-Rashid was informed of this, he said:

“Buhloul has not become insane; rather he has saved his religion and has escaped our clutches. He has enacted this in order to prevent himself from interfering in the affairs and the rights of the people.”⁴

Author’s note: Yes, each one is subjected to a specific examination. Not only was Buhloul offered authority, but the Caliph would send him food. Buhloul, however, would not eat it, saying,; *Throw it to the dogs behind the bath. Even they, if they were to realize that it was the Caliph’s food would refuse to eat it!*

3) Abu Hurairah Failed!

Abu Hurairah embraced Islam in the year 8 A.H. He was therefore in the company of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) for only two years. He died in the year 59 A.H., at the age of 78.

Abu Hurairah had come to be regarded as one of the companions of the holy Prophet. However, he failed to benefit from the Prophet’s (s.a.w.) holy company and protect himself from blunders and errors. On the contrary, he misused his position and sold himself for the material gains of this world.

Abu Huairah used to forge traditions and ascribe them to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in return for riches. On the first of the occasions when this occurred, the second Caliph prohibited him from narrating traditions; on the second occasion, the Caliph punished him by lashing him, and on the third occasion, he had him expelled from the city.

When A’laa, the governor of Bahrain passed away in the year 21 A.H., U’mar appointed Abu Hurairah as governor in his place. But within a short period, a large amount of money (four hundred thousand dinars) had found its way into Abu Hurairah’s own pockets. As a result, U’mar dismissed him from his post.

Mua'wiyah used to compel some of the companions and the 'followers' to forge traditions against Amirul Mu'mineen (a.s.) and one of the principal personalities in this act was Abu Hurairah.

Once Asbagh Ibn Nubata said to Abu Hurairah, "Contrary to the teachings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) you befriend Ali's (a.s.) enemies and harbour enmity towards his (peace be upon him) friends!"

Hearing this, Abu Hurairah sighed deeply and simply said, "*Inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raajiu'n.*"

Another of the evil deeds committed by Abu Hurairah was that, in order to acquire riches from Mua'wiyah, he accompanied the latter to the mosque of Kufah and slapping his forehead several times in full view of the gathering, said:

"O' People of Iraq! Do you think I shall ascribe a lie to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and thereby burn myself in the fire of Hell? By Allah! I have heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) say: 'For every prophet there is a holy sanctuary and mine is in Madinah, between the mountains of E'er and Thaur. Whoever establishes an innovation in my sanctuary, may the curse of Allah, the angels and all the people be upon him'. I take Allah as my witness that Ali (a.s.) introduced an innovation within the sanctuary of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.)." (God Forbid).

Mua'wiyah was so pleased with this statement that he rewarded Abu Hurairah and made him the ruler of Madinah.⁵⁷⁴

4) Ibrahim and the Sacrifice of Ismai'l

God ordered Ibrahim (a.s.) to sacrifice his son Ismai'l (a.s.). He did this to examine Ibrahim's (a.s.) patience and obedience to Allah. If Ibrahim (a.s.) passed this test, he would demonstrate his worthiness of Allah's grace and favour.

Having been bestowed with a child after years of loneliness without any children, he was being ordered by God to sacrifice with his own hands the apple of his eyes, who had grown up to become a young boy of 13.

Ibrahim (a.s.) said to Ismai'l (a.s.):

"O' My beloved son! I have dreamt that I am sacrificing you; what do you think about this?"

"Dear father! Act as you have been ordered and, God willing, you shall find me of the steadfast ones," Ismai'l (a.s.) replied.

Then, he strengthened his father's resolve by advising:

"Father, death is very painful and I am so fearful of it that its very thought leaves me disturbed and distressed, so bind my hands and legs firmly, lest I beat about with them while my throat is being slit and

thereby reduce the rewards ordained for me. In addition, sharpen the knife so that I am put at peacequickly. Also, place me with my face towards the ground and not upon my cheeks for I fear that if your eyes fall upon my face, compassion might overtake you and prevent you from complying with the Divine commandment. Take off your garments so that my blood does not taint them and my mother does not see my blood. If you deem it fit, take my clothes to my mother; they might serve to console her and lessen her grief at my death.”

Hearing this speech, Ibrahim (a.s.) responded, “O’ Son! You are indeed an excellent aide (to me) in executing God’s commandment.”

