

Section 2: Moses' Exhortation

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 7

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

7. “And (remember) when your Lord declared: ‘If you be thankful I will certainly increase you (your blessings) and if you be ungrateful, verily My chastisement is indeed severe’.”

Allah announces that if you are grateful for My favours, I shall augment your favors and if you deny them, My punishment covers all those who are ungrateful and deny them.

It says:

“And (remember) when your Lord declared: ‘If you be thankful I will certainly increase you (your blessings) and if you be ungrateful, verily My chastisement is indeed severe’.”

Imam Sadiq (as) has remarked:

“Whoever was given a favor and by his heart made confessions as to having that and thanked Allah with his speech, praising Him, no later would he have finished uttering his words than Allah would have commanded that his blessings be augmented.”

This verse is the most important and the most explicit verse of the Qur'an in regard to thankfulness due to divine blessings or being ingratitude to them, which has been discussed after the verse concerning the blessings of freedom and the formation of the Divine government under the leadership of Hadrat-i-Musa.

This is the secret as to the fact that the Divine government and the godly leaders are the supreme blessings for mankind, and if thanksgiving is not performed for them, Allah will inflict a severe

punishment on those who are not grateful.

There are various stages for thanksgiving:

A- Cordial thankfulness, in which case, man regards all the blessings from Allah.

B- Verbal thankfulness consists of uttering the words such as: *“(All) praise belongs to Allah.”*

C- Practical gratitude, which comes about as a result of performing religious rituals and spending one’s time along side gaining Allah’s satisfaction and in the service of people.

Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“Avoiding sins is (a kind of) being grateful for the favours.”

And he also said:

“Thanking for Allah’s blessing is done once a person regards all blessings as originated from the part of Allah (and not from his own intelligence, wisdom, reasoning and one’s own struggle or that of other people’s), and that he is content with what Allah has given him, and does not use Allah’s blessings as a means of committing sins, he is really thankful to Allah. Real gratitude consists of the utilization Allah’s blessings for Allah’s ends.”¹

Thankfulness for the Divine blessings is very tiny and unmentionable.

Some Islamic traditions indicate that Allah revealed to Moses:

“Thank Me as it is My due!”

Moses answered:

“It is an impossible act, for each word of thanks requires another word of thanks.”

The revelation came:

“Your confession as to the fact that you are aware that whatever exists has its origin in Me, is the best way of thanking Me.”²

Incidentally, if we use Allah’s blessings in ways other than the path of Allah, we have practiced the act of ingratitude and paved the ground for disbelief and deserve chastisement.

The verse says:

“...and if you be ungrateful, verily My chastisement is indeed severe.”

Several Traditions Concerning Gratitude

1- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) once said:

“Continue (the act of) thanksgiving so as your favour becomes continuous.” 3

2- Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“There are three things with which provide no harm: praying when one is in difficulty, asking for forgiveness when one is sinning, and showing gratitude when one is affluent.” 4

3- Imam Sadiq (as) also said:

“The gratitude for the blessings is avoiding the prohibitions, and the totality of thankfulness is that one says: ‘(All) praise is (only) Allah’s, the Lord of the Worlds’.” 5

4- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

“Thanking for the blessing causes it to be preserved from alteration and guarantees its sustenance.” 6

5- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

“The result of showing gratitude is the multiplication of the favours.” 7

6- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) said:

“Any blessing for which gratitude is expressed does not terminate; and when ingratitude is shown, it will not last long.” 8

7- The holy Prophet (S) remarked:

“The quickest punishment for the sins is (that of) ingratitude of a blessing.” 9

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 8

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ تَكْفُرُوا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

8. “And Moses said: ‘If you be ungrateful, you and whoso is on the earth, all together, verily Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy’”

Our faith or disbelief and our gratitude or our ingratitude will have not any impact on His Inherent Essence.

We must not hold Allah any indebtedness for our faith or acts since Allah is in no need of our deeds.

This holy verse is a confirmation and complementary to the discussion regarding the gratitude and ingratitude, which were referred to in the previous verse.

It is said from the tongue of Mūsā Ibn ‘Imran implying that he reminded the Children of Israel that if they and the entire people of the world become disbelievers, showing ingratitude towards the blessings of Allah there will be no harm to Him for He is in no need and is praise-worthy.

“And Moses said: ‘If you be ungrateful, you and whoso is on the earth, all together, verily Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy”

In fact, thanking Allah for His blessings, and accepting the faith are sources of increasing one’s blessings and one’s evolution and pride, otherwise Allah is needless and were all the existing beings to turn ungrateful, His kingdom would remain just intact as ever.

To define the Qur’anic term /qanyy/ many commentators have claimed that it means withdrawal of ones needs.

We have been of the opinion that it means “possession” and it includes the totality of Attributes of perfection of the Essence, qualities consisting of knowledge, power, life, sovereignty, splendour, magnitude, loftiness and so on and so forth.

