

Section 5: Abraham Argues Against Idolatry

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 51 – 52

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَالِمِينَ

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ

51. “And indeed We gave Abraham aforetime his rectitude, and We were aware of him (his eligibilities).”

52. “When he said to his father and his people: ‘What are these images (and lifeless statues) unto which you pay devotion?’”

In previous verses, the statement was upon the Torah and the Qur'an, while in this verse Allah declares that sending prophets and celestial Books is not a new matter, and before this, at the time of Abraham (as), there was the subject of the invitation of the deluded people unto the Truth.

Therefore, an important part of the life and struggles of Abraham against idolaters is referred to here.

At first, it says:

“And indeed We gave Abraham aforetime his rectitude, and We were aware of him (his eligibilities).”

Then, the Holy Qur'an points to one of the most important programs of Abraham (as) where it says:

“When he said to his father and his people: ‘What are these images (and lifeless statues) unto

which you pay devotion'?"

The word 'father', mentioned in this verse, refers to his uncle, 'Azar, because in Arabic language sometimes 'uncle' is called /'ab/ (father), too. 1

This Abraham's saying, in fact, is a clear reasoning for making the act of idol worshipping futile, because what is seen of the idols is their mere statues and the rest is delusion and conjecture.

The Arabic word /tamail/ is the plural form of /temal/ with the sense of 'lifeless statues'.

Having a glance over the history of idolatry shows that making statues had initially been used as a remembrance of the dignitary, which, later, became gradually as a state of sanctity and turned in the form of worship.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 53 – 54

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا ءَابَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وءَابَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

53. "They said: 'We found our fathers worshipping them'."

54. "He said: 'Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error'."

Abraham told the idol worshippers that both they and their fathers had been in manifest fault, while they had no proper answer to that clear logic. They only repelled the proposition from themselves and related it to their ancestors.

Thus they said that they had seen their fathers and ancestors that they had been worshipping those idols, and therefore, they were loyal to the traditional custom of their ancestors.

The abovementioned holy verse says:

"They said: 'We found our fathers worshipping them'."

Since there is no reason that ancestors might be wiser and more knowledgeable than the substituting generations, and in most cases the circumstances prove the reverse, because, with the past of time, sciences and knowledge develop, so Abraham immediately told them that not only they but their fathers also were certainly in aberration.

The verse says:

“He said: ‘Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error’.”

A Few Traditions Upon Misguidance

1– The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

*“I fear about my Ummah for three (main things) after me: misguidance after guidance, the seditions which cause aberrations, and the vain desire of the belly and of pudendum.”*²

2– Amir–ul–Mu’mineen Ali (as) said:

*“Whoever seeks guidance other than Allah’s guidance will go astray.”*³

3– Imam Baqir (as) said:

“Verily Allah, Almighty and Glorious, appointed Hadrat Ali (as) (to leadership) to be a sign between Him and His servants.

*Then, whoever has known him (his right) is a believer, and whoever has rejected him is a disbeliever; and whoever has not known him gets astray, and whoever appoints another (leader) with him is a polytheist, and whoever has confessed his mastership will enter Paradise.”*⁴

4– Imam Amir–ul–Mu’mineen Ali (as) said:

*“The most polluted deeds is that which causes misguidance.”*⁵

5– Muhammad–ibn–Muslim said:

“I heard that Imam Baqir (as) in a tradition was saying: ‘And do know O’ Muhammad! Verily the leaders of injustice, as well as their followers, are far from the religion of Allah. Certainly they have gone astray and lead astray, and the deeds that they do

‘... are like ashes on which the wind blows severely on a stormy day; they will have no power over any thing out of what they have earned; that is the very straying, far (and deep)’.⁶⁷

6– Zurarah once said:

“I heard that Imam Sadiq (as) in a tradition was saying: ‘O’ Allah! Cause me know You for verily if You do not make me know You I will not know Your prophet.

*O’ Allah! Cause me know Your prophet, for verily if You do not make me know Your prophet, I will not know Your Hujjah. O’ Allah! Cause me know Your Hujjah, for verily if I do not know Your Hujjah I will get astray from my religion (and will be misguided).”*⁸

7- Imam Baqir (as) said:

*“Whoever teaches a part of guidance (to any one) will have the like of the reward of those who act it and there will decrease nothing of the rewards of them; and whoever teaches a part of aberration (to any one) the sin of those who commit it will be for him without decreasing anything from their sins.”*⁹

8- Yazid-ibn-‘Abdulmalik narrates that Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“Visit each other because your visit will cause your hearts to be enlivened and our sayings to be remembered, and our sayings may make you kind to each other.

