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Section 3: The Ministry of Noah

Surah Hud – Verses 25 - 26

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحاً إِلىَ قَوْمِهِ إِنّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ

أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُوا إِلاَّ اللَّهَ إِنّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ

25. "And verily, We sent Noah to his people, (saying:) 'I am a plain warner for you'."
26. "That you serve none but Allah; verily, I do fear for you the penalty of a painful day."

Hadrat Noah is the first prophet among those possessors of determination /'ulul 'azm/ i.e., among the major prophets, who stood up against polytheism and idol worship, and as the human generation traces its genealogy back to him after the drowning of the unbelievers, he is addressed as the second Adam and, since his life-time was longest comparing that of other prophets, he is called Master of the Prophets.

Allah, the Gracious, has told the story of the prophets of the past to warn the unbelievers and to soothe the Prophet (S). Taking up the story of Noah, the Qur'an says that he was sent to his people so as to warn them against worshipping other than Allah.

The verse says:

"And verily, We sent Noah to his people, (saying:) 'I am a plain warner for you'."

He started His call in a sincere manner inviting them to accept monotheism because it was the most supreme ideal, for no other act of worship would be accepted before the All-knowing Allah, the sole and

only Creator of the world.

The verse says:

"That you serve none but Allah; verily, I do fear for you the penalty of a painful day."

Surah Hud – Verse 27

فَقَالَ الْمَلأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلاَّ بَشَراً مِثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلاَّ الَّذِينَ
هُمْ أَرَاذِلُنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ

27. "Then the chiefs of those who disbelieved among his people said: 'We do not see (in) you but a man like ourselves, nor do we see that any follow you but those who are the meanest among us, at first thought, nor do we see (in) you any excellence over us; nay, we think you are liars!'"

The opponents of the truth sometimes belittle and endeavor to weaken the Divine leaders. They claim that prophets are men like others and not superior to them.

The verse says:

"Then the chiefs of those who disbelieved among his people said: 'We do not see (in) you but a man like ourselves…"

At other times, humiliating the prophets' followers, they claim that they are some unimportant and insignificant people.

The verse continues saying:

"…nor do we see that any follow you but those who are the meanest among us, at first thought…"

At other times, they despise the entire school claiming that the adherents of this school are naive and superficial who lack any depth of vision.

The verse says:

"…nor do we see (in) you any excellence over us; nay, we think you are liars!'"

Arrogant people often detest being equal with the masses, especially with those who are deprived. Usually, the aristocrats have always allied themselves with the opponents of the prophets but those who take less interest in worldly affairs, become believers more quickly and are more decent.

Therefore, the opponents of the prophets lack reasoning and whatever they claim is based on

conjecture, speculation and on hallucinations.

Surah Hud – Verse 28

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنْتُ عَلَي بَيِّنَةٍ مِن رَبِّي وءَاتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِندِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنُلْزِمُكُمُوهَا وَأَنتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ

28. "He said: "O my People! Bethink you, if I be upon a clear proof from my Lord, and He has grant me mercy from His Presence, but has been obscured for you; shall we compel you to (accept) it while you are averse to it?"

This holy verse provides answers to two objections of the unbelievers which were raised in the foregoing verse.

The unbelievers used to say that Noah (as) was a man like themselves. This verse answers that although in appearance the prophets are like the unbelievers, they have merited Allah's particular approbation since they receive revelations and perform miracles.

The unbelievers would say that the followers of Hadrat Noah (as) were some simple minded, short sighted, and naive people. The verse answers that such was not the case, although apparently they were weaker than the unbelievers, they had become believers through witnessing the proofs shown to them by their prophet. Their conviction, indeed, was not baseless and without reason.

Despite all the false accusations and groundless protests, the prophets have always displayed a tolerant attitude towards their foes and they still took recourse to logic, reasoning and appeal to their emotions.

