

Section 1: Judgment Getting Nigh

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verse 1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

اَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ

1. “Nigh unto mankind has drawn (the day) of their Reckoning, while they turn away in heedlessness.”

This Surah begins with a vigorous warning unto all people, a shaking and an awakening warning.

It says:

“Nigh unto mankind has drawn (the day) of their Reckoning, while they turn away in heedlessness.”

The people's daily action shows that this negligence has occupied their whole entity; else, how is it possible that a mortal believes in the fact that Reckoning is nigh, a reckoning done by an extraordinary exact Performer, and yet he takes all the matters perfunctorily so that he pollutes himself with any kind of vice?

The purpose of “nigh is the day of Reckoning and Hereafter’ is that the remaining life of this world, in comparison with that which has passed, is a little time, therefore, Resurrection is nigh. It is a relative nearness, in particular that once the Prophet (S), pointing to his two fingers in one hand, said that his auspicious advent and the Day of Hereafter were like those two fingers.

There arises a question here that, regarding to the fact that ‘Negligence’ is ‘to be inattentive to something’, and /i’rad/ (to turn away) is an action which is done with attention, then how is it that ‘negligence’ and ‘turning away’ are usually referred to beside each other?

The answer to this question is that negligence is of two kinds:

- 1) The negligence that the person may become aware by a warning.
- 2) The negligence which is a preparation for desertion. Such a negligent person does not desire to be aware; like a person who pretends to be asleep and does not open his eyes even when he is called.

Surah Al-’Anbiya’ – Verses 2 – 4

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ

لَاهِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَسْرَأُوا النَّجْوَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ أَفَتَأْتُونَ
السَّحَرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَبْصِرُونَ

قَالَ رَبِّي يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

2. ***“Never comes to them a new reminder from their Lord, but they listen to it while they play.”***
3. ***“Their hearts trifling, and those who did wrong (to themselves) counsel together in secret (saying): ‘Is this (man) other than a human being like yourselves? Will you then go to sorcery while you see (it)?’”***
4. ***“He said: ‘My Lord knows (every) word (spoken) in the heaven and the earth, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-knowing’.”***

One of the signs of their turning back from the Truth has been pointed out in this verse, where it says:

“Never comes to them a new reminder from their Lord, but they listen to it while they play.”

But, if, even for one time, they take it earnestly, the path of their life may change at the same time.

Again, for a more emphasis, the verse implies that their hearts have sunk in vanity and ignorance.

The verse says:

“Their hearts trifling...”

The reason of it is that they have outwardly taken all the earnest matters in play and joke; therefore, it is natural that such people will never find the way of felicity and prosperity.

Then, the Qur’an points to a part of their satanic plans, when the verse continues saying:

“...and those who did wrong (to themselves) counsel together in secret (saying): ‘Is this (man) other than a human being like yourselves?...”

They say to each other now that he is not more than an ordinary human being, then these extraordinary actions that he does and the penetration of his speech cannot be any thing but sorcery. If so, do you go toward sorcery?

The verse says:

“...Will you then go to sorcery while you see (it)?”

In their saying, the disbelievers emphasized on two things: the first was that the Prophet (S) was a human being, and the second matter was the accusation of sorcery. Besides them, they accused him with some other false things, too, which will be rejected by the Qur’an through later verses.

The Qur’an, from the tongue of the holy Prophet (S), answers them in a general form, as follows:

“He said: ‘My Lord knows (every) word (spoken) in the heaven and the earth, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-knowing’.”

They should not imagine that their hidden plans and their concealed words are not revealed to Allah. It is not such, but

“He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing”.

Thus, He knows everything and is aware of all deeds. Not only He hears the words but also He is aware of the thoughts which pass through the minds and the decisions that are concealed in the hearts.

Surah Al-’Anbiya’ – Verse 5

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ بَلِ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِآيَةٍ كَمَا أُرْسِلَ الْأَوْلُونَ

5. “Nay!’, They say: ‘(These are) medleys of dreams! Nay! he has forged it! Nay! he is a poet! Let him then bring us a sign like the ones that were sent unto (the prophets) of old.”

After referring to two pretexts of the opponents, the Qur'an points to four other subjects they used to apply. They said that whatever Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (S), had brought were not revelations, but they were some confused dreams that he considered as truth and reality.

The verse says:

“Nay!, They say: (These are) medleys of dreams!...”

Sometimes they change their saying and say that he is a liar who has forged these words to Allah.

The verse continues saying:

“...Nay! He has forged it!...”

And sometimes they say that he is a poet, and those verses are some poetic imaginations made by him.

The verse says:

“...Nay! He is a poet!...”

And, finally they say that, passing by these things, if he is true, and he is a messenger of the Lord, he should bring a miracle for them as the former messengers had been sent with miracles.

The verse says:

“...Let him then bring us a sign like the ones that were sent unto (the prophets) of old.”

