

Section 7: The Respite and the End

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 42

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ
الْأَبْصَارُ

42. “And do not regard Allah to be heedless of what the unjust do. He only respite them (their punishment) to a day on which the eyes shall stare (of terror),”

The previous verses dealt with the issue of the day for settlement of accounts. For this reason, the Qur'an points out the case of the plight of the oppressors and the tyrants in this verse.

Incidentally, by means of the Qur'anic statement of this part of the discussions of resurrection, the sections on the issue of monotheism of the previous discussions are complemented.

At first, with a threatening tone of voice while addressing the oppressors and the tyrants, the Qur'an begins implying that the Prophet (S) should not rest assured that Allah is ignorant of whatever the oppressors do.

The verse says:

“And do not regard Allah to be heedless of what the unjust do...”

These are the words, in fact, uttered in answer to the query of those who say: If this world has got a Lord, a just Lord, so why the oppressors are left to themselves? The Qur'an answers this question by saying that Allah is never ignorant.

If He does not punish them instantly, it is for the fact that this world is a trial ground only and it is meant

for the development of human beings, and achieving this objective is impossible without freedom.

Then the Qur'an implies that Allah postpones their punishment for one day when on that day all are stunned with their eyes amazed because of intensive fear and terror, and are fixed to one points remaining motionless.

The verse says:

"...He only respite them (their punishment) to a day on which the eyes shall stare (of terror),"

Moreover, He declares in other verses as such:

"And whoever turns away from My remembrance verily for him is a life straitened..."¹

It is besides that Allah in another verse adds that such people will be afflicted in this world, too, where he says:

"And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought..."²

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 43

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ وَأَفْئِدَتُهُمْ هَوَاءٌ

43. "Hastening forward, their heads upraised, their eyes (and eyelids) not blinking and their hearts void."

There are several meanings proposed for the Arabic term /muhti'in/ which is derived from /'iht a'/ in the sense of: upraising the head, to speed up, looking pleasurably, all of which meanings can be implied in this verse.

The chastisements of the Resurrection Day are so horrifying that these oppressors stiffen their necks, raising their heads towards the sky, they even may fix their eye-lids in a state of motionlessness, while their hearts are becoming void because of their intensive fear, distress, anxiety and despair.

The verse says:

"Hastening forward, their heads upraised, their eyes (and eyelids) not blinking and their hearts void."

Those persons who considered themselves as think tanks and considered others as stupid will lose their reasoning in such a way that their looks resemble not the lunatics but that of the dead. Their looks will

be 'empty', indifferent, motionless and full of fear and horror.

Truly speaking, once the Qur'an decides to depict a scenario or a landscape, it depicts every thing in the most concise manner and provides the most comprehensive picture of everything, an example of which is shown in the above short verse.

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 44

وَأَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخِّرْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ
نَجِبْ دَعْوَتِكَ وَتَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُلَ أُولَٰئِكَ تَكُونُوا أَقْسَمْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ زَوَالٍ

44. “And warn the people as to the day when the chastisement comes to them; then those who did injustice will say: ‘Our Lord, defer us to a near term, (that) we will answer Your call and follow the messengers’. (They will be told:) ‘Did you not swear before that there would be no end for you?’”

The Qur'anic term /inʿar/ (warning) is the antonym of /biš arat/ (glad tidings) both of which were the mission of the prophets who were the bearers of the good news as well as the warners.

They were bearer of the good news regarding faith, righteous acts, virtue, and being characterized by attributes which lead one to salvation, happiness, Divine blessings, and ushering one to Paradise.

And they were warners as to the cases of paganism, ingratitude, darkness, sins, and evil attributes and characteristics which lead one to wretchedness misery, Divine Wrath, and awful consequences and punishments in this world and in the Hereafter.

Then, in order not to give impression that the Divine punishments are confined to a specific group, as a general rule He commands His prophet to warn all people about the day when the painful chastisement of Allah will call on them.

The verse says:

“And warn the people as to the day when the chastisement comes to them...”

That is, when the tyrants notice the terrible consequences of their behaviour, they may regret and think of compensating for it.

The verse continues saying:

“...then those who did injustice will say: ‘Our Lord, defer us to a near term, (that) we will answer

Your call and follow the messengers'...

The objective of this day is the day when some calamities and worldly chastisements will be descended, just like the punishments which were inflicted on the peoples of Lūt, and on ‘ Ad, and Thamūd people as well as on the Pharaoh people which exterminated them.

However, they are instantly held back and this shaking message is delivered to them that such a thing is impossible to happen. The course of action has come to an end. Were you not the ones who swore that there would be no end and perishing of your life and power?

The verse says:

“...(They will be told:) ‘Did you not swear before that there would be no end for you?’”

