

made their second request to take their younger brother with them.

3. Another instruction inferred from here is that it is appropriate to admonish a wrongdoer in the interest of his betterment. This would amount to telling him that his behavior demanded that the plea made by him should be rejected, but then, he should be given the feeling that he is being given a fresh chance by forgoing what has gone before - so that his sense of shame returns to him later and he becomes totally repentant. This is what Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did in the first instance. He made a caustic reference to their past record: 'Shall I trust you about Benjamin as I had trusted you earlier about Yūsuf?' But, after having warned them pointedly, he realized their penitence from their apparent condition, placed his trust in Allah and handed over his young son into their custody.

4. Placing one's trust, in the real sense, in the promise or protection of a human being is wrong. The real trust should be in Allah Ta'ālā. He alone is the real mover and maker of things and He alone is the causer of causes. To bring forth causes and to give them effect is what lies but in His control. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said: *فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَفِظًا* (Well, Allah is the best guardian).

According to a saying of Ka'b al-Aḥbār, since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, this time, did not simply trust the word of his sons, instead, entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, Allah Ta'ālā said: 'By My honour, now I shall send both of your sons back to you.'

5. If some property or thing belonging to someone else is found in our baggage, and strong indications prove that he has tied it up in our baggage with the specific intention of giving it to us, then, keeping it and using it is permissible - as was the case with this 'capital' which came out from the baggage of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and where strong indications proved that it did not happen as a result of some oversight or forgetfulness, in fact, it was given back intentionally. That is why, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give instructions that these articles of value be returned. But, in case there is a doubt that it has come to us, perhaps by oversight or forgetfulness, then, using it without making necessary inquiries from the owner is not permissible.

6. No one should be asked to give a pledge on oath, the fulfillment of

which does not lie fully in his control - as it was, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام took a pledge on oath from his sons that they would bring back Benjamin safe and sound, he exempted from it the situation in which they may become totally helpless or become themselves subjected to near-death circumstances.

Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked the noble Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين to give him a pledge of their obedience to him, then, he himself added a restriction to it, that is, the restriction of ability. Thus, the pledge stipulated: 'we shall obey you fully - as far as it is within our ability and control.'

7. That the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have been asked to give a pledge that they would bring Benjamin back shows that : كفالة بالنفس (Kafālah bin-nafs) is permissible. Being a technical term of Islāmic Law, it means that it is correct to tender a personal bail or guarantee for the due appearance of a person involved in a case on its hearing date in the court.

The view of Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى differs in this respect. According to him, it is only financial guarantee that is allowed in Sharī'ah. He does not hold the personal bail (Kafālah bin-nafs) as permissible.

Verses 67 - 69

وَقَالَ يٰٓبَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنۡ بَابٍ وَّاحِدٍ وَّادْخُلُوا مِنۡ اَبْوَابٍ مُّتَفَرِّقَةٍ ط
 وَمَا اُغْنِيْ عَنْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ط اِنَّ الْحُكْمَ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ط عَلَيْهِ
 تَوَكَّلْتُ ؕ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ وَاَلَمْ يَدْخُلُوْا مِنْ حَيْثُ
 اَمَرَهُمْ اٰبُوهُمُ ط مَا كَانَ يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا حَاجَةً فِىْ
 نَفْسٍ يَّعْقُوْبَ قَضٰهَا ط وَاِنَّهٗ لَدُوْ عَلِيْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنٰهٗ وَلٰكِنۡ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
 لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاَلَمْ يَدْخُلُوْا عَلٰى يُوْسُفَ اَوْىٰ اِلَيْهٖ اٰخَاهُ قَالَ اِنِّىْ اَنَا
 اٰخُوْكَ فَلَا تَبْتَسِمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَّعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾

And he said, "O my sons, do not enter (the city) all of you from the same gate, rather, enter from different gates.

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust." [67]

And when they entered (the city) in the manner their father had advised them, he could not help them in any way against (the will of) Allah, but it was just an urge in the heart of Ya'qūb which he satisfied. He was a man of knowledge; because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know. [68]

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother (Benyamin) with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing." [69]

Commentary

In the present verses, the second visit of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, this time accompanied by their younger brother, has been mentioned. On that occasion, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had told them to keep in mind that they were eleven of them going there, so they should not enter Egypt collectively from one single gate of the city of their destination. Instead of that, once they have reached the outer wall of the city, they should disperse and enter there from different gates.

The reason for this advice was his apprehension that all of them were young and, *māsha'allāh*, healthy, tall, handsome and impressive. He was concerned about them lest people find out that they were sons of the same father, and brothers to each other. May be they are affected by someone's evil eye which may bring them some harm. Or, their coming in all together may make some people envy them, or may even cause some pain to them.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام did not give them this advice the first time they went to Egypt. He did so on the occasion of their second trip. The reason for this, perhaps, is that they had entered Egypt on their first visit as common travellers and in a broken down condition. No one knew them, nor was there any danger that someone would take any special notice of their general condition. But, it so happened that, during their very first trip, the master of Egypt gave them an unusual welcome which introduced them to state functionaries and city people. Now there did

exist the danger that someone may cast an evil eye on them, or that some people start envying them for being an imposing group of visitors. Apart from it, the fact that the younger son, Benyamin, was with them this time, became the cause of the father's added attention.

The Effect of the Evil Eye is True

This tells us that human beings affected by the evil eye, or its causing pain or loss to another human being, animal etc., is true. It cannot be dismissed as ignorance, superstition or fancy. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was concerned about it.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has also confirmed its truth. It appears in a Ḥadīth: 'The evil eye makes a human being enter the grave, and a camel enter a petty pot.' Therefore, things from which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has sought refuge, and from which he has directed his Ummah to seek refuge, include: *من كل عين لامة* that is, 'I seek refuge from the evil eye.' (Qurṭubī)

Well-known is the event related to Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf, one of the noble Companions. It is said that there was an occasion when he took off his shirt to get ready to go for a bath. 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah happened to cast a glance at the bright tint and healthy look of his body. The spontaneous remark he made was: 'Until this day, I have never seen a body as handsome as this!' No sooner did these words escape his mouth, an instant high temperature seized Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Ḥunayf رضي الله عنه. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was informed about it, the treatment he suggested was that 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah should make Wuḍū', collect the water from Wuḍū' in some utensil, and let this water be poured on the body of Sahl ibn Ḥunayf. When it was done as ordered, the temperature dropped down immediately. He became fully fit, and left on the expedition he was going with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, following this event, also gave a gentle warning to 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah by telling him:

علام يقتل احدكم اخاه الا ببركت ان العين حق

'Why would someone kill his brother? (When you saw his body) you could have made a *du'ā*' for *barakah*. It is true that the evil eye leaves its effect.'

This Ḥadīth also tells us that, should someone notice something un-

usual about the person or property of somebody else, let him make *du'ā'* for him that Allah Ta'ālā blesses him with *barakah* in it. According to some narrations, one should say: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (*Māsha' Allāhu lāquw-wata illā billāh* : Whatever Allah will - there is no power but with Him). This removes the effect of the evil eye. This also tells us that, should someone become affected by a person's evil eye, the pouring of water used by that person in washing his face, hands and feet (in Wuḍū') will help eliminate the effect of the evil eye.

Al-Qurṭubī has said that there is a consensus of all 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah among *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* on the truth of the evil eye as affecting and causing harm.

Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, on the one hand, because of the apprehension of the evil eye, or envy, advised his sons that they should not enter all together from one single gate of the city. On the other hand, he considered it necessary to speak out about the reality behind it - the heedlessness towards which in such matters would usually cause many from among the masses to fall easy victims to superstition or baseless scruples. The real fact is that the effect of the evil eye over one's person or property is a kind of mesmerism (or an induced state as in hypnosis, though not necessarily in sleep or pre-set clinical conditions). This would be more like a harmful medicine or food which makes one sick; or, excessive heat or cold which make some diseases show up. The effective measures demonstrated by the evil eye or mesmerism are one of the customary causes which would, through the power of the eye or mind, make its effects manifest. The truth is that they themselves have no real effectiveness of their own. Instead, all universal causes operate under the perfect power, will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. No favourable measures taken against what has been Divinely destined can prove beneficial, nor can the harmfulness of some harmful measure become effective. Therefore, it was said:

وَمَا أَعْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَإِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

And I cannot help you in any way against (the will of) Allah. Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah. In Him I place my trust, and in Him should trust those who trust - 67.

It means: I know that the necessary precautions I have ordered you to take so as to help you remain protected against the evil eye cannot avert the will and intention of Allah Ta'ālā. What works here is but the command of Allah. However, one has been asked to do what is physically possible. Therefore, I have given this advice. But, I place my trust, not on these physical arrangements, but in Allah alone. And it is imperative for everyone that he or she should trust in and rely on Him alone - never placing one's trust in physical and material means.