Considering these contradictory attributions they attributed to the Prophet (S) it shows as a good reason that these people were not the seekers of the Truth. Their aim was to find pretexts in order to send the rival out of the scene in any rate and any form they could.

Explanations

The Arabic term /'adqa/ is the plural form of /diq/ in the sense of 'a group', or 'a collection'; and the Qur'anic word /'ahlam/ is the plural form of /hulm/ with the sense of 'dream'. Thus, the holy phrase /'adqau 'ahlam/ means 'a selection of confused dreams'.

Those disbelievers wanted the Prophet of Islam (S) to bring some miracles like those of Moses (as) and Isaac (as), but their real aim was to seek pretexts, because taking the sort of miracle depends on Divine Wisdom, not on the desires of people.

The enemy is not satisfied with striking one accusation. He attacks from every side by means of frequent accusations, and this is one of the main styles of the enemy.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 6 – 7

مَا ءَامَنَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَسَأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

6. ***“There did not believe before them any town which We destroyed; will these (now) believe?”***

7. ***“And We sent none before you, but men to whom We made revelation. So ask the people of ‘Thikr’(the Reminder) if you do not know.”***

Former verses denoted that the disbelievers said:

“Is this man other than a human being like yourselves?”

In this verse, the Qur’an implies that not only this Prophet (S) but also the former Divine prophets were human beings to whom the revelation was made. And this, the descent of revelation to them, does not contrast with being a human being.

In the previous holy verses, there were mentioned six contradictory pretexts that the opponents of Islam sought unto the holy Prophet (S). Here by this verse, the Qur’an answers them.

At first, it refers to the miracles that they demanded as their pretext, and that the people of the towns, whom were destroyed before them, sought for such miracles, but when their suggestions were fulfilled they did not believe.

The verse says:

“There did not believe before them any town which We destroyed; will these (now) believe?”

In the meantime, the holy verse warns the disbelievers that if their demand concerning the miracles are responded and they do not believe, their destruction is certain.

Then the Qur’an answers their first rejection about the Prophet (S) as a human being. It implies that all the Messengers sent before the Prophet of Islam (S) were totally human beings and from the sort of humankind.

The verse says:

“And We sent none before you, but men to whom We made revelation....”

This is a clear historical reality with which everybody is acquainted. Therefore, if you do not know it, ask other people.

The verse continues saying:

“..So ask the people of the Reminder if you do not know.”

Surah Al-’Anbiya’ – Verse 8

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَداً لَّا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ

8. “And We did not make them (such) bodies not eating the food, nor were they immortals.”

Among the secrets of the succession of a leader is that he always lives among the people, and in the affairs of his natural life he is generally like them so that, by seeing him and by means of his conduct, people might be practically constructed properly.

From the point of material and human necessities, prophets are never different from other people. Therefore, no one should expect prophets, reformers and teachers to be some angels; because it is an undue expectation. That is why this verse gives a further explanation about the Divine prophets that they are of humankind.

It says:

“And We did not make them (such) bodies not eating the food, nor were they immortals.”

The leader of a group should be from among those people themselves, with the same instincts, temperaments, emotions, feelings, necessities, and interests, so that he can feel their pains and problems.

It is in that case that, by being inspired with his instructions, he can choose the best way of healing them; and become an example and a good pattern for other human beings, too.

However, asking from the people of thikr (the reminder) and referring to the experts is a principle approved by wisdom. Some commentators have said that the purpose of ‘the people of the Reminder’ is the scholars of the Jews and Christians.

But there are a great number of traditions, narrated from Ahl-ul-Bayt (as), which indicate ‘the people of the Reminder’ are the Immaculate Imams (as). One of them is the following tradition.

It is narrated from Imam Ali-ibn-Musar-Rida (as) who, in answer to the question about the

abovementioned verse, said:

*“We are the people of Reminder, and we must be asked.”*¹

Another tradition narrated from Imam Baqir (as) denotes, that, on the commentary of this verse, he said:

*“The Qur’an is the Reminder, and the Ahl-ul-Bayt of the Prophet (S) are the people of the Reminder, and they must be asked.”*²

Some other traditions indicate that /*dhikr*/ (reminder) is the Prophet himself (S), and his Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) are ‘the people of the Reminder’.³

There have been recorded many other traditions which, on the whole, announce the same meaning. In numerous books and commentaries compiled by the scholars of the Sunnites, too, we are faced with some traditions containing the same concepts, including in twelve well-known commentary books of the Sunnites.⁴

There has been narrated from Ibn-‘Abbas who, upon the commentary of this verse, said:

“It (means) Muhammad, Ali, Fatimah, Hassan and Husayn (as). They are the people of the Reminder, and intellect, and statement.”

Again, a holy tradition has been recorded in the book of Tha‘labi, narrated from Jabir-i-Ju‘fi, who says:

*As soon as this verse was revealed, Ali (as) said: ‘We are the people of the Reminder’.*⁵

This is not the first time that, in the traditions concerning the commentary of the verses of the Qur’an, we confront the statement of some definite extensions which never confine the vast concept of a verse.