*Then if you practically take them (and do accordingly), you will develop and be prosperous; and if you abandon our sayings you will get astray and annihilate. Therefore, take them (and do accordingly), for I stand guarantor of your rescue and prosperity.”*¹⁰

Surah Al-‘Anbiya’ – Verses 55 – 56

قَالُوا أَجِئْنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ

قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

55. “They said: ‘Have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers’.”

56. “He said: ‘Nay! But your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who originated them, and I am unto this (fact) one of the witnesses’.”

This statement of Abraham (as) which was accompanied with kinds of emphasis and was said in a perfect decisiveness, caused the idol worshippers to come a little to themselves and try to investigate and research about the truth. They turned to Abraham (as) and asked him implying whether he had brought them a true matter or he was joking.

The verse in this regard says:

“They said: ‘Have you brought to us the truth, or are you one of the triflers’.”

But, in answer to them, Abraham (as) explicitly said that what he said was serious and was the exact fact that: their Lord is the Lord of the heavens and that of the earth.

The above holy verse says:

“He said: ‘Nay! But your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who originated them...”

Abraham (as) continued that this is the same Lord Who had created them and he was one of the witnesses of that notion.

The verse continues saying:

“...and I am unto this (fact) one of the witnesses’.”

By this sharp statement, Abraham (as) showed that that One is eligible to be worshipped Who is the Creator of them and the Creator of the earth and all beings.

Surah Al-‘Anbiya’ – Verse 57

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ

57. “And, by Allah, I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away turning your backs’.”

The commentators are divided in having the opinion that how Abraham (as) stated this sharp statement. Some of them, such as the authors of Tafsir-us-Safi and Al-Mizan, believe that this sentence was not stated openly and Abraham (as) said it in secret.

The reason for this is that they believe that the explicit claim of opposition against the small and big gods of a people, lonely and on the first day of the call, is opposite to precaution. But it seems that it is not so, because the accounts of the men of Allah are different from the ordinary accounts of ours, and nothing can prevent them to pave their clear way and to perform their Divine mission.

In the previous holy verses, we recited that Abraham (as) explicitly told his people:

“...Indeed you and your fathers have been in manifest error.”¹¹

Did Hadrat Zaynab (as) not say to Yazid, when she was as a captive in Sham, “I belittle you”, and then she started criticizing earnestly upon him and his government?

Did the great man of Iran, Imam Khomiyani, not say “The king must go”, when the king was in the peak of his tyrannical kingdom, and being fully equipped with kinds of arms, he was supported by all interior and exterior powers?

Did he not tell the king’s substitute: “I will nock down this government”? Did he not say to the existing dominant worldly oppressor, America, that America could do no evil? Truly speaking, to what kind of current political circumstances and ordinary precautions do these sentences agree?

Some believe that for conflicting the factors of mischief, those factors they must be struggled against in a negative manner. For instance, at the time of the tyrannical king of Iran, when the cinemas of the country were a serious means of deviation of the young generation, one of the dignitaries said:

“If people decide not to go to cinemas, the cinemas will automatically be suspended”.

But, the above-mentioned holy verse condemns this kind of thought, and it persists on the fact that the source of mischief must be eradicated. The example of it is the act of Moses (as) who burnt the golden Calf, and the Prophet of Islam (S) ruined the ‘mosque of dissension’ where was a base for the hypocrites.

Therefore, to prove that this proposition was one hundred percent earnest, and that he (as) was steadfast in his belief in a manner that he would accept heartily all its results and consequences in whatever form they might be, Abraham added:

“And, by Allah, I will certainly plan against your idols after you go away turning your backs’.”

Abraham’s purpose was to make them understand that he would finally use an opportunity and break the idols entirely.

But, perhaps, the greatness and dignity of the idols in their minds was so high that they did not take this statement for serious, and they did not show any reaction.

They might think that it was not possible that a person let himself play with the sacred things of a people and a tribe whose government was supporting them, too. With what daring could he do that? By which power was he able to afford it?