The reality which Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was talking about became all too visible in this trip as well. By chance it so happened that all measures taken to bring Benjamin back home safely just failed and he was detained in Egypt. As a consequence of which, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام received another severe shock. That the measure taken by him failed, as categorically mentioned in the next verse, had a purpose behind it. It means that this measure failed in terms of the essential objective, that is, the safe return of Benjamin back home - though, the measure taken to keep them protected against the evil eye or envy did succeed, because no such incident showed up during this trip. But, the unforeseen incident Divine destiny had in store for them was a factor not noticed by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, nor could he do anything to counter it. However, despite this visible failure, it was the *barakah* (blessing) of his *tawakkul* (trust) that this second shock turned out to be an antidote for the first one, and resulted in the happy reunion with both his sons, Yūsuf and Benjamin, safely and honourably.

This subject has been taken up in the succeeding verse where it is said that the sons carried out the instructions of their father and entered the city from different gates. When they did so, the desire of their father stood fulfilled - though, this measure taken by him could not avert anything already destined by Allah. But, as for the paternal love and concern of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام for his sons, this he did demonstrate to his heart's content.

Towards the end of the verse, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has been praised in the following words: وَأَنَّهُ لَدُوْعِلْمٍ لِّمَا عَلَّمْنَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (He was a man of knowledge, because We had taught him, but most of the people do not know - 68). It means that his knowledge was not acquired. It did not come from books. Instead, it was directly a Divine gift. Therefore, he did

employ physical means, something legally required, and commendable. But, he did not place his total trust in it. However, the truth is that most of the people do not know the reality behind it. Thus unaware, they would fall in doubts about Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thinking that the employment of these means did not match the station of a prophet.

Some commentators have said that the first word: علم ('ilm : knowledge) means acting in accordance with the dictate of 'ilm (knowledge). The translation in this case will be: "He was a man of action according to the knowledge We gave him". Therefore, he did not place his trust in material means, in fact, it was Allah alone he relied on and trusted in.'

Onwards from here, it was said in verse 69:

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ

And when they came to Yūsuf, he lodged his brother [Benjamin] with himself. He said, "Behold, I am your [lost] brother! So do not grieve for what they have been doing."

According to Tafsīr authority, Qatādah, the arrangement made by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was that two brothers were lodged in one room. This left Benjamin alone. He was asked to stay with him. When alone with him, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام disclosed his identity to his younger brother and told him that he was his real brother, Yūsuf. He comforted him and asked him not to worry about what their brothers have been doing until that time.

Rulings and Points of Guidance

Some injunctions and rulings come out from verses 67 and 68. These are given below:

1. The effect of the evil eye is true. To try to stay safe from it is permissible in Sharī'ah, and is commendable, just as one tries to stay safe from harmful foods and actions.

2. To stay safe from being envied by people, it is correct to conceal from them any special personal blessings and attributes one may have.

3. To employ physical and material means to stay safe from harmful effects is neither against *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah), nor against the stat-

us of prophets.

4. If one person apprehends likely harm or hurt coming to the other person, it is better to let him know about the danger and suggest how to stay safe from it - as done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام.

5. When someone finds some personal excellence or blessing enjoyed by another person appear unusual to him and there be the danger that he may be affected by the evil eye, then, it becomes obligatory (*wājib*) on the beholder that he should, after noticing it, say: بَارَكَ اللهُ (bārakallāh : may Allah bless) or: مَا شَاءَ اللهُ (māshā'Allāh : whatever Allah will), so that the other person remains safe from any possible harm.

6. Employing all possible means to stay safe from the evil eye is permissible. One of them is to seek its treatment through a *du'ā'* (prayer) or *ta'wīdh* (spoken or written words seeking the protection of Allah) - as was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, seeing the weakness of the two sons of Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, allowed him to have them be treated through *ta'wīdh* etc.

7. The ideal approach of a wise Muslim to whatever he does is that he must place his real trust in Allah Ta'ālā to begin with but, at the same time, he should not ignore physical and material means. Let him not fall short in employing whatever permissible means he can possibly assemble together to achieve his purpose - as was done by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم too has taught us to do so. The Sage Rūmī has expressed this prophetic teaching in the following line: *توکل زانوئے اشتر به بند* that is, 'Tie the leg of your camel and trust in Allah'.

This is how prophets place their trust in Allah, and this was the blessed way of our Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم.

8. A question arises here that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made efforts to call his younger brother, even insisted on it. And when he came, he even disclosed his identity before him. But, he neither thought of calling his father, nor took any steps to inform him about his well-being while in Egypt. The reason for this is the same as described earlier. There is no doubt that he did have many opportunities during those forty years when he could have sent a message to his father about himself. But,

whatever happened in this matter was Divine decree communicated through the medium of *Wahy* (revelation). Allah Ta'ālā would have not given him the permission to tell his father about himself - because he was yet to be tested once again through his separation from his son, Benjamin. It was to complete this Divine arrangement that all these situations were created.

Verses 70 - 76

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السَّقَايَةَ فِي رُحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ
 أَيُّهَا الْعَبِيرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسُرِقُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالُوا وَاقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقِدُونَ
 ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوا نَقْدُ صُوعِ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ
 زَعِيمٌ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا
 سُرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوا فَمَا جزَاؤُهُ، إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالُوا جزَاؤُهُ
 مَنْ وَجَدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جزَاؤُهُ، كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَبَدَأَ
 بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ كَذٰلِكَ
 كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ
 ٥ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَأٍ ٥ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

Later, when he equipped them with their provisions, he placed the bowl in the camel-pack of his brother. Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves." [70] Turning towards them, they said, "What are you missing?" [71] They said, "We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand surety for it." [72]

They said, "We swear by Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to make mischief in the land, nor have we ever been thieves." [73]

They said, "What is the punishment, if you are liars?" [74] They said, "It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers." [75]

So, he started with their bags before the bag of his brother, then, recovered it from the bag of his brother. This is how We planned for Yūsuf. He had no right to take his brother according to the law of the king, unless Allah so willed. We elevate in ranks whomso We will. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable. [76]

Commentary

The present verses describe how Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام arranged to have his real brother, Benjamin, stay on with him. All brothers were given grains according to rules. The grains for each brother was loaded on his camel, separately and by name.

In the supply of grain loaded on the camel for Benjamin, a bowl was concealed. This bowl has been called: سِقَايَه (siqāyah) at one place, and: صُوعَ الْمَلِكِ (suwā' al-malik) at another. The word: سِقَايَه (siqāyah) means a bowl used to drink water from, and: صُوعَ (suwā') too is a utensil similar to it. That it has been attributed to 'malik' or king shows the additional feature that this bowl had some special value or status. According to some narrations, it was made of a precious stone similar to emerald. Others say that it was made of gold, or silver. However, this bowl hidden in Benjamin's baggage was fairly precious besides having some special connection with the king of Egypt - whether he used it himself, or had it declared to be the official measure of grains.

In the second sentence of verse 70, it is said:

ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتْهَا الْعِيرُ إِنَّكُمْ لَسِرْفُونَ

Then, an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves."

Here, the word: ثُمَّ (thumma : translated as 'then') shows that this public announcement was not made instantly. Instead, a temporary delay was allowed for the caravan to leave. The announcement was made after that to offset the likelihood of anyone sensing a foul play. After all, this proclaimer identified the caravan of the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf as the thieves.

Verse 71 carries the response of the accused: قَالُوا وَاقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْعَدُونَ , that is, 'the brothers of Yūsuf turned to the announcer, as if protesting

on being made into thieves, and asked him to say what is it that you seem to have lost.' The answer given by the announcers was:

قَالُوا نَفَقْدُ صَوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ

We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand a surety for it.

The question which emerges here is: Why did Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام opt for this excuse to detain Benjamin with him, specially when he knew that his separation was already shocking for his father. Now, how could he bear by giving him another shock by detaining his other brother?

The other question which arises here is far more important because it involves things like accusing innocent brothers of theft and concealing something in their baggage secretly to cause them disgrace later. These are impermissible acts. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah. It is difficult to visualize how would he have gone along with them.

Some commentators, such as al-Qurṭubī and others, have stated: When Benjamin recognized Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and was at peace, he requested his brother not to send him back along with his brothers. Instead, he pleaded, he should let him stay with him. First, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made the excuse that his staying behind will shock their father. Then, he had no way of making him stay with him other than that blame him of theft, arrest him for it and thus keep him with him. Benjamin was so disgusted with the ways of his brothers that he was ready to go through all this.

But, even if this event were taken as correct, the heart-break caused for his father, the disgrace inflicted on all his brothers and dubbing them as thieves cannot become permissible simply because of the pleasure of Benjamin. That some commentators have interpreted the charge of theft levelled on them by the announcer as being without the knowledge and permission of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is not valid. This is a claim without any proof and, given the anatomy of the event, incoherent too. Similar is the case of another interpretation where it has been stated that these brothers stole Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his father, and sold him, therefore, they were called 'thieves.' This too is a long-drawn explanation.

Therefore, the correct answer to these questions is what has been given by al-Qurṭubī and Maḏharī. They have said: Whatever has been done and said in this connection was neither the outcome of Benjamin's wish, nor that of the initiative of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام himself. Instead of all that, all these happenings were the manifestation of the infinite wisdom of Allah alone under whose command they came to be what they were and being completed through them was the process of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. A hint towards this answer appears in this verse (76) of the Qur'an itself which says: كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ : 'This is how We planned for Yūsuf (to detain his brother).'