Ibrahim (a.s.) took his son to Mina (the place of sacrifice), sharpened the knife and then binding Ismai’l’s (a.s.) hands and legs, laid him with his face towards the ground. Ibrahim then raised his head towards the heavens and placed the knife on his son’s throat. But, as he did so, he realized that the knife did not cut. Looking at it, he noticed that the sharp knife had turned blunt. This occurrence was repeated several times, when suddenly a heavenly voice was heard saying:

O’ Ibrahim! Indeed, you have acted as you had dreamt and have complied with the commandment given to you.

As a substitute for the sacrifice of Ismai’l (a.s.), Jibraeel brought a goat, which Ibrahim (a.s.) subsequently sacrificed. From here, it became a custom that those performing the *haji* every year should offer a sacrifice at Mina.⁶⁷⁵

5) Sa’d and the Holy Prophet

One of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), by the name of Sa’d, was very poor and was regarded as one of the People of the Ledge.⁷ He used to offer all his prayers behind the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), who was greatly distressed by Sa’d’s poverty. One day, the Holy Prophet promised him that if he got some money, he would give it to Sa’d. Time passed but no money came to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) who became even more distressed at Sa’d’s situation. It was at this time that Jibraeel descended from the skies, bringing with him two dirhams.

He said to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), “Allah has said: We are aware of your distress in connection with Sa’d’s poverty. If you want him to emerge from this state, give him these two dirhams and ask him to engage himself in trade.”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) took the two dirhams and set out of the house for the Dhuhr prayers when he found Sa’d waiting for him near one of the rooms of the mosque.

Turning to him, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) asked:

“Can you engage yourself in business?”

“By Allah! I have no capital with which I can do business,” replied Sa’d.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) handed him the two dirhams and told him to start trading with this capital.

Sa’d took the money and after offering the Dhuhr and A’sr prayers set about to earn his livelihood.

God blessed him in such a way that whatever he purchased for a dirham, he would sell it for double the amount. Consequently, his financial state gradually improved. This continued till he eventually purchased a shop near the mosque and began conducting his business from there.

As his business picked up, he began to become lax with respect to his acts of worship, even to the extent that when Bilal recited the *adhaan* he would not get ready for the prayers. Previously, he was ready well before *adhaan* was recited!

When the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) noticed Sa’d’s lateness for prayers, he said to him:

“Sa’d, this world has made you so busy that it has even weaned you away from your prayers.”

Sa’d replied, “What can I do? If I leave my wealth unattended, it will go to waste and I will end up in loss. From one person, I have to collect the money for the goods sold, while from another I have to take possession of the goods purchased.”

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was disturbed at Sa’d’s involvement with his wealth and his negligence with respect to his acts of worship. At that moment, Jibraeel descended and said:

“Allah has said: ‘We possess knowledge of your distress. Which of the two states do you prefer for Sa’d?’”

The Holy Prophet indicated that the previous state was beneficial for Sa’d.

Jibraeel agreed, “Yes, love for the world causes man to become heedless of the hereafter. Take back the two dirhams, which you had given to him previously.”

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him and his holy progeny) approached Sa’d and asked him if he could return the two dirhams that he had given to him.

“If you desire, I shall even give you two hundred dirhams,” said Sa’d.

“No, just give me the two dirhams, which you had taken from me.”

Sa’d handed the money to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and within a short time, his financial situation turned a full circle and before long he found himself in his previous state.⁸

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1. Holy Qur'an, ch. Al-Mulk (67), vs. 2.
 2. Al-Kafi, vol. 8, pg. 75, (New Edition).
 3. Hikaayat-ha-e-Shanidani, vol. 4, pg. 65; Safinah al-Bihaar, vol. 2, pg. 714.
 4. Pand-e-Taareekh, vol. 1, pg. 181; Raudhaat al-Jannaat, pg. 36; Gharaaib al-Akhbaar of Sayyid Ne'matullah Jazaairi.
 5. Paighambar Wa Yaaraan, vol. 1, pg. 154-166.
 6. Taareekh-e-Anbiya, vol. 1, pg. 164-169
 7. These were the people, who did not possess a house of their own and so, lived in the veranda or the rooms of the mosque.
 8. Daastaan-ha Wa Pand-ha, vol. 2, pg. 78; Hayaat al-Quloob, vol. 1, pg. 578.

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