A Few Traditions Concerning Pictures

1- The holy Prophet of Islam (S) said:

“The intensive punishment of the people on the Day of Hereafter belongs to the drawers of pictures.”

(Perhaps, the purpose of it is: ‘those who painted the pictures of gods’.)¹²

2- Abi Basir has narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) who said:

“The Prophet (S) said: ‘Gabriel came to me and said: ‘Your Lord sends you regards and has prohibited you from ‘Tazwiq’ of the houses’.”

Abu Basir said:

“Then I asked what ‘Tazwiq of the houses’ meant; when he (as) said: ‘Painting pictures in the house’.”

(It should be thought what kinds of picture there were on those days regarding that the people had the

belief of idol worship in them and every picture must be considered as that.) 13

Muhammad–ibn–Muslim said:

*“I asked Imam Sadiq (as) about the drawing of the pictures of trees, sun, and moon. Then he (as) said: ‘When there is not a thing (a face) of an animal, it does not matter’.”*¹⁴

Surah Al-‘Anbiya’ – Verses 58 – 60

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ

58. “So he broke them into pieces, (all) except the chief of them, that haply they may return to it.”

59. “They said: ‘Who has done this with our gods? Surely he is (one) of the unjust’.”

60. “They said: ‘We heard a youth making mention of them, who is called Abraham’.”

However, without being afraid of the dangers of his action nor scaring from the harsh blow of the wrath of those people which could be considered as a result of his deed, in an appropriate opportunity, Abraham bravely took action and hastened fighting against those powerless gods which had so many fanatic ignorant advocators in their support.

The verse in this regard says:

“So he broke them into pieces, (all) except the chief of them...”

Abraham’s aim of doing it was that, maybe, the idol worshippers might come to him and he would say whatever was to say.

The verse says:

“...that haply they may return to it.”

It is true that by the word ‘idolatry’ we call in mind mostly the idols made of stone and wood, but from

another point of view, the words idol and idolatry have a vast meaning which envelops every consideration to anything besides Allah, in any form and state it may be. According to an Islamic tradition,

“Whatever makes man busy to itself, in a way that it makes him far from Allah, it is his idol.”

Finally, the idol worshippers entered the idol temple and encountered a scene that they could not imagine it. Instead of a tidy idol temple, they faced with an untidy scene, a heap of broken idols. They shouted asking who had done that wrong to their idols and that whoever had done it had certainly been one of the oppressors.

The holy verse says:

“They said: ‘Who has done this with our gods? Surely he is (one) of the unjust.’”

By this saying they indicated that the person who had done that action, in fact, had been unjust both to their gods, and to the society and to their party, and to himself.

But, a group of people who had the threats of Abraham due to the idols in mind, and knew this offensive behaviour of his to those artificial objects of worship, declared their opinion as follows:

“They said: ‘We heard a youth making mention of them, who is called Abraham’.”

According to some narrations, it happened at that time when Abraham was completely young, and he was probably about sixteen years old.

Surah Al-’Anbiya’ – Verses 61 – 63

قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَيَّ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ

قَالُوا ءَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالْهَيْتَانِ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسَأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ

61. “They said: ‘Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness’.”

62. “They said: ‘Are you the man that did this with our gods, O Abraham?’”

63. “(Abraham) said: ‘Nay, it was done by this, the chief of them! Ask them if they can speak.’”

Principally, it is usual that when a crime is committed, in order to find the person who has committed it, the hostile connections with the matter are investigated about. Certainly, there was no other person in that locality but Abraham who was objecting to the idols.

Therefore, all attentions turned to him, and some groups of the idolaters suggested, now that the circumstance was such, Abraham might be brought in front of the people so that those who knew him and were acquainted with the proposition could testify to his being criminal.

The verse says:

“They said: ‘Then bring him before the eyes of the people, that they may bear witness.’”

The callers cried around the city that those who were aware of the enmity and ill-speaking of Abraham due to idols should attend to bear witness.

At last, the court started its job with the presence of the chiefs of the people. It has also been said that Namrud himself was attending the court.

The first question which was asked from Abraham was as follows:

“They said: ‘Are you the man that did this with our gods, O Abraham?’”

Abraham answered them in such a way that they felt they were seriously surrounded, so that they could not save themselves from it.