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has very clearly attributed this excuse and plan to Himself. So, when all these things took shape as Divinely commanded, calling them impermissible becomes meaningless. They would be like the incident of the dismantling of the boat and the killing of the boy in the event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā and Al-Khaḏir عليهم السلام. Obviously, these were sins, therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام registered his disapproval of them. But, al-Khaḏir عليه السلام was doing all this with Divine assent and permission under particularly expedient considerations, therefore, he was not committing any sin.

In verse 73, it was said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَّا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سُرِقِينَ , that is, when the royal announcer accused the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf of theft, they said that responsible people of the state know them and know that they had not come to create any disorder in the country, nor have they ever been thieves.

In verse 74, it was said: قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُۥٓ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ كٰذِبِيْنَ , that is, the royal staff said to them: If it stood proved that they were liars, what do they suggest should be the punishment for the theft? The answer given was: قَالُوْا جَزَاؤُهُۥٓ مَنْ وُجِدَ فِيْ رَحْلِهٖ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُۥٓ ط كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ , that is, the brothers of Yūsuf said: 'It's punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.'

The sense of the statement is that the punishment for theft in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام allowed the person whose property had been stolen to take the thief as his slave. Thus, the state functionaries made the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf to tell them the punishment of a thief as in Jacobian law and thereby had them committed to hand over

Benyamin to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام according to their own decision following the recovery of the stolen goods from Benyamin's baggage.

Said in verse 75 was: **فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ**, that is, to cover up the real plan, the state officials first searched through the baggage of all brothers. They did not open Benyamin's baggage first lest that causes any doubts.

Then, as said in the first sentence of the next verse (76): **ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ**, Benyamin's baggage was opened up last of all and recovered from it was the 'bowl of the king.' At that sight, all brothers were put to shame. They started chiding Benyamin for having disgraced them.

After that, it was said: **كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ ط مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أِحَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ**, that is, 'this is how We planned for Yūsuf.' He could have not arrested his brother under the Egyptian Imperial Law because, according to their law of theft, there was a corporal punishment for the thief after which he was to be released against the payment of twice the cost of the stolen property. But, here, he had already found out the law of theft operative in the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. According to this law, detaining Benyamin with him became correct and valid. So, also granted through the wisdom and will of Allah Ta'ālā was this wish of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

Said in the last sentence of the verse is: **نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ ط وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ** (We elevate in ranks whomso We will [as, in this event, the ranks of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were elevated over his brothers]. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable).

It means that Allah has given precedence to some over others in terms of knowledge. Take the highest of the high in knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable than him. And if there is someone with a knowledge which is superior to the knowledge of the best among the creation of Allah, then, we have the *Ilm* of Allah *jalla thanā'uh* which is the highest of all for ever.

Rulings and points of guidance

Some injunctions and rulings deduced from the present verses are given below:

1. The statement: **وَلَمَن جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ** (and whoever brings it back shall

deserve a camel-load) in verse 72 proves that it is valid to make a general announcement that a particular award or remuneration will be paid to anyone who performs a particular act. This is very much like the current custom of announcing rewards for the arrest of absconding criminals or for the return of lost properties. Though, this form of transaction does not fall under the juristic definition of *Ijārah* (hiring), but, in the light of this verse, the justification for this also stands proved. (Qurṭubī)

2. The words: **أَنَا بِهِ رَعِيمٌ** (and I stand surety for it) appearing at the end of verse 72 tell us that one person can become the guarantor of financial rights on behalf of another person. The related ruling, according to the majority of Muslim jurists, provides that the creditor has the authority to recover his property from the person legally in debt, or from the guarantor, as he chooses. However, if it is recovered from the guarantor, the guarantor would have the right to recover from the person legally in debt whatever cash or property has been taken from him. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: **كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ** (This is how We planned for Yūsuf) in verse 76 tells us that it is permissible, for a valid reason recognized by Shari'ah, to change the form of a transaction in a way that it brings a change in its legal status. According to the terminology of the *fuqahā'* (jurists) it is called 'Ḥīlah Shar'īyah' (i.e. a lawful device to avoid a real hardship). However, the condition is that such an action should not cause the invalidation of the injunctions of the Shari'ah. If so, all such devices are, by the consensus of Muslim jurists, Ḥarām and unlawful - for example, finding an excuse to avoid paying Zakāh, or to embark on an unnecessary journey before or during Ramādān simply to seek an excuse for not fasting. This is universally Ḥarām. The hunt for such excuses and devices has brought Divine punishment on some nations, and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has prohibited the use of such stratagems. The entire Muslim Ummah agrees that they are Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Acting upon them does not go on to make whatever is done as permissible. In fact, what falls on the doer is a two-fold sin - firstly, that of the original impermissible act; secondly, that of the impermissible device which amounts, in a way, to cheating Allah and His Rasūl. That all such *hiyal* or stratagems are impermissible has been proved by Imām Al-Bukhārī in his Kitāb al-Ḥiyal.

Verses 77 - 82

قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ
 وَلَمْ يُوَدِّعْهَا لَهُمْ ۚ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانًا ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾
 قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ ۚ إِنَّا
 نَرُكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا
 مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ ۚ إِنَّا إِذَا لَطَلْمُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ حَلَصُوا
 نَجِيًّا ۖ قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ
 اللَّهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ ۚ فَلَنْ أْبْرَحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ
 لِيَ أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ ارْجِعُوا إِلَى
 آبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ ۚ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلَّمَنَا وَمَا
 كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَسئَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعَيْرَ الَّتِي
 أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

They said, "If he commits theft, then, a brother of his has committed theft before." So Yūsuf kept it (his reaction) to himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are even worse in position. And Allah knows best of what you allege." [77] They said, "O 'Azīz, he has a father, a very old man. So, take one of us in his place. We see you are a generous man." [78] He said, "God forbid that we keep anyone except the one with whom we have found our thing, otherwise we shall be unjust." [79]

So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation. The oldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges. [80] Go back to your father and say, 'Our father, your son has committed theft, and we do not testify except what we know, and we could not guard against the unseen. [81] And ask (the people of) the town

in which we have been and the caravan with which we have come, and surely we are truthful.” [82]

Commentary

It was stated in the previous verses that, while in Egypt, a royal bowl was concealed in the baggage of Benyamin, the younger brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Then, by recovering it as planned, a charge of theft was levelled against him.

As in the first of the verses cited above, when the stolen property was recovered from Benyamin’s baggage before the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, they were so ashamed that they said in irritation: **إِنْ يُسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ**, that is, if he has committed a theft, it is not much of a surprise, for he had a brother who, like him, had committed a theft before. The sense was that he was not their real brother. He was their step brother. And he had a real brother who had also committed a theft.

On this occasion, the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام accused him too of a theft, which refers to an event which took place during his childhood when the way a conspiracy was hatched here to blame Benyamin for theft, a similar conspiracy was staged against Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام at that time with him being totally unaware of it. As for his brothers, they were fully aware of the fact that he was totally free from this blame. But, being angry with Benyamin on this occasion, they have made out that event too as of theft and have put its blame on his brother, Yūsuf.

What was that event? Reports differ about it. Referring to Muḥammad ibn Ishāq and Tafsīr authority, Mujāhid, Ibn Kathīr has reported that soon after the birth of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, Benyamin was born. This birth of his became the cause of his mother’s death. When both Yūsuf and Benyamin were left without their mother, they were raised by their paternal aunt. Allah Ta’ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from his very childhood with such an attractive personality that whoever saw him became deeply attached to him. His paternal aunt was no exception. She would not let him disappear from her sight at any time. On the other hand, no different was the condition of his father who was very fond of him. But, being a minor child, it was necessary that he be kept under the care of a woman. Therefore, he was put under the care of his

paternal aunt. When he had learnt how to walk, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام thought of having him come to live with him. When he talked to his paternal aunt, she showed her reluctance to let him go. After that, having been under compulsion, she somehow handed Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over to his father, but she did make a plan to take him back. She had an antique waist-band which had come to her as the legacy of Sayyidna Ishāq عليه السلام and was highly valued. Sayyidna Yūsuf's paternal aunt tied this band on his waist underneath his dress.

After he had gone, she spread the news around that her waist-band has been stolen by someone. When searched for, it turned out to be with young Yūsuf. According to the Sharī'ah of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the paternal aunt now had the right to keep him as her slave. When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw that the paternal aunt has become the owner of Yūsuf on the authority of the religious law of the land, he handed young Yūsuf over to her. Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام kept living with her as long as she was alive.

This was the event in which the blame of theft was imputed to Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام following which the truth came to light and everybody found that he was free of even the least doubt of theft. It was the love of his paternal aunt for him that had made her conspire to keep him. The brothers knew this truth all too well. Given this reason, it did not behove them that they would attribute theft to him. But, of the series of excesses inflicted on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام by his brothers, this too was the last.