They require withdrawal of needs and defects. And the term /hamid/ embraces the totality of attributes of action, which include all the Divine acts irrespective of creation, nourishment, death, revival, health, disease, blessings and catastrophe, reward, chastisement, needlessness, poverty, development, restraint, tightness, legislation of ordinances, sending prophets on their mission, substituting successors, allocation of duties, and His other acts are all consonant and in accordance with wisdom and expedience, that are correct, appropriate, and timely, all of which signify ‘Justice’ and are among the principles of the Shi’ite doctrine.

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 9

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبُوءُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ

9. “Has not the account of those before you reach you of the people of Noah, and ‘ Ad, and Thamūd and those who (came) after them? None knows them but Allah. Their messengers came

to them with clear signs (miracles) while they thrust their hands into their mouths, and they said: 'Verily we disbelieve in (that) which you have been sent with, and verily we are in doubt about that unto which you invite us'.

This verse is one of the examples of reminding and calling attention to the Divine days which was dealt with in the fifth verse of the current Surah, where it says:

"...and remind them of the days of Allah..."

According to Shaykh-i-T̤isi, (May his soul be sanctified) cited in Tafsir-i-Tibyan, there are differences between the Arabic words /šakk/ and /rayb/. The former means natural skepticism while the latter signifies that kind of skepticism which is mixed with suspicion and accusations.

A doubt, which may pave the ground for research and acceptance of the truth, is a constructive type and useful type of criticism; while that kind of skepticism which is expressed with regard to the Clear Evidences', or with regard to miracles is only of the obstinate and destructive kind of doubt which stands in the way of man for accepting the truth.

Incidentally, one can translate the Qur'anic holy sentence /faraddā 'aydīyahum fi afw ahihim/ in several ways:

A- The dissidents shut the mouth of those who were uttering the truth by putting their hands on their mouth.

B- The miracles and the reasons of the prophets were so strong as if they had taken people's hands and put them on their mouth; alluding metaphorically to the fact that the language of the people was obstructed because of the truth and they had no words to say.

C- The opponents of the prophets were so angry that they bit their fingers.

D- The opponents of the prophets, at the presence of their prophet, would put their hands on their mouth, metaphorically alluding to the fact that they silence themselves and stop preaching.

Anyway, here the Qur'an refers to the fate of some groups of previous nations in several verses. Those nations who took to the road of ingratitude as against Allah's blessings and went on opposing and disbelieving in face of the call of the Divine leaders and their logic. Eventually, the Qur'an explains their acts to be an emphasis on what was said in the former verse.

It says:

"Has not the account of those before you reach you of the people of Noah, and 'Ad, and Thamūd and those who (came) after them?..."

Then, it adds:

“...None knows them but Allah...”

This means that no one is aware of the news of them, except Him.

Then, as a further explanation about their biographies, it implies that their prophets called on them with clear evidences though they put their hands on their mouths because of their amazement and denial, saying:

We are ungrateful for whatever you are sent for, for we are skeptic as to what you call us for, and how would it be possible for us to accept your call despite such a doubt and skepticism?

The verse says:

“...Their messengers came to them with clear signs (miracles) while they thrust their hands into their mouths, and they said: ‘Verily we disbelieve in (that) which you have been sent with, and verily we are in doubt about that unto which you invite us.’”

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 10

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

10. “Their messenger said: ‘Is there any doubts about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?’ He calls you to forgive for you of your sins and respite you till an appointed term. They said: ‘You are nothing but mortals like us; you intend that you turn us away from what our ancestors used to worship. Then bring us some clear authority.’”

In the previous verse, the pagans told the prophets:

“You call us to the way of Allah.”

However, in this verse, the prophets told them:

“Allah calls you.”

That is, our call does not initiate from our side and is not directed towards us. On the contrary, it originates in Allah and terminates in Allah as well.

According to, Zamakhshari and Maraghi, the promises of the Qur’an concerning the faithful relate to the

forgiveness of all of their sins, while concerning others the case is forgiveness of some of their sins:

“...to forgive for you of your sins...”

Anyway, as was explained in the previous verse with regard to the pagans and disbelievers and their lack of faith owing to their skepticism, immediately in this verse, He negates their skepticism with clear reasoning and in a concise statement, saying:

“Their messenger said: ‘Is there any doubts about Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth?’...”

Probably, the Arabic term /fatir/ (the Originator) refers to the splitting of the preliminary matter mass of the world which we are up-dated about in everyday life of the existing science we read that the totality of the world mass matter consisted of an integrated continuum which burst asunder, revealing and causing the emergence of the globes.

Anyway, here, as in other situations and cases, the Qur’an insists on the creation of the system the world of existence as well as the creation of the heavens and the earth for demonstrating Allah’s Existence and His Attributes.

Then, it turns to answer the second criticism raised by the opponents whose criticism relates to the issue of the prophetic mission of the prophets. It implies that it is obvious that the Wise and Omniscient Creator of the world does not abandon His servants without a leader.