Here is Abraham’s response:

“(Abraham) said: ‘Nay, it was done by this, the chief of them! Ask them if they can speak.’”

The principals of the job of the specialists of felony indicate that the accused person is the one who has the effects of the crime with him. Here, the ‘effects of the crime’ is with the chief idol.

Abraham wanted to say why they went to him, and why did they not accuse the chief god of theirs? He inquired whether they did not think that the chief idol probably had considered that other idols were as its future rival and, therefore, had destroyed them totally.

Since this interpretation, from the view point of the commentators, did apparently not adapt to the reality, and in view of the fact that Abraham is a prophet and an immaculate person never tells a lie, there have been stated different matters upon this Qur’anic sentence.

What seems the best of all is that Abraham (as) decisively attributed this action to the great idol, but all references testified to the fact that he did not intended to say it earnestly. He wanted to make the

baseless superstitious notions of the idol worshippers manifest to them.

He decided to make them understand that those soulless pieces of stone and wood were so feeble that they could not say even a sentence in order to ask help from their worshippers, much less they wanted them to solve their problems.

In our daily sayings there are many instances similar to this meaning when, in order to nullify the speech of the opposite party and to condemn him, we put his indisputable affairs in front of him in the form of an imperative, declarative, or interrogative sentence, and this is not a lie at all. A lie is something that has not a frame of reference with it.

There has been cited a tradition in the book of Kafi narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) who said:

“He (Abraham) said this:

‘Nay, it was done by this, the chief of them’

for he intended to improve their thoughts and to tell them the idols could not do such an action.”

Then the Imam added:

“By Allah, the idols had not done it nor did Abraham tell a lie.”¹⁵

However, some commentators also think that probably Abraham (as) uttered this subject in the form of a conditional sentence, implying that if the idols can speak, they have done such an action. Certainly the meaning was not contrary to the actuality, because neither did the idols speak, nor had they done such a job.

There is also a tradition close to this very commentary cited in Burhan, Safi, and Nur-uth-Thaqalayn.

Surah Al-‘Anbiya’ – Verses 64 – 65

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

ثُمَّ نكسوا على رؤوسهم لقد علمت ما هؤلاء ينطقون

64. “So they turned to themselves and said: ‘Verily, you yourselves are the unjust’.”

65. “Then they were made to hang down their heads, (saying:) ‘Very well indeed you know these (idols) do not speak’.”

Arousing the inner senses, self finding, returning to one's self, and heeding the natural disposition of people are among the main aims of the divine prophets (as).

Therefore, the words of Abraham (as) moved the idol worshippers and aroused their sleeping conscience. As a storm which takes the abundant ash from over the flames of fire and makes its brightness clear, Abraham made manifest their monotheistic nature from behind the curtains of their bigotry and ignorance.

During a short and fleeting time, they awoke from that deep and death-like sleep and returned to their conscience and nature and told themselves that they were truly unjust to themselves. They were unjust not only to themselves, but also to the society to which they belonged, and also to the holy presence of Allah, the Bestower of the blessings. 16

The verse says:

“So they turned to themselves and said: ‘Verily, you yourselves are the unjust’.”

But, the amount of the rust of their ignorance, bigotry and blindly imitation was more than that it could be completely wiped out and burnished by the call of this Champion of Monotheism.

Alas! That holy spiritual awakening state did not last long, and there appeared an opposition against this monotheistic light from the side of the evil powers, and because of ignorance existed in their dark polluted innate, everything returned to its first state.

What a beautiful and narrow sense the Qur'an has, where it says:

“Then they were made to hang down their heads...”

So, in order to bring an excuse for their deaf and dumb gods, they announced:

“...(saying:) ‘Very well indeed you know these (idols) do not speak’.”

They wanted to say that their idols are always silent and they never break the dignity of silence.

The idol worshippers, in fact, wanted to hide the weakness, vileness and abasement of the idols by this hollow excuse.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 66 – 68

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ

أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ

66. “(Abraham) said: ‘Do you then worship, besides Allah, that which profits you nothing, neither hurts you?’”

67. “Fie on you and on what you worship besides Allah! Have you then no sense?”

68. “They said: ‘If you would do aught, burn him, and help your gods.’”

The godly men generally always pursue their holy aims in whatever condition they may be, and they do not stop even for a while, although their struggles may seem to be fulfilled in different shapes.