Now in the second sentence of the first verse (77) it was said: فَاسْرَهَا فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ وَكَمْ يُبْدِيهَا لَهُمْ that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard what his brothers had to say and kept it in his heart for they still seemed to be after him and were now blaming him for theft. But, he kept his reaction to himself and did not let his brothers know that he had heard what they had said and was affected by it in any way.

Said in the next and last sentence of the verse was: قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ , that is, 'Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said (in his heart): 'You are even worse in position (as you accuse your brother of theft, falsely and knowingly). And Allah knows best of what you allege (whether what you are saying is true or false).' The first sentence has been uttered in the heart. The other sentence may possibly have been said publicly as his re-

sponse to what his brothers had said.

In verse 78, it was said: قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ It means when the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) realized that nothing seems to be working here and they have no option left but to leave Benjamin behind, they started flattering the 'Azīz of Miṣr. They told him that Benjamin's father was very old and weak (his separation will be unbearable for him). Therefore, they requested him that he should detain anyone from among them, in lieu of him. They also told him that they were making that request to him in the hope that he, as they feel, appears to be a very generous person - or, he has been generous to them earlier too.

The response of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) appears in verse 79 as: قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَن أُنَاقِلَهُمْ لِأَنَّ نَأْتِخِدَ إِلَّا مِنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَظَالِمُونَ that is, he gave his reply to their request according to the regulations followed in his country by telling them that they were not authorized to detain anyone they wished. In fact, if they were to arrest someone other than the person from whose possession the lost property has been recovered, then, according to their own *fatwā* and ruling, they would be accused of being unjust.

The reason he gave was that they had themselves said that 'he, in whose baggage the stolen property is found, shall himself be the punishment.'

In verse 80, it was said: فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْسَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا (So when they lost hope in him, they went aside for consultation).

After that, the primary statement of the oldest brother which begins with the words: قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ (The oldest of them said) is continued till the end of verse 80. The statement was: "Do you not know that your father had taken pledge from you in the name of Allah, while you had defaulted earlier in the case of Yūsuf. So, I shall never leave this land unless my father permits me (to return) or Allah decides about me. And He is the best of all judges."

This is the statement of the oldest brother. Some commentators identify him as being Yahūda (Judah) - and he was, though not the oldest in age, but was certainly the eldest in knowledge and merit. Other commentators say that he is Ruebel (Rueben) who is the oldest in age and he

was the one who had suggested that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام should not be killed. Still others have said that this oldest brother was Shamūn who was known to be the eldest in power and rank.

Then, in verse 81, it was said: *إِرْجِعُوا إِلَىٰ آبَائِكُمْ*, that is, the oldest brother said: I am going to stay here. You all go back to your father and tell him that his son has committed a theft, and that whatever we are saying is what we have seen with our own eyes, and that the stolen property was recovered from his baggage before us.

As for the last sentence of verse 81: *وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ* (and we could not guard against the unseen), it means that 'the pledge we had given to you to bring back Benjamin definitely was given in terms of outwardly visible circumstances. We did not know what we did not see and control - thus how could we know that he would steal and be arrested for it leaving us helpless in this matter.' The sentence could also mean that 'we did our best to keep Benjamin protected seeing that he does nothing which would put him in trouble. But, this effort of ours could be within the limits of our outwardly visible circumstances. That this thing would happen to him, in absence of our vigilance and knowledge, was something we did not know about.'

Since the brothers of Yūsuf had deceived their father earlier, and knew that their father would never be satisfied with their statement mentioned above, and he would never believe in what they would tell him, therefore, for additional emphasis, they said: '(and if you do not believe us), you can check with the people of the town in which we have been (that is, the city in Egypt). And you can also check with the caravan which has come from Egypt to Can'aan with us. And we are true in what we are saying.'

At this point, the question - why would Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام bear by such a heartless treatment with his father - reappears in Tafsīr Mazharī. This question has also been taken up earlier in our comments on this Sūrah where it has been said that it was surprising that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did not tell his father about himself, then detained his brother too, then his brothers made repeated visits to Egypt and he never told them about himself nor sent some message to his father. Tafsīr Mazharī answers all these doubts by saying:

إِنَّهُ عَمِلَ ذَلِكَ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى لِيَزِيدَ فِي بَلَاءِ يَعْقُوبَ

That is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did that with the command of Allah Ta'ālā so that (the cycle of) the test and trial of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام reaches its completion.

Rules and Principles

1. The statement: وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلِمْنَا (and we do not testify except what we know) appearing in verse 82 proves that human transactions and contracts are based on apparently known circumstances. They do not cover things which no one knows. The pledge to protect Benyamin which the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had given to their father was related to things which were in their control. As for the incident that he was accused of theft and arrested for it, it was a different matter which does not affect the pledge as such.

2. Deduced from the same verse, there is another ruling which appears in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī. It says: This sentence proves that testimony depends on knowledge. No matter how this knowledge is acquired, testimony can be given in accordance with it. Therefore, the way an event can be testified by having seen it with one's own eyes, similarly, it can be testified by having heard it from someone reliable and worthy of trust - subject to the condition that he does not conceal the truth of the matter, instead, states plainly that he has not seen it personally but has heard it from such and such reliable person. It is on the basis of this principle that Malikī jurists have ruled the testimony of a blind person as permissible.

3. The present verses also prove that should a person be true, right and proper, but the situation is such that others may suspect him to be otherwise, then, he must remove that shadow of doubt so that those who see him do not fall into the sin of (unwarranted) suspicion - as in this event relating to Benyamin, there came up an occasion of accusation and doubt because of a past event in the life of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Therefore, in order to make things clear, the testimony of the people of the city, and the caravan, was presented in support.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by his personal conduct, affirmed it positively. On his way back from his Masjid, when he was going through an alley with Ummul-Mu'minīn, Sayyidah Ṣafīyyah رضي الله عنها,

he noticed two persons appearing at the head of the alley. They were still at some distance, but the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم told them that he was with Ṣafīyyah bint Ḥuyayy. They said: Yā Rasūl Allah, can anyone have any suspicion about you? Then, he said: Yes, the Shayṭān keeps seeping through the human body, may be it drops a doubt in somebody's heart. (Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) [Qurṭubī]

Verses 83 - 87

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أُمَّرًا ۖ فَصَبِّرْ جَمِيلًا ۗ عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ
يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ
يَأْسَفِي عَلَى يُونُسَ ۖ وَأَيُّضْتُ عَيْنَهُ مِنَ الْحُزَنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ﴿٨٤﴾
قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَوْنَا تَذَكَّرُ يُونُسَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ
الْهَالِكِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ يَبْنِي أَذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُونُسَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا
تَأْيِسُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُ مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ
الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

He (Ya'qūb) said, "Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best. Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, All-Wise." [83]

And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yūsuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief). [84] They said, "By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf until you collapse or perish." [85] He said, "I complain of my anguish and sorrow to none but Allah, and I know from Allah what you do not know. [86] O my sons, go and search for Yūsuf and his brother, and do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah. In fact, only the infidels lose hope in the mercy of Allah." [87]

Commentary

After the detention of young Benjamin in Egypt, his brothers re-

turned home and told Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام about what had happened there. They tried to assure him that they were telling the truth which can be confirmed from the people in Egypt, as well as, from the caravan they came with from Egypt to Can'aan. From the later, he could also ascertain that Benyamin's theft was apprehended and he was arrested for it. Since Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام knew that they had lied to him earlier in the case of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, therefore, he could not believe them this time too - though, in fact, this time they had told him no lie. And therefore, on this occasion as well, he said the same thing he had said at the time of the disappearance of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام: **بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ: السَّيِّئَاتُ** ("Rather, your inner desires have seduced you to something. So, patience is best), that is, this statement of yours is not correct. You have made it up yourself. But, even now, it is patience I choose to observe. Only that would be the best for me.'

From this Al-Qurtubī has deduced: In whatever a Mujtahid says with his Ijtihād, there can be an error as well, so much so that it is possible that a prophet too, when he says something on the basis of his own Ijtihād, could make an error - though, only initially. This is what happened in this case when he declared the truth of his sons to be a lie. But, prophets have a special status and a personal exclusivity on the basis of which they are alerted over the mistake by the will of Allah, and removed away from it, and finally they find truth.

Here, it is also possible that by his comment about 'manuvering something' mentioned above Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام intended to refer to what was made up in Egypt whereby Benyamin was arrested under a false charge of theft only to achieve a particular purpose, and the ultimate result of which was to unfold later in a better form. There may, as well, be a hint toward it in the next sentence of this verse where it is said: **عَسَى اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا** (Hopefully, Allah may bring them all together).

In short, the outcome of the refusal of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام to accept the statement of his sons this time was that there was no theft really, nor was Benyamin arrested, and the truth of the matter was to be found elsewhere. This was true in its place. But, whatever was said by his sons, as they knew it, was not wrong either.

