

Surah al-Dharyyat, Verses 24 – 46

Surah al-Dharyyat – Verses 24-27

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ فَجَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ سَمِينٍ

فَقَرَّبَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ

24. Has the story reached you, of the honored guests of Abraham (as)?

25. When they came in to him and said: “Peace be upon you!” He [Abraham] replied: “Peace be upon you,” and said: “You are a people unknown to me.”

26. Then he turned to his household secretly and brought out a fattened [roasted] calf.

27. Then placed it before them [noticing that they refrain from eating, he said]: “Will you not eat?”

Bearing the glad tidings of a child to be born to Abraham (as), some angels entered his home, but the Prophet (as) did not know them. However, he invited them to go in and showed his hospitality by preparing food for them. Noticing that they refrained from eating, he was anxious and inquired the reason for their refraining to partake of the food.

Then, they presented themselves to him and enlightened him on their mission. Instances of anthropomorphic angels are attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an, including: descent of Gabriel upon Mary (as), that of Harut and Marut in Solomon's (as) realm, and that of angels upon Abraham (as).

Thus, addressed to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), the blessed Verses in question say:

“O Muhammad (S)! Are you aware of the story of the Abraham's (as) guests honored by God Almighty?”

A similar Qur'anic instance is attested elsewhere in which God Almighty says of angels:

“But they are honored servants.”

The adjective 'honored' may refer to Abraham (as), i.e. he honored the angels by preparing food for them. The manner of expression reflects that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) had not been aware of the story but he learned the story through Divine Revelation.

The blessed Verse 25 saying:

“When they came in to him”

indicate that they were sent by God Almighty to fulfill two missions: to bear glad tidings to Abraham (as) that God Almighty would grant him a son; they were also sent to afflict the people of Lot (as) with torment.

The blessed Verse 25 is saying that when the angels descended, they greeted with Abraham (as) by saying:

“Peace be upon you.”

The angels' greetings may merely serve as asking Divine Mercy for Abraham (as). It may also indicate that they aimed to inform Abraham of their mission as to afflicting the people of Lot (as) with torment and apprise him of his safety and that of his followers.

Replying them by saying:

“Peace be upon you”

he noticed that he did not know them, since he thought that they were human beings and it was his habit to show hospitality to his company.

The blessed Verse 26 says that Abraham (as) went to Sarah and had a fattened calf roasted and brought it to his guests.

Noticing that the guests who appeared like human beings to him refrain from eating, he inquired with

surprise:

“Will you not eat?”

Since they were unknown to him and besides they declined his offer to partake of the food, he was afraid of them lest they might be his enemies suspecting some malintention against him.

Thus, the angels said unto him:

“Fear not. We are here to bear you glad tidings rather than harm you.”

Surah al-Dhariyat – Verses 28–30

فَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَبَشَّرُوهُ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ

فَأَقْبَلَتْ امْرَأَتُهُ فِي صَرَّةٍ فَصَكَّتْ وَجْهَهَا وَقَالَتْ عَجُوزٌ عَقِيمٌ

قَالُوا كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ

28. Then he entertained fear of them [when they ate not]. They said: “Fear not [since we are God’s angels].” And they bore him glad tidings of a son having knowledge.

29. Then his wife [hearing the glad tidings of a son] came forward with a loud voice: She smote her face and said: “[How] a barren old woman [may conceive a child]!”

30. They [the angels] said [unto him]: “Thus says your Lord. Indeed, He is the All-Wise, the Omniscient.”

The Arabic word awjas (“apprehensive, entertaining fear, having presentiments”) derives from w-j-s (“be apprehensive, have presentiments, be seized by fear”). The Arabic noun Khyfa (“fear, dread”) derives from the root kh-’-f (“fear, dread”) and its nunnation (tanwin) indicates diversification (tanwi’) connoting that Abraham was seized by a kind of fear.

The blessed Verse is saying that the angels introduced themselves to Abraham saying that they were not human beings in need of partaking food, but they were angels sent on a mission by God Almighty to inform him of a son who would be quite knowledgeable and wise.

The son mentioned herein may refer to Ishmael (Isma‘il) born to Hagar (Hajar). The following blessed

Verse indicates that the son mentioned in the blessed Verse 28 was Isaac (Ishaq) born to Sarah (Sara).