Along the way of his messengership, at first, Abraham (as) goes toward his own uncle and relatives and invites them unto monotheism and Unity, but when he does not gain any positive result, for the second stage, he hastens to the idols and breaks them all.

After that, addressing their innate disposition, he tries to awaken them, and, finally, next to his advice and reprimand, he makes them contemplate.

He attacks them using his most violent words, and puts their minds under the frequent logical awakening blames, as the verse says:

“(Abraham) said: ‘Do you then worship, besides Allah, that which profits you nothing, neither hurts you?’”

Again, this teacher of monotheism goes on his own speech further than that, and by striking the whips of scorn upon their painless souls, he said to them:

“Fie on you and on what you worship besides Allah! Have you then no sense?”

However, in blaming and scorning them, Abraham did not leave clemency, lest they would become more obstinate.

Thus, by the practical and logical reasoning of Abraham, all of the idol worshippers were condemned, but their intense obstinacy and bigotry hindered them to accept the Truth, and that was why they made a very harsh and dangerous decision about Abraham (as).

As for the reaction of the crowd, the Qur’an says:

“They said: ‘If you would do aught, burn him, and help your gods.’”

Similar to that, they said many vain things about Abraham, and they incited people to revolt against him in a way that, instead of a few loads of wood which could be sufficient to burn several persons, the inhabitants piled thousands of loads of wood over there which made a mountainous heap of wood, and, consequently, an ocean of fire was provided.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 69 – 70

قُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَيَّ اِبْرَاهِيمَ

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْاٰخْسِرِيْنَ

69. “We said: ‘O fire! Be you cold and safety for Abraham!’”

70. “And they intended a device against him, but We made them the worse losers.”

The men of Allah are so steadfast in their divine aims that they are ready to devote their souls. Burning alive a person is the most terrible kind of slaughter.

There are many matters cited in commentaries about the event of throwing of Abraham (as) into fire, among which is that: the polytheists, with the help and guidance of Satan, made a mangonel.

Abraham, with his matchless trust to Allah, did not ask any help from any of the angels, even from Gabriel, and, at that time, he was busy praying to Allah in solitude and supplicating to Muhammad (S) and his Ahl-ul-Bayt (as).

At last, with cries of exultation of people and while they were shouting applauding, Abraham was thrown into the horrible flames of the prepared fire by means of a mangonel. They were shouting so happily that as if the breaker of the idols was destroyed for ever and turned to ash.

But Allah, Whose command is obeyed by everything, and Who had even taught the quality of burning to fire, and Who had taught the secret of love to mothers, decided to keep safe this sincere believing servant in the ocean of fire, and to add another proof to the evidences of his honour, as the Qur'an here says:

“We said: ‘O fire! Be you cold and safety for Abraham!’”

Undoubtedly, the command of Allah (s.w.t.) was a genetic command, the same command that, in the world of existence, He issues for the sun, the moon, the earth, the heaven, the water, the fire, the plants, the birds and everything, and without that command no effect comes forth from any cause.

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

“When Allah commanded the fire, saying:

‘Be you cold...’,

because of the extreme cold (in the midst of Namrud’s fire), the teeth of Abraham were shivering and hitting against each other, until the time it was told:

‘... and safety’

*when its coldness disappeared and caused safety for him.”*¹⁷

Then, to draw a conclusion, the Holy Qur’an, in a short sentence, concisely implies that the polytheists had decided to annihilate Abraham (as) by this evil plan, but Allah made them the worse losers of people.

The verse says:

“And they intended a device against him, but We made them the worse losers.”

It is evident that by remaining Abraham safe in the middle of that fire, the scene changed entirely, the cries of joy fell down, and the mouths were wide open out of surprise, but still bigotry and obstinacy hindered them to accept the truth perfectly, although the alert hearts (minds) got their interest from this event and their faith unto the Lord of Abraham was increased.

However, the Arabic word /’axsarin/ has been applied in the Qur’an for those who do an indecent action while they think that their action is good, and therefore, they usually do not comprehend their loss to try to compensate it.

Surah Al-’Anbiya’ – Verse 71

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ

71. “And we delivered him, and Lot, unto the land which We have blessed for (all) peoples.”