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 45

وَسَكَنتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمْ
الْأَمْثَالَ

45. “And you dwelt in the abodes of those who did injustice to themselves oppression on yourself in the houses of those who preceded you, and it became clear for you how we did with them, and We set forth (may) parables for you.”

Many people do not take examples and instructions from those who preceded them and neglected everything though they are seating themselves in their seats.

Therefore, to warn and to blame them further, the Qur’an addresses them implying that you were such people who settled down in the lands of those who refuted the prophets and you knew as to how Allah had inflicted catastrophes on them and had exterminated them.

The verse says:

“And you dwelt in the abodes of those who did injustice to themselves oppression on yourself in the houses of those who preceded you, and it became clear for you how we did with them...”

Some are of the opinion that they were the people of ‘ Ad, and Thamūd, while others claim that they were those who were killed in the Battle of the Badr.

We provided you examples and made you acquainted with the characteristics of your predecessors so as to enable you to take example, but you did not draw lessons, and admonitions did not have any

impacts on you.

The verse says:

“...and We set forth (may) parables for you.”

Some suggest that the objective of the parables which are mentioned is those matters which are dealt with in the Qur’an and demonstrate that Allah is Omnipotent in the world of creation as before, and is able to re-enliven all after their death, and to reckon their accounts.

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 46

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَكْرُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُولَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ

46. “And indeed they have devised their devising, and their devising is with Allah, though their devising were such as to remove the mountains thereby.”

Allah is both aware of their devices and tricks, and is all-powerful over them, and He shall provide all conspirators with commensurate chastisement. He can also diffuse and expel their tricks or return those tricks to themselves.

At any rate, do not worry, such conspiracies and plans will have no effect on you even if their strategies are such that enable them to remove mountains. For, no matter how powerful and forceful they may be, the oppressors will eventually be perished by Allah.

The verse says:

“And indeed they have devised their devising, and their devising is with Allah, though their devising were such as to remove the mountains thereby.”

Some commentators have claimed that the objective in mind of ‘the mountains’ has been the Islamic religion and the Prophet (S) that have withstood all sorts of conspiracies and tricks of the enemies.

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 47

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلِفاً وَعْدِهِ رُسُلَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتِقَامٍ

47. “So do not think that Allah will fail in His promise to His messengers. Verily Allah is Mighty,

the Lord of Retribution.”

As a man takes revenge, he does it along with hatred and instinctive satisfaction. Nevertheless, what Allah does is based on justice and wisdom.

Therefore, addressing the prophet (S) once again, as to warn the oppressors and evildoers with a threatening voice, it implies that they should not imagine that Allah opposes His earlier promise and pledge which He has kept with the prophets.

For, that kind of person violates his promise who is either not able to keep his promise or he has not included such words in his vocabulary as punishment or vengeance. However, Allah is both able and can take vengeance.

The verse says:

“So do not think that Allah will fail in His promise to His messengers. Verily Allah is Mighty, the Lord of Retribution.”

This noble verse is in fact complementary to the verse which we already cited, saying:

“And do not regard Allah to be heedless of what the unjust do...”³

That is, if you notice that the oppressors have got a respite, it is not because of Allah’s negligence and overlooking of their acts, and it is not for that Allah may violate His promise. Rather, all of their accounts will be settled and cleared in a day and their just chastisement will be given to them.

Incidentally, the respite given to the pagans and the oppressors is based on a practice and on wisdom, and it is not because of negligence and of going back on one’s promises.

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 48

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

48. “On the day when the earth shall be changed into other than the earth and (so will be) the heavens, and (all men) shall come forth before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.”

The changing and the transformation of the earth on the Hereafter Day has been explained in a number of verses of the Qur’an. On that Day, a strong earthquake will take place; the mountains will be displaced and start moving and they will be softened like wool and cotton. It refers to the day when the earth will be turned into a soft piece of plain which is even.

As the Qur'an says:

“And they ask you (O Apostle) about the mountains (on that Day). Say: ‘My Lord will uproot them and scatter them (as dust),”

“Then He will leave them as a plain, smooth level;”⁴

But, the transformation of the skies will take place with the setting off the sun and the rolling over of the skies. However, this existing system of existence has got a culmination point.

Anyway, after destruction, everything will be reborn and renewed on that Day and man will step forward with some new conditions of the world, the conditions of which differ from these of this world, as regards its vastness, its blessings, its chastisements.

And it is on that Day that one appears with all of his existence and with all of his possessions before the Allah Who is unique and Almighty.

The verse says:

“On the day when the earth shall be changed into other than the earth and (so will be) the heavens, and (all men) shall come forth before Allah, the One, the All-Dominant.”

Therefore, the attribute of Allah as ‘the All-Dominant’ signifies His domination over everything and His authority over what is inside and what exists in the outside of every single being.