Of all the things required of the prophets, offering proofs to the people and performing miracles combined with decisive reasoning leave no room for any excuses. Nothing must withhold people from exercising their free choice. Once they stick to their beliefs, they will prosper and once they refuse to do so they will be tormented. There is no compulsion in that.

The verse says:

"He said: "O my People! Bethink you, if I be upon a clear proof from my Lord, and He has grant me mercy from His Presence, but has been obscured for you; shall we compel you to (accept) it while you are averse to it?"

Surah Hud – Verse 29

وَيَا قَوْمِ لآ أَسْأَلُكُم عَلَيْهِ مَالاً إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلاَّ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَاْ بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
إِنَّهُم مُلاَقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْماً تَجْهَلُونَ

29. "And O' my People! I ask you no wealth for it. My reward is only upon Allah, and I will not drive away those who believe, (***for***) ***verily they shall meet their Lord, but I see you are an ignorant people."***

The secret of a preacher's success is his lack of over expectation with regard to people and not letting himself be stymied by the objections of the wealthy corrupt classes.

If the prophets were seeking illegitimate profits, they would call on the aristocrats and not the poor, on the princes not on the paupers. The followers of the prophets are the oppressed people and they never neglect them.

The prophets are never greedy for the people's property. Their sole purpose, according to their mission is to save the people from their ignorance and from the Divine punishment.

The verse says:

"And O' my People! I ask you no wealth for it. My reward is only upon Allah, and I will not drive away those who believe, (***for***) ***verily they shall meet their Lord, but I see you are an ignorant people."***

Surah Hud – Verse 30

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَن يَنصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِن طَرَدتُّهُمْ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ

30. "And O my people! Who will help me against Allah if I drove them away? Will you not then reflect?"

The Qur'an further explains the situation in this verse, and from the tongue of the prophet to his people, it implies that if he cast out this group, who in this world can come to his assistance in that great Court of Justice?

The verse says:

"And O my people! Who will help me against Allah if I drove them away?..."

Driving out the righteous and faithful believers is no easy matter. They can bear witness against the prophet on the Day of Resurrection and no one will be able to defend him then, while, at the same time, the Divine punishment might also face him in this world. And contemplating this would lead to knowledge that whatever the prophet said was identical with the truth.

The verse says:

"...Will you not then reflect?"

Surah Hud – Verse 31

وَلآ أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِندِي خَزَآئِنُ اللَّهِ وَلآ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلآ أَقُولُ إِنّي مَلَكٌ وَلآ أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَن يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْراً اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ إِنّي إِذاً لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

31. "And I do not say to you* (*that*) *Allah's treasures are with me; nor do I know the Unseen, nor do I claim to be an angel; nor do I say, about those whom your eyes do despise,* (*that*) *Allah will never grant them any good. Allah is well aware of what is in their hearts;* (*for*) *verily then I should be of the unjust."

Knowledge of Unseen, regarding anything and every condition, is absolutely with Allah. The Qur'an says: ***"And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them..."***1 which means that the keys to the invisible world are in His Own authority.

However, due to Divine Providence and according to the Divine Will, men of Allah will sometimes find windows opened up for them. The Qur'an in regard to this fact says:

"These are of the tidings of the Unseen which We reveal unto you..."2

Therefore, Allah's prophets are knowledgeable about the invisible world as the Qur'an states:

"The Knower of the Unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any,"

"Except to him whom He chooses as an apostle..."3.

This verse means that He is knowledgeable about the invisible world, and no one is aware of this knowledge of the invisible except those whom He has selected from among His prophets.