The enemy wanted to destroy Abraham (as):

“...they intended a device against him”¹⁸,

but Allah not only saved him but also endowed on him a blessed generation and made also all of them from among the righteous and eligible ones:

“...and We made them all righteous.”¹⁹

The event of burning Abraham alive in the fire and the miraculous safety of his life from this dangerous stage caused the chiefs of the government of Namrud tremble.

They thought if he, in that state, remained in that city and in that country, with that eloquent language, that powerful logic, and his matchless manliness, certainly he was a source of danger for that tyrannical egoistic government.

On the other hand, Abraham, in fact, had done his mission in that region and had sown the seed of faith and awareness in that land.

He ought to migrate into another part of the land and declare his call there. Therefore, he decided to migrate from that country towards Sham (Syria) accompanied with Lut, (his brother's son), Sarah (his wife), and probably with a small group of the believers.

Thus, the Qur'an says:

“And we delivered him, and Lot, unto the land which We have blessed for (all) peoples.”

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verse 72

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ

72. “And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob as a further gift, and We made them all righteous.”

This holy verse points to one of the most important merits that Allah had endowed upon Abraham (as). He (as) was having got not only a righteous child but also a fruitful and worthy generation.

The Qur'an says:

“And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob as a further gift...”

Then the holy verse adds that Allah made all of them some righteous, worthy, and useful men.

The verse says:

“...and We made them all righteous.”

In this verse, the name of Isaac (as) was mentioned while the name of Ishmael (as), who was the first child of Abraham (as), was not referred to. It is, perhaps, for the attracting of the attentions to the extraordinary and wonderful birth of Isaac who, by the will of Allah, was born of a barren mother, i.e.,

Sarah, in her old age.

By the way, a child is a gift of Allah, but what is more important than a child is his being righteous.

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verse 73

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ
الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ

73. “And We made them leaders guiding (the people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good deeds, and the establishing prayer, and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone).”

This verse in a general sense refers to the rank of Imamate and Leadership of these great prophets as well as a part of their important and valuable programs.

Here, on the whole, six specialties of these qualities are mentioned, to which if we add the specialty of being righteous, which was referred to in the previous verse, they will totally be seven specialties.

At first, it says:

“And We made them leaders...”

This means that, in addition to the rank of prophethood and messengership, Allah gave them the rank of Imamate, too. As it was also mentioned before, divine Imamate is the last stage of development course of man which means the absolute leadership of people; whether: material and spiritual, exoteric and esoteric, physical and mental.

The difference of prophethood and messengership with Imamate lies in this fact that the divine prophets in the rank of prophethood and messengership only receive the command of Allah and inform people of it in order to convey it to them, and this communication is often accompanied with glad tidings and warning.

While in the stage of Imamate, they put these divine programs into action, whether it is done by formation of just government or without it. In this stage they are trainees and they carry the Divine ordinances and programs into effect, and they foster men so that they provide a clean environment for them.

In fact, the rank of Imamate is the rank of proving all the Divine programs to true. In other words, it is the remittance of the quest as well as both the religious guidance and Divine guidance.

From this point of view, it is just like the sun which fosters the living creatures by its rays.

Then, next to that stage, the Qur'an reiterates the actuality and consequence of this rank.

It continues saying:

"...guiding (the people) by Our command..."

This guidance is not only in the sense of leading and showing the way, which exist in the rank of prophethood and messengership, but also in the sense of succour and gaining the aim (for those who are receptive and have competency, of course).

There can be drawn a conclusion from the last part of the verse that Imam (the immaculate absolute leader of people) must be appointed from the side of Allah, because, firstly, Imamate is a kind of Divine covenant, and it is evident that such a person should be assigned by Allah Who is a side of the covenant.

Secondly: those who have somehow been unjust, and there is a dark point of injustice in their life, irrespective of injustice to themselves or injustice to others, or being idol worshipers even for a while, are not eligible for the rank of Imamate. In other words, Imam should have been Immaculate in his whole lifetime.

Can any one, save Allah, be aware of the existence of such an epithet in a person?

So, if we intend to choose the successor of the Prophet (S) through this criterion there can be none but Amir-ul-Mumineen Ali (as).

It is interesting that the writer of Al-Manar narrates from Abi-Hanifah that he believed that caliphate was exclusively eligible to Alawites, and for that reason he thought rebellion against the contemporary government of that time, (Mansur-i-Abbasi), was permissible, therefore, he did not agree to accept the job of judgment in the government of Abbasides.