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verses 49 – 50

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقَرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ

سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِنْ قَطْرِانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ

49. “And you will see the guilty on that day bound together in chains.”

50. “Their robes (shall be) of pitch, and their faces covered with Fire,”

The person who is experiencing punishment and trouble will be ever more suffering if he hears other people crying, as the case is with those who are happy and rejoicing and their happiness and rejoicing will double if they find themselves beside others who are happy as well.

It is for this reason that the Qur'an declares that: Allah will bring together all those individuals who

resemble one another in their line of thinking: the culprits in Hell and the good ones in Paradise.

And we also find that the Qur'an depicts the conditions of the offenders in a different way in this verse.

It says:

“And you will see the guilty on that day bound together in chains.”

These chains and yokes represent the mental and practical connections of the sinners who joined together and who were interwoven as in a line to help each other in this world.

Then, the Qur'an describes their dressing pattern which is in itself a great disaster for them. Their robes and dresses are made of tar (a stinking, malodorous, and inflammable material) and their faces are covered by flames of fire.

The verse says:

“Their robes (shall be) of pitch, and their faces covered with Fire,”

As such is the case, instead of proper clothing, their bodies are wrapped up in a kind of material which has four distinct awful defects as they are stinking, black, inflammable and burnable, for robes are put on for protection as well as for ornamental and cosmetic purposes. They are meant to protect one against heat and cold. Such robes, contrast all garments, are both ugly and inflammable.

The Arabic term /'asf ad/ is the plural form of /sufūd/ which means 'the bone of a tree', it was also used for attaching to the feet of prisoners.

The Arabic term /qatr an/ is a kind of material which is extracted from some trees after the boiling of which and after its solidification. It is used for curing the skin diseases of camels for its intensive burning. It is extremely stinking and inflammable.

Surah 'Ibrahim – Verse 51

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

51. “That Allah may requite everyone what he has earned, verily Allah is swift at reckoning.”

None of the people will remain without compensation. And no action in the world will be left without any reactions. Thus, the Divine punishment and reward have their origin in our own practices.

The verse says:

“That Allah may requite everyone what he has earned...”

This means that Allah rewards or punishes everyone according to His own discretion for whatever he has done.

At the end of the verse, the Qur’an implies that Allah is quick to discern and settle accounts.

The verse continues to say:

“...verily Allah is swift at reckoning.”

Surah ‘Ibrahim – Verse 52

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

52. “This is a clear message for mankind and that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is God (the only) One, and that those possessors of intellects may take admonition.”

As we already noted, Surah ‘Ibrahim began with depicting the sensitive role of the Qur’an in bringing out man from utter darkness of ignorance and paganism into the enlightenment of knowledge and of monotheism.

It ends by providing an exposition of the role of the Qur’an in warning all human kind and instruction of monotheism and that the possessors of intellects may take admonition.

The verse says:

“This is a clear message for mankind and that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is God (the only) One, and that those possessors of intellects may take admonition.”

Such a beginning and such an end provide us with clues to the reality as to the fact that whatever we read about is already mentioned in the Qur’an, and as Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as) says:

“The sources of all knowledge and the delight of the heart are in the Qur’an.”⁵

One also has to look for the remedies of mental, ethical, social and political illnesses in the Qur’an. It has been said:

“Seek from it for the treatment of your diseases.”⁶

This exposition provides us with sufficient reasons to believe that the Holy Qur’an is a Book which

contains instructions for everyone throughout his life.

And ‘finally’ it is a Book which provides the learned man as well as the masses of people with the required instructions as they need. Once the Muslims have set aside this great celestial Book and turned to the deviant schools of thought of the east and west, they must be on the look out for the reasons of their weakness and their backwardness in here.

Explanations

1– The holy Qur’an provides the substance for religious propagation and the preachers must look to the Qur’an for the main substance of their propagation.

“This is a clear message...”

2– The Qur’an is the Book of monotheism and one must educate monotheistic people by it.

“...and that He is God (the only) One...”

3– It is not enough to communicate only, warning is also necessary. It does not suffice to know paying attention, and admonition is also required.

4– Association with the Qur’an provides us with both knowledge, cognition, and outlook as well as with admonitions which urge us to perform decent acts.

5– The Qur’an provides the general public with a mandate though only the men of wisdom take advice and instruction from it.

“...and that those possessors of intellects may take admonition.”

Certainly, if we pay attention to the guidelines of the Qur’an heartily, we will become truly monotheistic individuals. Allah willing.

The End of Surah ‘Ibrahim

You can read the biography of Hadrat-i-‘Ibrahim in the following pages.

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1. Surah T a H a, No. 20, verse 124
 2. Surah Ash-Shur a, No. 42, verse 30
 3. This Surah, verse 42
 4. Surah T a H a, No. 20, verses 105–106
 5. Nahj-ul-Bal aqah, sermon 176
 6. Ibid

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