Not only the knowledge of the invisible world is His own prerogative but the power to perform extraordinary works also rests with Him, though Allah can and will bestow something of whatever aspect of His power which He deems worthy upon anyone He chooses and to the extent that He wishes. For example, it is mentioned in the Qur'an that death and life are in His Power:

"Verily, it is He who makes one die and live". 4

However, the Qur'an also says that Hadrat 'Isa (as) made the dead live with His permission;

"I make the dead live with His permission."5

Although Allah takes lives ***"Allah takes the souls..."***6 yet angels take lives with His permission:

"The angel of death shall cause you to die..."7

And although He is the sole Creator of all, ***"Allah is the Creator of every thing..."***8, But Hadrat 'Isa creates, however, with His permission:

"...and when you did make of clay a thing like the shape of a bird, by My leave..."9

Theological research has shown that no one individual existing among the jinn and mankind can have access to the science of the invisible world apart from a limited amount of it which depends upon their potentialities.

This type of knowledge in relation to them is not a science of the invisible after it is bestowed on them although it might be so for others. On the other hand, Allah has made the prophets and the Imams knowledgeable about the invisible world and aware of the past and future.

For example, the blessed Prophet (S) had foretold the news of the 'Imamat' of twelve persons, the sufferings inflicted on them, the intentional disappearance of Hadrat Mahdi (as) and his reappearance, the events occurring during the last days, the establishment of his government, and the resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgment, other similar matters have also been passed down to us from the other Imams (as).

Without doubt whatever has not been given to us in this respect is due to the lack of capacity on the part of the average man or has been withheld for reasons known only to Allah.10

At the end of the verse, the Qur'an goes back to the subject of oppressed believers, emphasizing that the prophet cannot say that those whom the disbelievers despise will not be rewarded by Allah.

On the contrary, the blessings of this world and those of the next belong to the oppressed even though they are empty handed in this world. It is the wrongdoers who in their infatuation with the world consider goodness to be confined to wealth, position, youth, and the like, demonstrating their lack of knowledge of the truth and its true meaning.

Even if one assumes that the oppressors are right and that the oppressed are indeed wretches, still Allah is more aware than us of what is in their minds, for we know nothing about them except what is indicative of their good faith and sincerity, and thus we are obliged to accept them.

I am only required to judge and relate with men based on their outward behavior, judging a man on the basis of his inward nature belongs to Allah alone, and if I act otherwise, I will certainly be among the oppressors.

The verse says:

"And I do not say to you (that) Allah's treasures are with me; nor do I know the Unseen, nor do I claim to be an angel; nor do I say, about those whom your eyes do despise, (that) Allah will never grant them any good. Allah is well aware of what is in their hearts; (for) verily then I should be of the unjust."

Surah Hud – Verse 32

قَالُوا يَانُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَآ إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

32. "They said: 'O' Noah! You have disputed with us and multiplied disputation with us. Bring us then what you have promised us (of divine punishment), if you are truthful.'"

Disputes are only valuable whenever they are honestly in pursuit of the truth and done in a respectful and polite manner; as the Qur'an says:

"...and argue with them in the best manner."11

If the dispute is based on what is wrong, it is of no value, as the holy Qur'an says:

"...and they disputed by means of the falsehood in order to stamp out the truth thereby..."12

Thus, as the unbelievers did not have logic on their side and accepted no logical arguments, they sought to bring the debate to and end by telling him to bring unto them what he had promised.

The verse says:

"They said: 'O' Noah! You have disputed with us and multiplied disputation with us. Bring us then what you have promised us (of divine punishment), if you are truthful.'"

Therefore Hadrat Noah (as) cursed them after they had made their declaration that they wanted him to send down their destruction.

Surah Hud – Verse 33

قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُم بِهِ اللَّهُ إِن شَآءَ وَمَآ أَنتُم بِمُعْجِزِينَ

33. "He said: 'Verily Allah will bring it to you, if He wills, and you will not be able to frustrate (it).'"

Noah replies that the realization of the punishment for their heedlessness and obstinacy is not up to him but it is dependent upon the Will of Allah. He himself is only a messenger and a sincere servant of the Almighty.

They should beware, however, that when the command for the punishment is issued they cannot escape His power for they are at His mercy and they will not be able to take refuge anywhere.

The verse says:

"He said: 'Verily Allah will bring it to you, if He wills, and you will not be able to frustrate (it).'"

