

Section 6: The Ministry of Salih

Surah Hud – Verse 61

وَالَّذِي تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ

61. “And unto (the people of) Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih, He said: ‘O my people! Worship Allah! You have no god other than He. It is He Who produced you from the earth and settled you therein: so ask forgiveness of Him, and turn unto Him in repentance: surely my Lord is Nigh, Responsive.’”

Salih (as) is the third prophet who succeeds Noah and Hud (as) in the Divine mission.

The Qur’anic story of the people of ‘Ad ended with all of its instructive lessons and now it is the turn of the people of Thamud, the people, who, according to historical narrations, lived then in the land of “Wadi al Qurra” which was located between Medina and Damascus.

Here again we note that the Qur’an, when mentioning their prophet, terms Salih as a brother, a compassionate person who had no other aim except wishing his people well.

The noble verse says:

“And unto (the people of) Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih...”

The verse also continues:

“...He said: ‘O my people! Worship Allah! You have no god other than He...”

Afterwards, in order to elevate their sense of appreciation and their sense of gratitude, he refers to an

example of Allah's favor which, from the point of view of their existence itself, they would not be able to deny, he says:

"...It is He Who produced you from the earth..."

After referring to the blessings of creation, the verse reminds them of all the favors which Allah had bestowed upon them in being enriched in the earth, and implies that Allah is He who has left the development of the earth to you and has empowered you with the means of its exploitation.

The verse says:

"...and settled you therein:..."

It is to be noted here that the Qur'an does not claim that Allah developed the earth and made it available to them, on the contrary, it says that He left the development of the earth to them. Allusion is here made to the fact that all the means of exploitation had been readily available from all points of view, however, it is up to men to develop the land with their own toil, and obtain its resources.

And they would not be able to claim any share of it without working and making the required effort.

Since such is the case, they should seek repentance from their sins and return to Him for Allah is always near to His subjects and accepts their requests.

The verse concludes:

"...so ask forgiveness of Him, and turn unto Him in repentance: surely my Lord is Nigh, Responsive'."

Surah Hud – Verse 62

قَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّنَا
لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ

62. "They said: 'O Salih! You have hitherto been a source of hope among us. Do you (now) forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? Truly we are in disquieting doubt as to that unto which you invite us'."

The idol worshippers told Salih (as) that before he used to be their source of hope and pride and because of this they loved him. They said this so that he might be encouraged to try to preserve the good relationship they used to have, and give up his calling to them towards monotheism.

They told him that he was their source of hope in the past and they used to appeal to him asking his counsel, they used to have faith in his wisdom, insight, and in his intelligence, and they never cast any shadow of a doubt upon his benevolence and compassion.

However, they told him that unfortunately, you made us lose hope in you with your opposition against our way of life which is the worship of idols and icons according to the way of our ancestors.

This has been our source of pride and thus indicates that you do not have the slightest respect for our leaders, nor do you have any faith in our wisdom and intelligence nor do you defend our traditions.

The verse says:

“They said: ‘O Salih! You have hitherto been a source of hope among us...”

Do you actually want to dissuade us from worshipping what our fathers used to worship?

They declared:

“...Do you (now) forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped?...”

The fact of the matter is that we are in doubt as to the way of life to which you are calling us (that is monotheism) and, at the same time, we are also pessimistic about it.

They said:

“...Truly we are in disquieting doubt as to that unto which you invite us’.”

Surah Hud – Verse 63

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَءَاتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ

63. “He (Salih) said: ‘O’ my people! Bethink you if I be upon a clear proof from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself, who will then help me against Allah if I (were to) disobey Him? So you do not add to me other than loss.”

Metaphysically orientated religions and Divinely appointed prophets call on people to adopt monotheism and the worship of Allah by providing sound reasoning and miracles, and not by force, threats and ignorance.

The position of being appointed as a prophet is a special favor and a privilege accorded to certain

individuals by Allah.

One should never abandon Allah's way by imaginary and wishful thinking about popular support. We should take note of the fact that deviant people will add nothing to others except to their losses, for opposing truth itself is something very detrimental for man.

The verse says:

“He (Salih) said: ‘O’ my people! Bethink you if I be upon a clear proof from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself, who will then help me against Allah if I (were to) disobey Him? So you do not add to me other than loss.”

Surah Hud – Verse 64

وَيَا قَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ
فِيَا خُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ

64. “O my People! This she – camel of Allah is a Sign for you. So leave her alone to graze in Allah's earth, and do not touch her with any harm, lest a swift chastisement will seize you!”

The story of Salih's she-camel has also been reiterated in suras Ash-Shu'ara and Al-Qamar as well. 1

Salih (as) said to the people that he would ask their idols something and they also should ask something from His Lord. Whoever, provides the right answer, could be the object of his and their worship. The idol worshippers accepted and their request was for a pregnant she-camel to come out of the mountain just then and there. Allah accepted their request and a camel, meeting all those requirements, came out of the mountain.