The blessed Verse 29 is saying that upon hearing such glad tiding, Sarah, Abraham's (as) wife, hastened toward the room with a loud voice (fi sarratin) saying:

“How may I conceive a child when I am an old [barren] woman.”

Qur'anic exegets maintain that Sarah and Abraham (as) were ninety five and one hundred and ninety years of age respectively at the time.

The blessed Verse 30 is saying that replying to Abraham's (as) wife seized by great surprise and fear, the angels said:

“Thus says your Lord. Indeed, He is the All-Wise, the Omniscient,”

i.e. he is All-Aware of all good and evil things. The angels might have intended to say that they were on a mission from God Almighty to bear them glad tidings rather than saying something of their own, aiming to make her understand that God Almighty willed to reflect his Omnipotence to the world that whatever He willed would be realized and there was nothing impossible against His Omnipotence.

Thus, the angels said:

“He is the All-Wise, the Omniscient.”

The emphatic conjunction inna (“behold, verily, truly”) indicates that whatever God Almighty wills is based upon His Wisdom and Omniscience as to improving the affairs and vanity may never penetrate his Sacred Divine Presence.

Surah al-Dharyat – Verses 31-34

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ

لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّن طِينٍ

مُسَوِّمَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لِلْمُسْرِفِينَ

- 31. [Abraham] said: “Then for what purpose you have come, O Messengers?”**
32. They said: “We have been sent to a wrong-doing people,
33. To send down upon them stones of baked clay [for their perdition].
34. [Stones] marked by your Lord for [the perdition of] transgressors of Divine Bounds.

The Arabic word khatb designates ‘significant affair or concern’ and musawwama denotes ‘marked.’ Lot (as) was a relative of Abraham (as) who propagated monotheism in the region of Sodom, Jordan, at the time. Lot’s (as) people were promiscuous and also sodomizers inattentive to Prophet Lot’s (as) warnings. As a consequence, God Almighty caused the destruction of their region and their story is mentioned in Chapters 7, 11, 15, and 29.

The blessed Verse 31 is saying that when Prophet Abraham (as) recognized the angels through the light of his heart and learned that they were on a significant mission, he inquired about their purpose.

The blessed Verse 32 is saying that since Prophet Abraham (as) occupied a place higher than that of Prophet Lot (as), the former was informed by God Almighty through His angels that He intended to cause the destruction of the people of Lot (as) inhabiting Mu’tafaka turning a deaf ear to Lot’s warnings against their committing such obscene acts.

Thus they brought Divine torment upon themselves. Replying to Prophet Abraham (as), the angels informed him that they had been sent by God Almighty to send down upon them stones of baked clay.

The blessed Verse 34 is saying:

“O Muhammad (S)! Those stones marked by your Lord are for those people leading their lives in pleasures of the flesh, disbelief, and sin.”

The blessed Verse may make a reference to the point that the recompense of any act is to be consistent with it (jaza’an wifaqan). Since the promiscuous deeds of the people of Mu’tafaka were the lowliest acts against the laws of nature and human practice, but quite bestial, their chastisement had to be inflicted upon them by means of the lowliest of things, namely baked clay.

It may be for the same reason that the punishment for sodomy is being stoned so that the sodomizer tastes the most excruciating torment in this world and others may take a lesson and refrain from committing such act of obscenity.

Surah al-Dharyat – Verses 35–37

فَأَخْرَجْنَا مَنْ كَانَ فِيهَا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

وَتَرَكْنَا فِيهَا آيَةً لِلَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ

35. Therefore, We brought out from therein all the believers.

36. But We found not there any household of the Muslims except one.

37. And We have left there [nothing but] a sign for [warning] those who fear the excruciating torment.

Corruption at times disseminates to such an extent that an honored Prophet like Lot (as) is backed by one single household, to be more precise by his household excluding his wife;

(“any household of the Muslims except one”).

As reflected in the blessed Verses in question, the angels said unto Prophet Abraham (as) who was concerned about Prophet Lot (as), his nephew, that they had expelled all disbelievers from the city of Mu'tafaka but one home belonging to the Muslims that stayed intact by Divine torment and the home belonged to Prophet Lot (as) and his two daughters.

It is said that Prophet Lot (as) propagated monotheism for twenty one years, but only one person believed him. Thus, the inhabitants of the city deserved Divine Chastisement since it is reflected that they did not deserved Divine Guidance. Had some of them had faith, they would have remained unharmed.