As it was mentioned before, the Qur’anic term /*dhikr*/ is applied for any cognizance, remembrance, and information. Thus the phrase /*ahl-ul-dhikr*/ (the people of the Reminder) envelops all the aware and the informed persons in all fields.

But, in view of the fact that the Qur’an is the clear example of remembrance, knowledge and awareness, it has been called /*dhikr*/ (Reminder). The Prophet (S) himself is also the manifest extension of /*dhikr*/, and such are the Immaculate Imams (as) who are his Ahl-ul-Bayt and the heirs of his knowledge.

But, the acceptance of this matter does not oppose the generality of the concept of the verse and the occasion of its revelation which concerns the scholars of ‘the People of the Book’.

It is for this reason that the scholars of theology, and the experts of Muslim law, attach to this verse when speaking about /*ijtihad*/ (discretion), and that those who are unaware of the religious ordinances should follow a religious jurist.

However, the abovementioned holy verse expressed a fundamental Islamic principle, which covers all the material and spiritual subjects of the life. It warns all the Muslims that they ought to ask the people of Reminder whatever they do not know, and they should not interfere in the fields they are not acquainted with.

Thus, not only in all religious laws and Islamic affairs the subject of specialism is formally accepted, but also it is emphasized on in all fields. It is such that all Muslims, in all ages, should have some expert and aware persons available in all subjects of life so that, if there are some people who do not know how to solve their own problems, they can easily refer to them.

It is also necessary to mention that we must refer to those experts and clear-sighted persons whose truthfulness and veracity have been proved and who are rather matchless. Do we ever refer to a physician who is specialist in his branch but we are not certain of his truthfulness and uprightness in that job which the physician has?

That is why, in connection with jurisprudence and following a religious leader, the epithet of 'justice' has been put beside both /'ijtihad/ (discretion) and /'a'lamiyyat/ (being the most learned). In other words, the imitated authority should not only be both knowledgeable and aware of the Islamic affairs, but he must also be pious and God-fearing.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verse 9

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ نَشَاءُ وَأَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِينَ

9. "Then We fulfilled the promise unto them. So We delivered them and whomever We would, and We destroyed the extravagant ones."

Then, as a threat and a warning, the Qur'an says to the obstinate and pertinacious rejecters of the Truth that Allah had promised the prophets to relieve them from the grips of their enemies and make their enemies' plans futile.

It says:

"Then We fulfilled the promise unto them. So We delivered them and whomever We would, and We destroyed the extravagant ones."

Yes, alike the Allah's way of treatment, which was choosing prophets, the leaders of humankind, from among human beings, this was also the Allah's way of treatment that He would support His Messengers against the plots of their opponents.

And, if their frequent advices did not affect on them, He would clear out the surface of the ground from the dirt of their beings.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verse 10

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

10. “We have sent down to you a Book wherein is your Reminder. Have you then no sense?”

This holy verse, in an expressive short sentence, again answers the majority of the objections of the polytheists.

It says:

“We have sent down to you a Book wherein is your Reminder. Have you then no sense?”

Whosoever studies the verses of this Holy Book, which are the means of reminding, awakening the hearts, exciting the thoughts, and purifying the societies, he knows well that this Book, the Qur'an, is a clear and eternal miracle.

The signs of inimitability of the Qur'an are seen in it from different points of view: from the view point of extraordinary attraction, from the point of contents, such as ordinances and religious laws, beliefs, theology and so on. With the existence of this clear miracle, do they expect the appearance of another miracle?

The quality of being awakening of the Qur'an is not a compulsory aspect; but it is conditioned to man's will and that he opens the windows of his heart to it.

Explanations

The Qur'anic phrase /^٤ikrukum/ means either 'the means of remembrance', or 'the cause of honour and dignity of your name'. In philology, the Arabic term /^٤ikr/ has been meant into 'fame', and 'nobility and honour', too.⁶

Concerning the commentary of this holy verse, Imam Kazim (as) said:

“The purpose of the phrase ‘wherein is your Reminder’ is that: it is mentioned in the Book that the obedience, after the Prophet (S), should be paid to Imam; that is, your nobility and honour lies in the obedience from (immaculate) Imam after the Prophet.”

1. Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3 pp. 55 and 56

2. Ibid

3. Ibid

4. The objective meaning of 'twelve well-known commentary books of the Sunnites' is: the commentary books of 'Abu-Yusuf, Ibn-i-Hajar, Mughatil-ibn-i-Sulayman, Waki'-ibn-i-Jarrah, Yusuf-ibn-i-Musa, Ghutadah, Harbut-Ta'i, Soday, Mujahid, Mughatil-ibn-i-Hayyan, Abu-Salih, Muhammad-ibn-Musal-Shirazi.

5. 'Ihghagh-ul-Haghgh, vol. 3, p. 482

6. Ghamus-ul-Muhit

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