Said in verse 84 was: **وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا سَفَى عَلَى يُونُسَ وَأَبْيَضْتُ عَيْنُهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهَوَّ**

كَظِيمٌ : 'And he turned away from them and said, "How sad I am about Yusuf" and his eyes turned white with sorrow and he was suppressing (his anger and grief).' It means that, after this second shock, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام closed this chapter of talking to his sons about this matter, and turned to his Lord with his plaint before Him as to how sad he was about Yūsuf. What happened was that this constant crying at his separation from Yusuf caused his eyes to turn white from sorrow. The sense is that he lost his eyesight, or it became very weak. Tafsīr authority, Muqātil has said that this state of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام continued for six years when his eyesight had nearly gone. In the last sentence of the verse, it was said: **فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ** which can be explained by saying that he became silent, speechless, unable to share his pain with anyone else. The word: **كَظِيمٌ** (*kaẓīm*) has been derived from: **كَظَمَ** (*kaẓm*) which means to be choked up or filled. Thus, the sense would be that his heart was all filled up with sorrow and his tongue was tied for he would not talk about his grief to anyone.

Therefore, the word: **كَظَمَ** (*kaẓm*) is also taken in the sense of suppressing anger - in a way that anger, despite having one's heart filled with it, does not become the motivating factor of doing something, by word of mouth or movement of hand, as demanded by one's anger. It appears in Ḥadīth:

وَمَنْ يَكْظِمُ الْغَيْظَ يَأْجُرْهُ اللَّهُ

That is, 'whoever suppresses his anger (and does not act as it demands despite having the ability to do so), Allah will reward him.'

It is said in another Ḥadīth that, on the day of Resurrection (Al-Ḥashr), Allah Ta'ālā will bring such people before the whole multitude of people and would give them the option to take whichever of the blessings of Jannah (Paradise) they liked.

At this point, Imām Ibn Jarīr has reported a Ḥadīth according to which, at a time of distress, reciting or prompting to recite: **إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ** (*Innā lil-lāhi wa innā ilaihi rāji'ūn* : To Allah we belong and to Him we are to return) is one of the distinguishing characteristics of this Ummah, and this Kalimah is highly effective in delivering one from the suffering of sorrow. We can understand why it has been called the distin-

guishing characteristic of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ since Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام, when choked with deadly sorrow and shock, did not say this Kalimah, instead, he said: يَا سَفَىٰ عَلَىٰ يُوْسُفَ (How sad I am about Yūsuf). In his Shu‘abul-‘Imān, Al-Baihaqī has also reported this Ḥadīth as based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه.

Why Was Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام So Deeply Attached To Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام ?

At this stage, we notice that Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام had extraordinary love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. He was so affected by his disappearance that, during this whole period of his separation from him which has been reported to be forty years in some narrations while eighty in some others, he kept weeping continuously, so much so that he lost his eyesight. Apparently, this does not measure upto his spiritual majesty as a prophet that he would love his children so much and that much. On the other hand, the Holy Qur‘ān says: ‘Your wealth and your children are a *fitnah* (trial) - 64:15.’ And, as for the spiritual majesty of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all, the Holy Qur‘ān has this to say: إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذَكَرَى الدَّارِ : that is, ‘We have made them special to specialize in the remembrance of the Home (of ‘Ākhirah) - 38:46.’ Mālik ibn Dīnār رحمه الله تعالى explains its meaning by saying that: We have taken out the love of *dunyā* from their hearts and, in its place, We have filled their hearts with nothing but the love of ‘Ākhirah. Their only criterion, in taking or leaving something, is ‘Ākhirah.

From the sum-total of what has been said here, there rises a difficulty before us as to how could Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام allow himself to be so consumed with his love for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and how could that be explained as correct.

In his Tafsīr (Mazharī), Qādī Thanā‘ullah Pānīpatī رحمه الله تعالى has, with reference to this difficulty, reported a special research of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the gist of which is that, no doubt, the love of *dunyā* and its enjoyment is blameworthy. Categorical statements of the Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth prove that. But, the love of things of *dunyā* which relate to ‘Ākhirah is, in reality, included under the love of ‘Ākhirah. The excellences of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were not limited to his physical beauty alone. Also to be taken into account are his prophetic chastity and high morals. So, given an over-all view, love for him was not the love of what worldly life

has to offer. In fact and in reality, this was nothing but the love for 'Akhirah itself.

In the comment quoted above, it is worth noticing that this love, though not the love of *dunyā* really, yet it did have a certain worldly touch. For this reason, this love became the source of the trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, for which he had to undergo the unbearable shock of a forty-year separation from him. Then, the chains of this event, from the beginning to the end, show that things kept taking shape as determined by Allah Ta'ālā which made this shock stretch longer and longer. Otherwise, at the very start of the event, it would have not been possible for a father who loved his son so intensely that he would simply listen to what his other sons told him and elect to keep sitting home and not do anything about it. In fact, if he had immediately visited the site of the incident and made necessary inquiries and investigations, he would have known the truth of the matter on the spot. But, things happened in a way as Allah would have them, so it just did not occur to him. After that, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was stopped, through revelation, from sending to his father any news about himself - to the limit that he took no initiative in this direction even after his ascension to power in Egypt. Then, more trying were events which happened concerning the repeated visits of his brothers to Egypt. Even at that time, he said nothing to his brothers about himself, nor did he try to send some note of information to his father. Instead of doing all that, he detained yet another brother through a secret plan, thus inflicting yet another shock on his father. All these actions cannot possibly issue forth from a great prophet such as Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام unless and until he had not been prohibited from doing so through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). Therefore, al-Qurṭubī and other commentators have declared this entire range of actions taken by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام as directly prompted by Divine revelation. The Qur'ānic statement: كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ (This is how We planned for Yūsuf - 76) also indicates in this direction. Allah knows best.

When the sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام saw the extreme suffering and patience of their father, they said: قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ تَفْتُوْا تَذَكَّرُ يُوْسُفَ (By God, you will not stop remembering Yūsuf ...), meaning thereby that every shock ends, after all, and so does every sorrow. The passage of days in life makes one forget them. But, he continues to be where he was, even after

ﷺ proves that it is Wājib on every Muslim when faced with distress or pain in the case of his person, children, family or property that he or she should seek redress from it by resorting to patience (*ṣabr*) at its best and by becoming resigned to and content with the decree of Allah Ta'ālā - and follow the example of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ and other blessed prophets.

The Merit of Swallowing Anger and Pain

Imām Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى has said: Out of what one swallows, two are the best in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā: (1) To do Ṣabr on pain or distress, and (2) to swallow anger.

Complaining of pain before everyone

In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: مَنْ بَثَّ لِمِ يَصْبِرُ , that is, one who goes about narrating his distress before everyone has not observed Ṣabr.

The Reward for Ṣabr

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said: Allah Ta'ālā conferred upon Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ the reward of Shuhadā' (martyrs in the way of Allah) for this Ṣabr. And, in this Ummah too, whoever observes Ṣabr while in distress shall receive a similar reward.

The Reason why Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was put to Trial

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given a reason for this severe trial and test of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ as it appears in some narrations. It is said that one day Sayyidnā Ya'qūb ﷺ was doing his Tahajjud prayers and Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ was sleeping before him. All of a sudden a sound of snoring by Sayyidnā Yūsuf ﷺ caused his attention to be diverted to him. This happened twice, and thrice. Then, Allah Ta'ālā said to His angels: Look, this is My friend, and My favoured servant, see how he, in the middle of his address and approach to Me, turns his attention to someone other than Me. By My Honour and Power, I shall take these two eyes of his out, the eyes with which he has turned his attention to someone other than Me, and the one to whom he has turned his attention, I shall separate from him for a long time.

How About Looking at Someone During Ṣalāh?

Therefore, in a Ḥadīth of Al-Bukhārī narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ, it appears that she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'How is it to look else-

where during Ṣalāh?' In reply, he said: 'Through it, the Shayṭān snatches the Ṣalāh of a servant of Allah away from him.' May Allah *subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā* keep us protected.

Verses 88 - 92

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا بِبِضَاعَةٍ
مُزْجَجَةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾
﴿٨٨﴾ قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾
قَالُوا إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ ۗ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي ۖ قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْنَا ۗ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾
قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَتَرْنَاكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَخَطِئِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ
عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ ۗ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

So, when they came to him (Yūsuf), they said, "O 'Azīz, distress has befallen us and our family, and we have brought a capital of very little worth. So, give us the full measure and be charitable to us. Surely, Allah rewards the charitable." [88] He said, "Do you know what you did to Yūsuf and his brother when you acted ignorant?" [89]

They said, "Are you really the Yūsuf?" He said, "I am Yūsuf, and this is my brother. Allah has been very kind to us. Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers." [90]

They said, "By God, Allah has given to you preference over us, and we were surely in error." [91]

He said, "No reproach upon you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful." [92]

Commentary

Mentioned in the verses appearing above is the remaining part of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers. It tells us that Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام asked his sons to go and search Yūsuf and his brother. So they travelled to Egypt for a third time - because they knew that Benya-

min was there and they had to try to get him released first. As for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, though his presence in Egypt was not known to them but, when the time comes for something to happen, human plans too start falling in place, unconsciously and without an intentional effort. This is confirmed by a Ḥadīth which says: When Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He makes its causes get together automatically. Therefore, to search Yūsuf too, the very travel to Egypt was appropriate, though taken up unconsciously. Then, they needed foodgrains, after all. And yet another factor was that they hoped to see the 'Azīz of Miṣr on the pretext of their request for foodgrains, when they could put forward their plea for the release of Benjamin.