The blessed verse 37 is saying that God Almighty left the city in ruins so that those who fear excruciating torment might take a lesson. The blessed Verse reflects that the Prophets were able to lead those unto Guidance who were prepared to have faith and believe in God Almighty believing that He is Most Gracious at the time of Mercy and Most Revengeful at the time of being Wrathful.

Noticing the traces of Divine torment descended upon former peoples, their faith increases and fear of God Almighty overwhelms them, but those who are frail of faith are not prepared to receive Guidance, like the pretending Muslims of our time who take all disasters inflicted upon them to be natural phenomena and do not regard themselves to be blameworthy deserving such afflictions.

Surah al-Dhariyat – Verses 38–40

وَفِي مُوسَى إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

فَتَوَلَّىٰ بِرُكْنِهِ وَقَالَ سَاحِرٌ أَوْ مَجْنُونٌ

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ

38. And in [the story of] Moses [AS there is a sign and a lesson to take], when We sent him to Pharaoh with a manifest authority.

39. But [Pharaoh] turned away relying on his might and hosts, saying: “[He is] a sorcerer, or a madman.”

40. Therefore, We took him and his hosts [by force] and dumped them into the sea for he was blameworthy.

The phrase:

“manifest authority”

is a clear evidence for the possibility of entering into discussions with others and producing one’s logical arguments.

The verbal form nabadhnam [“we dumped them”] deriving from the root n–b–dh is employed in the sense of dump unworthy and insignificant objects. The Arabic word mulim deriving from l–’–m (“censure, blame, and rebuke”) denotes ‘blameworthy.’ The word rukn ad hoc connotes Pharaoh’s might, holsts, property, authority, and propaganda, intending to say that Pharaoh relying on his might, confronted Moses (as) and refused to acknowledge his Prophetic Call.

Alluding to the previous blessed Verses, those in question proceeds with further warning following the stories of Abraham (as) and the torment sent down on the people of Lot (as).

Opening with the story of the story of Moses (as) and Pharaoh, they say that God Almighty sent Moses (as) with miracles including his walking stick and the shining hand as manifest Divine Signs, relying on his might, sovereignty, and the large number of adherents, Pharaoh turned away from the miracles of Moses (as) and showed indifference, since he claimed godhead and forced people to worship him.

However, might have inwardly acknowledged Moses' (as) Prophetic Call through Divine Signs, but he was deceived by his love for sovereignty and the large number of his courtiers and servants thereby he refrained from believing in monotheism.

As a consequence, he attributed sorcery and lunacy to the Prophet (as) attempting at deceiving people by claiming that Moses was either a sorcerer for transforming a walking stick into a dragon or a lunatic for his Call to worshipping the invisible God.

Since Pharaoh went to the extreme in obstinacy and confrontation with Moses (as), believed in his godhead, impeded his kith and kin from believing in God Almighty, and persecuted Prophet Moses (as) and believers in monotheism, God Almighty gave him the ultimatum, afflicted him and his hosts with torments and drowned them in the Nile.

Pharaoh blamed himself at that time as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an1:

“And We took the Children of Israel across the sea and Pharaoh with his hosts followed them in oppression and enmity till when drowning overtook him, he said: ‘I believe that none has the right to be worshipped but He [Allah] in Whom the Children of Israel believe and I am one of the Muslims.’”

It was said unto him:

“Now that you are close to perdition, your belief is of no avail and may not rescue you from drowning, since you refused to believe in God but waxed corruption in the earth.”

When disbelievers and transgressors of Divine Bounds taste the torment and when they notice the evil consequences of their vicious deeds in mortal throes, their repentance will be of no avail, since his potential for turning away from denial of God Almighty and turning toward Him has come to an end and his repentance will be in vain; as the old saying goes:

“An ounce of precaution is better than a pound of cure.”

Surah al-Dharyat – Verses 41-42

وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ

مَا تَذَرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيمِ

41. And [there are lessons and Signs] in [the story of] ‘Ad when We sent against them the barren [destructive] wind;

42. It [the wind] spared nothing that it touched, but blew it into broken spreads of rotten ruins.

Prophet Hod (Hud AS) was sent by God Almighty to call his people to monotheism. Despite his warnings they did not pay any heed but paved the path for sending down Divine torment. Winds are sometimes rejuvenating but they may be barren and destructive at times. The Arabic phrase al-rih al-‘aqim designates ‘destructive wind’ sent as a torment against the people of ‘Ad.