Then, the writer of Al-Manar adds that the four leaders of the Sunnites were totally antagonist to the governments of their times and did not assume them as eligible for leadership of the Muslims since they were some unjust cruel men.²⁰

But it is wonderful that a great deal of our contemporary Sunnite scholars approve and support some unjust tyrannical governments whose communication with the enemies of Islam is certain and decisive, and whose injustice and mischief is not concealed to anyone, and they easily consider them as 'the people in authority' and 'those to be obeyed'.

Explanations

1. Similar to prophethood, Imamate should be assigned by Allah. The Qur'an says:

“And We made them leaders...”

2. If Imamate is gained by force and injustice, it is an invitation to Hell. The Qur'an says:

“...leaders (who) call to the fire...”²¹

But when Imamate is given by Allah, it is blessed and it is in the path of the Truth.

3. The guidance of prophets is neither from their own accord nor is it by their own personal tastes, but it is guidance by Allah's command:

“...guiding (the people) by Our Command...”

4. Ritual prayers and almsgiving (zakat) are two basic principles in all religions, since without prayer and Zakat none reaches the rank of servitude.

The verse says:

“...and We revealed to them the doing of good deeds, and the establishing prayer, and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone).”

5. One can comprehend from this verse that religion is not separate from government.

“And We made them leaders, guiding (people) by Our Command...”

Surah Al-'Anbiya' – Verses 74 - 75

وَأُوطِئَ أَتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ إِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

74. “And Lot, We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and We delivered him from the town which were doing abominations. Verily they were evil people, perverse,”

75. “And We admitted him into Our mercy; verily he was of the righteous.”

In view of the fact that Lut was one of the close relatives of Abraham and was among the first persons who believed in him, next to the story of Abraham (as), the Qur'an refers to a part of the efforts and endeavours of Lut (as) in the way of conveying his prophethood and Allah's favours unto him.

The verse says:

“And Lot, We gave him wisdom and knowledge...”

Hadrat Lut was a great prophet who was contemporary with Abraham and who, accompanying him, migrated from Babylon to Palestine, and later, he separated from Abraham and went to Sodom, a city.

The people of this region were completely polluted with vice and sin, especially with sexual deviations and pollutions. He did his best and struggled very much to guide this aberrant group, but it affected the least on those blind-hearted people.

At last, the intensive Wrath and Punishment of Allah, seized them all, except Lut's family, with the exception of his wife, and destroyed them utterly.

Therefore, in the continuation of the holy verse, the Qur'an points to this favour which Allah bestowed on Lut when it says:

“...and We delivered him from the town which were doing abominations...”

The reason of the punishment of those people is mentioned as that they were some bad people and had gone out of the circle of the obedience of Allah's command.

It continues saying:

“...Verily they were evil people, perverse,”

Then the Qur'an refers to the last Divine favour from this group of favours which were given to Lut, by saying:

“And We admitted him into Our mercy; verily he was of the righteous.”

Thus, in this holy verse, four important favours of Allah, which were endowed on Lut (as), are pointed out. They are: wisdom, knowledge, deliverance and admitting him into Allah's mercy.

1. For a further explanation about Abraham's father, see Surah Maryam. No. 19, verse 42

2. Bihar, vol. 68, p. 269

3. Qurar-ul-Hikam, vol. 1, p. 461, and vol. 4, p. 228

4. Wasa'il, vol. 18, p. 567

5. Khisal, vol. 2, p. 264

6. Surah 'Ibrahim, No. 14, verse 18

7. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 184
8. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 1, p.331
9. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 35
10. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 186
11. current Surah, verse 54
12. Sahih-i-Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1670
13. Wasa'il-ush-Shi'ah, vol. 3, p. 560
14. Ibid, p. 563, and Mustadrak, vol. 9, p. 318
15. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn and Burhan, following of the verse
16. Some commentators have also probabled that the objective meaning of the sentence

“So they turned to themselves”

is that, as for this saying, they returned one another and blamed themselves.

17. Kafi, vol. 8, p. 318
18. Verse 70 of the current Surah
19. Verse 72 of the current Surah
20. Al-Manar, vol. 1, pp. 457-458
21. Surah Al-Qasas, No. 28, verse 41

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