The first verse (88) begins with the words: *فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا* (And when they came to him, they said...). It means: When the brothers of Yūsuf reached Egypt as ordered by their father and met the 'Azīz of Miṣr, they talked to him in a flattering tone. Presenting their need and helplessness, they told the 'Azīz that they and their family were suffering because of the famine, so much so that they did not have even adequate funds to purchase foodgrains. Compelled by circumstance, they had brought a capital which was not good enough for that purpose. Thus, their request was that, given his generosity, he should accept whatever they had and give them the full measure of grains as is usually given against things of good value. Not being their right in any way, they pleaded that the grains should be given to them as if given in charity because 'Allah rewards the charitable.'

What was this 'capital of very little worth'? The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have not clarified it. The sayings of the commentators differ. Some say that they were bad *dirhams* which were not acceptable in the open market. Others say that this comprised of household articles. This expression - 'capital of very little worth' - is a translation of the meaning of the word: *مُرْجَاتِي* (*'muzjātin'*) which really means something which does not move on its own, but has to be moved by someone else forcefully.

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام heard these submissive words from his brothers and saw their broken-down condition, he was naturally coming to a point where he would have no option but to disclose the truth as it was. And the drift of events was showing that the restriction placed by Allah Ta'ālā on Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that he would not disclose the truth

of the matter about himself was not going to be there anymore for the time had come close when it would be taken back. Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, it has been reported in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī and Maḏharī that Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام had, on this occasion, sent a letter in writing and had addressed it to the ‘Azīz of Miṣr. The letter said:

"From Ya‘qūb Ṣafī Allah Ibn Ishāq Dhabiḥ Allah Ibn Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah To the ‘Azīz of Miṣr. After offering praise to Allah: Our entire family is known for hardships and trials. My grandfather, Ibrāhīm Khalīl Allah was tested through the fire of Nimrud. Then, my father, Ishāq was put to a hard test. Then, I was tested through a son of mine whom I held very dear - to the limit that I lost my eyesight when separated from him. After that, there was his younger brother, a source of comfort for me in my grief, whom you arrested on a charge of theft. And let me tell you that we are the progeny of prophets. Never have we committed a theft, nor has there ever been a thief among our children. And peace on you!"

When Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام read this letter, he trembled and broke into tears and decided to let his secret out. To start with, he first asked his brothers if they remembered what they had done with Yūsuf and his brother at a time when they were ignorant, unable to distinguish between good and bad, and quite neglectful of acting with foresight.

When his brothers heard his question, they were dumbfounded. What has the ‘Azīz of Miṣr got to do with the story of Yūsuf? Then, they recollected the dream seen by young Yūsuf the interpretation of which was that he would achieve some high rank and they would have to bow down before him. Could it be that this ‘Azīz of Miṣr is none else but Yūsuf himself? Then, as they exerted and deliberated a little more, they recognized him by some signs. Still, to confirm it further, they asked him: *ءَأَنْتَ لَأَنْتَ يُونُسُ؟* (Are you really the Yūsuf?). Then, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said: ‘Yes, I am Yūsuf and this is my brother, Benyamin.’ He supplemented his statement by adding the name of his brother so that they become certain about him. In addition to that, he also wanted them to become sure right then about the total success of their mission, that is, the two they had started to search for were there before them, both at the same time and place. Then, he said: *قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا ط إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ*, that is, ‘Allah has been very kind to us [that he first gave both of us two qualities, those of patience (*Ṣabr*) and the fear of Allah

(*Taqwā*), qualities which are a key to success and a security shield against every hardship. Then He changed hardship into comfort, separation into union, and our paucity of wealth and recognition into its total abundance. 'Surely, whoever fears Allah [and abstains from sins] and observes patience [while in distress], then Allah does not waste the reward of the good- doers [like these].'

Now the brothers of Yūsuf had no choice left with them but to confess the wrongs they had done and admit the grace and excellence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. So, in one voice, they all said: تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ اٰتٰنَا اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنْ كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِيْنَ: 'By God, Allah has given to you preference over us [which you deserved], and we were surely in error [in whatever we did - and so, forgive us in the name of Allah].' To this in reply, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام said what a prophet of his stature would say: لَا تَتْرِيْبٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (No reproach upon you), that is, 'not to say much about taking a revenge of your injustices against me, on this day, I would not even blame you for it.' This much was the good news of forgiveness from his side which he let them hear. Then, he prayed for them before Allah Ta'ālā: يَغْفِرُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ اَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيْمِيْنَ: (May Allah forgive you, and He is the most merciful of all the merciful).

After that, he said: اِذْهَبُوْا بِمِصْبِيْ هٰذَا فَاَلْقُوْهُ عَلٰى وَجْهِ اَبِيْ يٰٓاْتِ بِصِيْرًا وَاَنْتُمْ بِاَهْلِكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ: 'Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man [which will enable him to come here]. And bring to me all your family [so that all of us can get together, be happy, enjoy the blessings given by Allah and be grateful to Him].'

Points of Guidance

We come to know of many injunctions, rulings, as well as guidelines, which are good to have in life:

1. First of all, the use of the expression: تَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا (*taṣaddaq 'alainā*: be charitable to us) in verse 88 raises a question as to how would Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) become Ḥalāl (lawful) for the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who are the progeny of prophets? Secondly, even if Ṣadaqah could be taken as Ḥalāl, how would the act of asking for it become Ḥalāl? Even if the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were no prophets, he himself certainly was. Why did he not warn them against this error?

A clear enough answer to this is that the word Ṣadaqah used here does not mean the real Ṣadaqah. In fact, the request for a concession in

the transaction has been given the name of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt - because, they had just never asked for a free supply of grains. Instead, they had offered 'a capital of very little worth.' And the essence of their request was that this 'capital of very little worth' be accepted in the spirit of remission given in such hard circumstances. Moreover, it is also possible that the unlawfulness of Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity) for the progeny of prophets may be exclusive to the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - as held by Mujāhid from among Tafsīr authorities. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

2. The last sentence of verse 88: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ (Surely, Allah rewards the charitable) tells us that Allah Ta'ālā gives good return to those who spend in Ṣadaqah and Khairāt (charity). But, there are details to it, that is, there is a general return for Ṣadaqah and Khairāt which is received by everyone, believer or disbeliever, right here in the present world. That return comes in the form of the removal of disasters and hardships. Then, there is the return which is particularly attached to the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter), that is, the Jannah (Paradise). That is for the believers only. Since the addressee here is the 'Azīz of Miṣr - and the brothers of Yūsuf did not know at that time whether or not he was a believer - therefore, they opted for a sentence which was general, and which included the return of the present world, as well as that of the Hereafter. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Besides, this being an address to the 'Azīz of Miṣr, the occasion obviously demanded that the address in this sentence should have been direct, as: 'Allah will give you the best of return.' But, as his being a believer was not known, therefore, the form of address used was general, and any special return for him was not mentioned. (Qurṭubī)

3. The sentence: قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا (Allah has been very kind to us) in verse 90 proves that, should one be in some distress or hardship, then, Allah Ta'ālā delivers one from these and showers him or her with his blessings, now, after that, such a person should not talk about his past hardships anymore. Instead, one should remember nothing but this blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā which one now has. After having been delivered from distress, and after having been blessed by Divine rewards, to continue crying over past hardships is ingratitude. Such an ungrateful person has been called: كَنُودٌ (*kanūd*) in the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (Truly, man is to his Lord, ungrateful - 100:6). The word, *kanūd*, refers to a person who does not remember favours received, but does remember hardships faced.

Therefore, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام made no mention at this time of the hardships he had to undergo for a long time due to the actions of his brothers. Instead of that, he mentioned the blessings of Allah only.

4. The last sentence: إِنَّهُ، مَنْ يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ (Surely, whoever fears Allah and observes patience, then Allah does not waste the reward of the good-doers) in verse 90 tells us that Taqwā, that is, abstention from sins, and Ṣabr, that is, patience and fortitude, are two qualities which deliver one from every disaster and distress. The Holy Qur'ān has said at several places that a person's prosperity and success depend on these two qualities, for example: وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا , that is, 'if you keep patience and fear Allah, their cunning shall not harm you at all - 3:120.'

A surface view of the verse here may suggest that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام is claiming to be God-fearing and patient in the sense that it was because of his Taqwā and Ṣabr that he was blessed with deliverance from difficulties and rewarded with high ranks. But, no one can claim Taqwā for himself. It is prohibited by definite statements in the Holy Qur'ān, for example: فَلَا تَزْكُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى (Therefore do not claim purity for yourself: He knows best who it is that guards against evil - 53:32). But, in reality, there is no claim here. Instead, this is a confession of the blessings and favours of Allah Ta'ālā, for He first gave him the Taufīq of Ṣabr and Taqwā and then, through it, came all blessings from Him.