On the contrary, by sending you messengers, He calls you so as to remove your faults and pollutions and forgive your sins. And He gives you a limited amount of time in order that you go through your development process and make the most of your life.

The verse says:

“...He calls you to forgive for you of your sins and respite you till an appointed term...”

In fact, the call of the prophets has had two objectives in mind: The forgiveness of sins and the continuation of life till a pre-fixed date, both of which are in fact having a cause-and- effect for each other.

For, a society can continue to live which is on the whole pure from sins and injustice. However, despite all these, the obstinate disbelievers did not accept this enlivening call which was mixed with the evident logic of monotheism. They answered their prophets with the words which were loaded with obstinacy and non-submission of the truth.

The verse says:

“...They said: ‘You are nothing but mortals like us...”

Moreover you want to keep us from worshipping what our ancestors worshipped. In addition to all these, you must provide us with clear evidences.

The verse continues saying:

“...you intend that you turn us away from what our ancestors used to worship. Then bring us some clear authority’.”

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 11

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنْ نَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

11. “Their messengers said (answering) them: ‘We are nothing but mortals like you, but Allah bestows (His) favour on whomever He pleases of His servants; and it is not for us that we bring unto you any authority except by Allah’s permission. And on Allah should the believers rely.’”

The Qur’an in this holy verse implies that Allah bestows (His) favours on whomever He pleases and appoints him as His prophet, yet, Allah, the Wise, knows who has the capacity and who is capable of performing such a great responsibility.

“...Allah knows best where to place His apostleship...”¹⁰

Incidentally, the disbelievers and the pagans had two claims to make with the prophets:

1- You are a man like all of us.

2- Perform the miracle which we propose for us.

The answer to these two claims has been provided in this verse. We do accept the fact that we are human beings just like you; but Allah granted us this favour and has provided us with revelations. And as for your claim saying that our miracles must be performed according to your request.

This cannot be achieved, for we reserve the right not to perform any miracles without Allah’s permission.

Anyway, performing miracles is not our job, so that we tend to isolate ourselves sitting in a corner and perform extraordinary things with everyone requesting a different miracle as he wishes, thus making perform of extraordinary things into a useless affair, reducing it to a plaything matter. On the contrary, we cannot perform any miracles without the command of Allah.

The verse says:

“Their messengers said (answering) them: ‘We are nothing but mortals like you, but Allah bestows (His) favour on whomever He pleases of His servants; and it is not for us that we bring unto you any authority except by Allah’s permission...”

Moreover, every prophet does perform miraculous works without being requested by the people in order to prove his legitimacy.

Afterwards, in order to provide the pretenders with a decisive answer regarding their various threats, they clarified their position, saying that all faithful individuals must rely on Allah, the same Almighty to Whose Power all powers are insignificant and useless.

The verse says:

“...And on Allah should the believers rely.”

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 12

وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

12. “And why should we not rely on Allah while He has guided us to our ways (of happiness)? And certainly we will bear patiently whatever hurt you inflict on us; and on Allah (alone) should the reliant rely.”

The Arabic term /tawakkul/ signifies ‘employing a lawyer or an advocate’. Such a person must have four attributes: perspicacity, honesty in keeping other’s deposits, power, and affection. No one but Allah possesses all these attributes fully. Thus we must trust Him.

Imam Rida (as) said:

“The border of the trust is that, by belief in Allah, you be scared of none.” 11

Therefore, that Lord Who leads us will also protect us. Thus, we must solely trust Him.

Therefore, providing transparent justifications for the issue of trust, the prophets said as to why must they not trust Him and ask for His help in all circumstances? Why must they be frightened by the straw powers and threats while He has led them through the ways of happiness?

The verse says:

“And why should we not rely on Allah while He has guided us to our ways (of happiness)?...”

Then, they would continue saying that now that they rely solely on Allah, Who is not vulnerable and is supreme over all things definitely, they should stand against all of disbelievers' tortures and harms.

The verse says:

"...And certainly we will bear patiently whatever hurt you inflict on us..."

Then, finally, they ended up their speech with these words:

"...and on Allah (alone) should the reliant rely."

The objective of /tawakkul/ is to enable one not to have feelings of inferiority and weakness when facing with the greatness of difficulties, but by relying on the unending vast power of Allah, he should consider himself as conquering and victorious. Thus, surely such a trust is hope-inspiring and strengthening, and can increase our resistance.

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1. 'Usūl-i-Kafi, section: Thanks giving
 2. 'Usūl-i-Kafi, vol. 4, p 8
 3. Jami'i-i-'Ahadith-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 13, p. 545
 4. Bihar, vol. 75, p. 365
 5. Kafi, vol. 3, p. 95
 6. Ghurar-ul-Hikam, vol. 2, p. 159
 7. Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh, vol. 6, p. 145
 8. Bihar, vol. 74, p. 420
 9. Safinat-ul-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 710
 10. Surah Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 124
 11. Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn

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