Surah Hud – Verse 34

وَلاَ يَنفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُّ أَنْ أَنصَحَ لَكُمْ إِن كَانَ اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَن يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

34. "And my advice will not profit you, should I intend to give you advice, if Allah wills to lead you astray. He is your Lord and unto Him you will be returned."

Noah said that his advice would have been of no use to them even though he sincerely wished to counsel them.

The punishment and retribution of the evildoers is up to Allah, and prophets are nothing but agents for conveying the Divine message and admonishing the people.

There is no way for man to resist or escape Divine justice and punishment, for Allah's Will overcomes all other wills. Even if one is not punished in this world, Allah will deal with him on the Day of Resurrection, and then he will see the final result of his deeds.

However, the Arabic word /nush/ refers to the saying or deed by which sincere reformation is achieved, and the Arabic word /qayy/is called to that kind of ignorance which has its roots in corrupt and evil convictions.

The difference between /'idlal/ and /'iqwa/ is that the doer of the former knows the destination but he has lost the way, while with respect to /'iqwa/ the aim and intention are both unknown.

Attributing the actions of /'idlal/ and /'iqwa/ to Allah is in the way of punishing those who are misled because of the obstinacy and corruption of their character. It does not mean that from the beginning and without prior premise Allah goes on leading one astray.

Surah Hud – Verse 35

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَاْ بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرِمُونَ

35. "Or they say: 'He has forged it.' Say: 'If I have forged it, upon me is my sin, and I am quit of the sins you commit'."

Some of the unbelievers among the Quraysh claimed that these stories of the prophets had been fabricated by the Prophet himself (S) which he then attributed to Allah.

The Almighty instructs him to tell them that if he had fabricated them, it would be he alone who would suffer the consequences and they would not be held responsible, but the converse is also true with respect to their transgressions, that he is just as free of responsibility for their sins and offences.

His duty is only to convey the message and nothing else, whether or not they accepted or rejected it.

The verse says:

"Or they say: 'He has forged it.' Say: 'If I have forged it, upon me is my sin, and I am quit of the sins you commit'."

Apparently because of the Qur'anic word /qul/, which means 'say', and owing to the news about the unbelievers of Mecca and the Prophet of Islam, the verse relates to the Apostle of Islam (S).

Anyway, he who commits an act will only be held responsible and it is no one else's fault. The Prophet (S) will not be involved in their sins either.

The fact that they did not accept the faith and attributed false accusations to the Qur'an, calling the Prophet a liar, all together resulted in grievous consequences while on his part, he had performed his mission in admonishing and conveying the message to them.

The Arabic term /'ijram/ and /jurm/ mean the picking of unripe fruits and which thereafter have been referred to whatever indecent behavior or offence or sin.

1. Surah Al-An'am, No. 6, verse 59
2. Surah Hud, No. 11, verse 49
3. Surah The Jinn, No. 72, verses 26, 27
4. Surah An-Najm, No. 53, verse 44
5. Surah 'Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 49
6. Surah Az-Zumar, No. 39, verse 42
7. Surah As-Sajdah, No. 32, verse 11
8. Surah Ar-Ra'd, No. 13, verse 16
9. Surah Al-Ma'idah, No. 5, verse 110
10. Refer to Bihar-ul-'Anwar, vol.35 p.420, 'Usul ul Kafi, vol.1, p.225 Yanabi' ul Mawaddah, vol.1, p.605; Kashf-ul Ghumma, vol.3, p.340, Safinat-ul-Bihar 'Uyun Akhbar-ur-Rida, vol.2, p.237; Kitab al Sirat ul Haqq, vol.3 p.340, 'Uyun-i-Akhbar-ur-Rida, vol.2, Nahjul Balaqah and Haqayiq by Ibn Shahr-'Ashub, and other books regarding the 'Knowledge of the Imams.
11. Surah An-Nahl, No. 16, verse 125
12. Surah Ghafir, No. 40, verse 5

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