The declaration: لَا تَرْبِبْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today) in verse 92 has been made from the highest level of good morals whereby the oppressor was not only forgiven, but spared from reproach too.

Verses 93 - 100

أَذْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هَذَا فَالْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا ۗ وَأْتُونِي
بَاهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ ۗ وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ
يُوسُفَ كَوَلَا أَن تَفِنَدُونِ ﴿٩٤﴾ ۗ قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ
﴿٩٥﴾ ۗ فَلَمَّا أُنْجِيَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْفَهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا ۗ قَالَ أَلَمْ
أَقُلْ لَكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا ۗ أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ ۗ قَالُوا يَا بَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْنَا

ذُنُوبِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَطِيئِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ
 الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩٨﴾ فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ أَوْىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبُوهُ وَقَالَ
 ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَرَفَعَ أَبُوهُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ
 وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا ۗ وَقَالَ يَا بْتَ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
 جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا ۗ وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ
 بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي
 لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man. And bring to me all your family." [93]

And when the caravan set out, their father said, "I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile." [94]

They said, "By God, you are still in your old fallacy!" [95]
 So, when came the man with good news, he put it (the shirt) on his face, and he turned into a sighted man. He (Ya'qūb) said, "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?" [96]

They said, 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong.' [97]

He said, "I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. Surely, He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful." [98]

Later, when they came to Yūsuf, he placed his parents near himself and said, "Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace." [99]

And he raised his parents up on the throne, and they all fell before him in prostration. And he said, "My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream. My Lord has made it come true. He favoured me when he released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers. Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." [100]

Commentary

The previous verses about the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام have told us about the time when, by the will of Allah, it was appropriate for him to disclose his secret to his brothers. This he did. His brothers sought his forgiveness. He, not only that he forgave them, did not even choose to admonish them for what they had done to him in the past. In fact, he prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for them. Meeting his father was now his next concern. Given the conditions, he found it better that his father comes to him with the family. But, having come to know that his father had lost his eyesight as a result of his separation from him, that became his first concern. So, he said to his brothers: **إِذْهُمْ أُولُو بِقِيصٍ هَذَا قَالَ قُوَّةٌ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا** (Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man - 93). It is obvious that putting someone's shirt on the face of a person cannot become the physical cause of an eyesight to return. In fact, this was a miracle of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for he, by the will of Allah, knew that once his shirt was put over the face of his father, Allah Ta'ālā will give him his eyesight back.

Tafsīr authorities, Ḍaḥḥāk and Mujāhid have said that this was the inherent quality of that shirt because it was not like ordinary clothes. Instead, it was brought from Paradise for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at the time when he was thrown into the fire naked by Nimrūd. Then, this apparel of Paradise remained preserved with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. After his death, it passed on to Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام. After his death, it came to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. In view of its status as a sacred legacy, he put it inside a tube, sealed it and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it round his neck as a Ta'wīdh (spiritual charm) so that he remains safe against the evil eye. When the brothers of Yūsuf removed the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام to deceive their father and he was thrown into the well without it, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn came, and opening the tube hanging round his neck, took this shirt out from it, and made Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام wear it. Since that time, it remained preserved with him. When needed again, it was Jibra'īl al-Amīn again who advised Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that this shirt was an apparel of Paradise. It had a unique property. If put over the face of a blind person, he becomes sighted. He asked him to send it to his father and he would become a sighted man.

The view of Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī عليه السلام رحمه الله تعالى is that the beauty,

rather the very existence of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, was itself a thing of the Paradise. Therefore, every shirt that touched his body could have this property. (Maẓharī)

Said in the last sentence of verse 93 was: وَأَتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَحْمَعِينَ that is, 'all of you, my brothers, bring your entire family to me.' Though, the real purpose was to have his respected father come to him but, here he did not specifically mention his father, instead, talked about bringing the family - perhaps, because he considered that asking his father to be brought to him was contrary to etiquette. However, he was already certain that the sight of his father would return and there would remain no reason which could stop him from coming to him, rather, he would himself want to honour him with his visit. According to a narration reported by Al-Qurtubī, Yahūdā (Judah) from among the brothers of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام offered to carry this shirt personally - because, it was he who had carried young Yūsuf's shirt smeared with fake blood and which brought many shocks for his father, and now, it should be him again who should carry the shirt in his own hands, so that amends could be made for past injustices.

Verse 94 opens with the words: وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ 'And when the caravan set out' (and had reached barely outside the limits of the city), then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام said (to those around him): 'I sense the scent of Yūsuf if you do not take me to be senile.' According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه there was a travel distance of eight days from the city of Egypt to Can'aan, and according to Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه the distance was eighty *farsakh*, that is, nearly two hundred and fifty miles. Unique is the power of Allah Ta'ālā who, from such a distance, carried all the way to Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, the scent of his son Yūsuf through the shirt of his son Yūsuf. And some thing of wonder it certainly is that this scent, when Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was sitting confined into a well of his own homeland, caused no reaction into the smell buds of his father! Right from here, we learn that no miracle is in the control of a prophet. In fact, a miracle is not even the personal act and action of the prophet. This is directly the act of Allah. When Allah Ta'ālā wills, He makes a miracle manifest itself. And when the Divine will is not there, the nearest of the near recedes into the farthest.

In verse 95, it was said: قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ (They said, 'By God, you are still in your old fallacy!'). It means that those around Sayyidnā

Ya'qūb عليه السلام commented on what he had said by wondering that he still seemed to be engrossed into his old fallacy, that is: 'Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.'

Said in verse 96 is: فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ that is, 'when this man with the good news reached Can'aan' and put the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام over the face of his father, his eyesight returned and he became a sighted man. The man who came with the good news was Yahūda, the same brother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام who had brought his shirt from Egypt.

The last sentence of the verse is: قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (He [Ya'qūb] said, 'Did I not tell you that I know from Allah what you do not know?' - 96) - that Yūsuf is alive and we shall meet again.

Now, when the truth of the matter became clear, the brothers of Yūsuf asked for the forgiveness of their father in a spiritually endearing style by saying: قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ : 'Our father, pray to Allah to forgive us our sins. Surely, we have been wrong - 97.' Thus, it is obvious that a person who prays to Allah Ta'ālā for the forgiveness of their sins would do that himself too.

The reply given by Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was: قَالَ سَوْفَ أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي (I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you ... - 98).

Here, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام has, instead of praying for them instantly, made a promise that he would pray for them soon. Commentators have generally given a reason for this. According to them, his purpose was to pray for them particularly, in peace and with concentration, towards the later part of the night - because the prayer made at that hour is answered specially. This is as it appears in a Ḥadīth in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that, in the last third part of every night, Allah Ta'ālā descends in all His Glory close to the firmament near the Earth, and proclaims: Is there someone who would pray to Me, and I would answer? Is there someone who would seek forgiveness from Me, and I would forgive?

About what has been said in the next verse: فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ (Later, when they came to Yūsuf ... - 99), it appears in some narrations that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had sent with his brothers this time a large supply of clothes and other articles of need all loaded on some two hundred camels, so

that the whole family could make good preparations in anticipation of their visit to Egypt. Thus, all set for the trip, when Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام and his entire family set out for Egypt, their number, according to one narration, was seventy two and, according to the other, it was comprised of ninety three men and women.

On the other side, when came the time for their arrival in Egypt, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and the people of Egypt came out of the city to receive them. With them came four thousand soldiers to present a guard of honour. When these guests reached Egypt and entered the home of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام he lodged his parents with him.

Here, the text refers to 'parents.' - though, the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died during his childhood, but after her death, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام had married Layya, the sister of his late wife. She was, in her capacity as the maternal aunt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, almost like his own mother, and also as the married wife of his father, was deserving of being called as nothing but his mother.*

At the end of verse 99, the statement: وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرًا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ (he said, 'Enter Egypt, God willing, in peace') means that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام asked all his family members to enter Egypt by the will of Allah and without any fear or restriction, the sense being that they were free from usual restrictions placed on travellers who enter another country.

Verse 100 opens with the words: وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (And he raised his parents up on the throne), that is, Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had his parents sit with him on the royal throne.