This she-camel of Salih was extraordinary in many respects.

1. It came out of the innermost part of the mountain.
2. It was pregnant without having any contact with a male camel.
3. For one full day, she had drunk of the water of that village.
4. It provided a daily supply of milk that was sufficient for meeting the needs of the people of the area.
5. The people had no responsibilities towards her.
6. It served as a reason and as a miracle which was quite tangible and understandable for the people.

Surah Hud – Verse 65

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوبٍ

65. “So they hamstrung her. Then he said: ‘Enjoy yourselves in your abode for three days, (then will be your ruin). That is a promise not to be belied.’”

Through traditional narrations we are informed that only one person had killed the she-camel. Despite this, the Qur’an says: /‘aqaruha/ which means that all of them killed her. This indication signifies that there had been a consensus of opinion among them about the killing.

From the Islamic point of view, the ideological bond between individuals causes them to be responsible for the sins of single individuals within the context of that ideology.

Question: What is the underlying philosophy of a three-day grace period?

Firstly: So as to give them a chance to repent.

Secondly: To provide a means for spiritual pressure and augmentation of the penalty. If a person is told that he will be killed within three days, this very news will serve as the greatest blow upon him psychologically speaking.

Thirdly: It provided another good proof for the legitimacy of the Divine prophet since fixing a dead line results from having access to news from the invisible world.

However, one should never take Divine warnings as jokes or lies as scorning them will cause the infliction of Divine penalties.

Surah Hud – Verse 66

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِن خِزْيٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

66. “And when Our Decree came (to pass), We saved Salih and those who believed with him by a Mercy from Us, and (delivered them) from the ignominy of that day. Verily, your Lord is the All-strong, the All-mighty.”

The Arabic term /xizy/, applied in this holy verse, means a kind of defect of deformity, the appearance of

which causes man embarrassment and loss of prestige.

Natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods or dangerous epidemics may happen to both to the faithful as well as to idol worshippers, just like carelessness, which may be seen in one man, but the effects of which can be felt by all.

However, when the issue in question is the Divine punishment, the faithful are secure and safe unless they have merited punishment owing to their lack of action, their condescension to oppression, or their ceasing to dissuade others from what has been forbidden.

The verse says:

“And when Our Decree came (to pass), We saved Salih and those who believed with him by a Mercy from Us, and (delivered them) from the ignominy of that day. Verily, your Lord is the All-strong, the All-mighty.”

Surah Hud – Verse 67 – 68

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

كَانَ لَمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا أَلَا إِنَّ تَمُودَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِتَمُودَ

67. “And the (mighty) Blast overtook those who were unjust, so they became motionless corpses in their abodes.”

68. “As if they had never dwelt there. Behold! Verily Thamud rejected their Lord. Behold! away with Thamud!”

The Arabic term, /jaimin/ is derived from /jaama/ which means sitting on one’s knees or falling on face, like the state in which one has received an electric shock which renders one immobile, making that person lose the power to escape.

The Qur’anic term /yaqnau/ is derived from /qiniy/ which means staying in one place.

The record of these obstinate and oppressive people of Thamud comes to a close in this verse.

Salih (as) is one of the Arab prophets, and the tribe of Thamud is an ancient tribe belonging to prehistoric period, which resided in Wadi-al-Qura, located between Medina and Damascus. They were a nation of farmers and used to engage in horticulture. The name of Salih has been mentioned in the

Books of the Divine prophets.

The annihilation of the people of Salih by the mighty blast has been likened to and resembles that of the supersonic jets of today which break the sound barrier when their speed exceeds that of sound.

The terrifying sound caused, shatters glass windows, can cause abortions in pregnant women, and hasten heart attacks. As a result of the mighty blast, the Thamud people also were annihilated. The verse says:

“And the (mighty) Blast overtook those who were unjust, so they became motionless corpses in their abodes.”

The end of time will also be associated with a Divine mighty blast which will exterminate everything. Surah Yasin, No. 36, verse 49 says:

“They will not have to wait for anything but a single Blast: it will seize them while they are yet disputing (among themselves).”

Again, Surah Yasin, No. 36, verses 29, 32, say:

“It was naught but a single (mighty) Blast, and behold! They were (like ashes) quenched and silent.”

“And all of them shall surely be brought before Us.”

The raising up of the dead on the Day of Resurrection will also be made manifest in the same way.

However, the Divine punishment inflicted upon the oppressors takes a similar course as a result of their injustice and cruelty. It must be noted that Allah’s retributions are not given only in the Hereafter, but injustice and cruelty will be rewarded even in this very world, too.

The verse says:

“As if they had never dwelt there. Behold! Verily Thamud rejected their Lord. Behold! away with Thamud!”

1. Surah Ash-Shu'ara No. 26, verses 155–158, and Surah Al-Qamar No. 54, verses 27–31.

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