It was so scorching and poisoning that it destroyed all men, animals, and plants on its way. The word ramim designates ‘rotten, decaying’ and tarmim denotes ‘restoration of decay.’ Despite their great physical strength, power, and high stature, the destructive wind shattered them like rotten bones.

The blessed twain Verses allude to the torment sent against the people of ‘Ad who despite their strong body and high stature, their strength, power, and might could not keep them from being afflicted with the Divine torment, the barren, namely destructive wind, levitating them off the ground and dumped them onto the land thus turning them into rotten bones.

Surah al-Dhariyat - Verses 43-45

وَفِي ثَمُودَ إِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَمَتَّعُوا حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

فَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ

فَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا مِنْ قِيَامٍ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنْتَصِرِينَ

43. And in [the story of] Thamud [there are Signs and lessons], when they were told: “Enjoy yourselves for a while [in your lifetime]!”

44. But they insolently defied the Command of their Lord, so the Sa’iqa [awe inspiring cry] overtook them while they were beholding.

45. Then they were unable to rise up, nor could they ask for help.

Prophet Salih (as), the Prophet of the people of Thamud, brought out a camel at the request of his people and ordered them to refrain from harming the camel, but they killed it and denied his Prophetic Call.

The Arabic phrase hata hin indicates the three day respite granted them so that they may regret their evil deed and repent, but they kept on committing sins and succumbed to Divine Chastisement after three days, as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an2:

“So he said: ‘enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days.’”

Thus, recounting the story of the people of ‘Ad and their affliction with Divine torment and the icy gale (sarsar) owing to their denial of the Prophetic Call is followed by an allusion to the torment inflicted upon the people of Thamud who, having killed Salih’s (as) she-camel, were granted a three day respite so that they may compensate for their past evil deeds, but they disobeyed Divine Command and returned to their vicious deeds. As a consequence, the destructive torment was sent down upon them and caused their perdition.

It is said that the torment was Gabriel’s awe-inspiring shout as a consequence of which they lost consciousness and perished

“while they were beholding.”

It is also said that a group of them, Amalekites (‘amaliqa), were out of town on those three days and were able to hear the awe-inspiring shout and the inhabitants’ loss of consciousness; however, the following blessed Verse:

(“Then they were unable to rise up, nor could they ask for help”)

reveals that the people of Thamud did not die right after the awe-inspiring shout, but lost consciousness and lost their lives later on.

Surah al-Dhariyat – Verse 46

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

46. [And were] the people of Noah [AS] before them [whom We destroyed]. Indeed, they were a people transgressing Divine Bounds.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) and Muslims were able to take a lesson out of the story of Noah’s (as) people whom Noah called to monotheism for a thousand years. The common run of people at times incline toward committing sins and pave the ground for Divine torment.

The opening conjunction particle ‘and’ connects the blessed Verse in question with the preceding ones, as per which the blessed Verse is saying that God Almighty caused the destruction of the people of

Noah prior to those of ‘Ad and Thamud, since they were wrong-doers who were totally sinners disobedient to Divine Command.

They disbelieved Prophetic Calls as a consequence of which they were given the ultimatum and were afflicted with the recompense of their vicious deeds – the excruciating torment. These blessed Verses treat of five Prophets (as) and their peoples and the torments inflicted upon the disobedient peoples.

The reminder serves two purposes: firstly, warning others against disobedience to God Almighty which necessitates Divine torments illustrating those in store in the Hereafter and secondly, consoling the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) encouraging him to entertain no sorrow because of some people attributing unbecoming qualities to him including sorcery and madness.

He is thereby reminded that people have been the same at different times and those seeking truth are very few in number. Former Prophets (as) were patient against disbelievers’ persecutions and persevered firmly in propagating their Prophetic Missions. The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) is encouraged to persevere firmly in the Cause of Allah like former Prophets (as).

The same motif is attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an, including 46:35:

“Therefore, be patient [O Muhammad (S)!] as did the Prophets of strong will (ulu al-‘azm).”

These blessed Verses encouraging him to be patient reflect that the Noble Prophet (S) suffered many abuses by the disbelievers from Quraysh and he was quite anxious because of their denial of his Prophetic Call.

1. 10:90

2. 11:65

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