After that it was said: وَحَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا (and they all fell before him in pro-

*. This interpretation is according to the *riwāyah* where it has been said that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. It is on this basis that the present text of the respected author, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, appears to be contradictory to the relevant text on page 38 of Volume V where the name of Sayyidnā Yūsuf's mother عليها السلام has been given as Rāhīl. But, in reality, there is no authentic *riwāyah* in this connection. *Isrā'īlī riwāyāt* do exist, but they too are contradictory. The author of *Rūh al-Ma'ānī* has himself said that the Jewish chroniclers do not subscribe to the view that the mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام had died at the time of Benyāmin's birth. If this *riwāyah* is given credence, no doubt remains. Then, in this situation, by the words: ورفع ابويه (And he raised his parents up on the throne - 100), the reference would be to the real mother of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Ibn Jarīr and Ibn Kathīr have opted for this as the weightier view. So, commenting on this, Ibn Kathīr has said: وظاهر القرآن (أي ام يوسف عليه السلام) وموت امه (أي ام يوسف) ولم يقم دليل على موت امه (أي ام يوسف عليه السلام) وظاهر القرآن - يدل على حياتها - **Muhammad Taqī Usmānī**.

tration), that is, the parents, and all brothers did *sajdah* before Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه has said that this prostration of gratitude was for Allah Ta‘ālā, and not for Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. Others have said that a Sajdah or Sujūd (prostration) as part of ‘Ibādah (worship) when done for anyone other than Allah has always been forbidden in the Shari‘ah of every prophet. But, the Sajdah of Ta‘zīm (veneration) was permissible in the religious codes of past prophets - which has been prohibited in the Shari‘ah of Islām on the basis that it is a source of Shirk. This is confirmed by Ḥadīth reports from Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that Sajdah (prostration) for anyone other than Allah is not Ḥalāl.

And when both his father and mother, and eleven of his brothers, prostrated before him simultaneously, he remembered the dream he had seen in his childhood, and he said: وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا : 'My father, here is the fulfillment of my early dream,' that 'the sun and the moon and eleven stars are prostrating to me,' and I am grateful that 'my Lord has made it come true.'

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. When his sons requested Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام to pray to Allah for their forgiveness, he said, 'I shall (soon) pray to my Lord to forgive you.' He did not make that *du‘ā* instantly. He delayed it.

One of the reasons given by commentators for this delay is that he first wanted to check with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام whether or not he has forgiven them - because, unless the victim of injustice forgives, there is no forgiveness from Allah either. So, this being the state of affairs, the making of a prayer for forgiveness was not appropriate.

Pointed to here is a matter of sound principle - that no violation of the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-‘Ibād*) gets to be forgiven unless the holder of the right receives his right back, or forgives it - only verbal repentance for it is not enough.

2. According to a narration of Sufyān al-Thawrī رحمه الله تعالى, when Yahūdā brought in the shirt of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and put it over the face of his father, he asked: How is Yūsuf? Yahūdā told him that he was the king of Egypt. Sayyidnā Ya‘qūb عليه السلام said: I am not asking if he is a

prince or a pauper. I am asking how is he in his faith and deed. Then he told him about the qualities of his character and how God-fearing and chaste in conduct he was. This is how the noble prophets love and relate to their children. They are more concerned about the state of their spiritual life than they are with the state of their physical comfort. This is the model every Muslim should follow.

3. According to Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan رحمه الله تعالى, when the carrier of the good news arrived with the shirt of his separated son, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام wished to give him something in reward. But, life was hard, therefore, he apologized that there was no bread baked in the house for seven days and he could not give a material reward. However, he prayed that Allah Ta'ālā makes the agony of death easy on him. Al-Qurṭubī has said that this prayer was the best reward for him.

4. This event also tells us that the giving of a reward to someone who brings a good news is a practice of the blessed prophets. An event relating to Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Malīk رضي الله عنه from among the noble Ṣaḥābah is well known. He had not participated in the battle of Tabūk for which he was reproached and punished - though his repentance was later accepted. When the man with the good news of this acceptance came to him, he gave the dress he was wearing to him.

In addition to that, it also proves that inviting friends over meals on occasions of happiness is Sunnah. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه when he completed his reading of Sūrah al-Baqarah, shared his happiness with others by inviting them to eat with him for which he slaughtered a camel.

5. The sons of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, once the truth had come out in the open, asked for the forgiveness of their father and brother. This tells us that a person who has caused pain to someone, by word or action, or remains responsible for returning any right owed to him, then, it is obligatory on that person that he must pay back that right immediately, or have it forgiven by him.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه there is a report in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A person who has someone's financial right due against him, or may have caused pain to him, by word or action, then, he must pay it back today, or get it off

his shoulders by seeking forgiveness - before comes the day of Qiyāmah where no one would have any property or wealth from which rights could be paid back. Therefore, his good deeds will be given to the victim of injustice and he will be left empty-handed. And if, he has no good deeds in his account, the sins of the other person will be put on his shoulders. May Allah protect us all from this.

Patience and Gratitude :

The Dignified Station of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام

To pick up the thread of the story, we see that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام starts telling his parents things which happened to him. This is a point where it would be useful to stop for a while and think. Had someone in our day been subjected to go through all those hardships which were faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام and had he been enabled to meet his parents after such a long trial of separation and disappointment, just imagine where would he begin his tale of woes, how would he cry and make others do the same, and how many days and nights would he spend in recounting the hardships faced by him? But, the two parties, the teller and the listener, are both no less than two messengers and prophets of Allah. Worth observing is their conduct in this matter. Here is the very dear separated son of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, when he meets his father after having gone through the long period of so many hardships, see what he says:

وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجْتَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي

He favoured me when He released me from the prison and brought you from the countryside after the Satan had caused a rift between me and my brothers - 100.

The hardships faced by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام can be divided over three stages respectively: (1) The injustices of his brothers; (2) the separation from his parents; (3) the pain of the prison. What this great prophet of Allah has done is that, in his statement, he has changed the order of events as they had happened. He started from the prison. Then, he said nothing about how he had entered the prison and how he had suffered there. Rather, talked about how he was released from the prison and mentioned that too with words of gratitude for Allah Ta'ālā. As a corollary of his release from the prison and his gratitude to Allah for it, he

also told them that he has been in the prison for a certain time.

Worth noticing here is that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has mentioned his release from the prison. But, he has not said anything about the prison of the well in which his brothers had thrown him. He did not mention it even functionally, as in 'He released me from the prison - 100.' The reason is that he had already forgiven the mistake made by his brothers, and had said: لَا تَتْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ (No reproach upon you today - 92). Therefore, he did not consider it proper to mention the incident of the well in any form whatsoever, so that his brothers may not be put to shame. (Qurtubī)

After that, he was supposed to dwell on the long and trying separation from his parents, and talk about how they had affected him. But, he set all these things aside. He took up the last part of it and mentioned his meeting with the parents and said so by thanking Allah for it: 'and brought you from the countryside (*al-badw*)' to this city of Egypt. There is a hint here to the blessing of Allah that He brought Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام from his home in the countryside, where conveniences of living are scarce, to a city with royal honours.

The first stage of the trials of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام has not been mentioned yet. This concerns the injustices inflicted by his brothers on him. It is interesting that he sweeps the whole thing away as a handiwork of Satan and makes things come easy even by suggesting that his brothers were not of the kind who would do something like that. It was Satan who deceived them and caused this rift between them.

This is the elegance of prophets. Not only that they would be patient against pain and hardship, but that they would invariably find the occasion to be grateful to Allah under all conditions. Therefore, with prophets, there is no state of being in which they are not grateful to Allah Ta'ālā. This is contrary to what ordinary human beings would do. In their state of being, they would have thousands of blessings of Allah Ta'ālā being showered over them, yet they would not talk about them to anyone. And when they have some hardship overtake them at some time, they would go about crying over it all their lives. The Qur'ān has complained about this human mind-set when it says: إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ (that is, human beings are, to their Rabb, very ungrateful -100:6).

After having reduced the tale of his trials in three words, Sayyidnā

Yūsuf عليه السلام said: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِّمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way. Surely, He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise - 12:100).

Verse 101

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۚ فَاطِرَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّ الْدُنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ تَوْفَنِي مُسْلِمًا
وَالْحَقِّي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠١﴾

My Lord, You have given me some power to rule and a knowledge of interpreting events. O the Creator of the heavens and the Earth, You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and make me join the righteous." [101]

Commentary

The address of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in the previous verses was to his respected father. Now, after having achieved an important objective by meeting his parents and brothers, he was at peace to devote himself directly to praising Allah Ta'ālā and to supplicating before Him. What he said appears immediately above. The 'ṣāliḥīn' or 'the righteous' or morally the most perfect servants of Allah can be the prophets themselves for they are Divinely protected (*ma'ṣūm*) against all sins. (Maẓharī)

Worth noticing in this *du'ā'* is the prayer for a good end to life. It presents before us a profile of the typical servants of Allah who have the honour of being accepted in the sight of their Creator. Their attitude is that they may be enjoying the highest possible ranks in this world and in the Hereafter, and they may have all sorts of power and office beneath their feet, yet, they would never wax proud over these. In fact, they keep fearing lest such things around them may be taken away or cut down. So, they keep praying that the physical and spiritual blessings given to them by Allah Ta'ālā continue to be with them, even keep increasing, right through the hour of death.

At this stage, the unusual story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, and the subsequent chain of instructions and lessons, as mentioned in the Qur'ān,

has reached its completion. What happened after that has not been reported in the Holy Qur'ān, or in any Marfū' Ḥadīth (with its chain of reporting authorities ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself). Most commentators have reported that with reference to historical or Isra'īlī narrations.

Based on a narration by Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan 'رحمه الله تعالى', it has been reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr that Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام was seven years old when his brothers had thrown him into a well. Then, he remained separated from his father for eighty years, remained alive for twenty three years after having met his parents, and died at the age of one hundred and twenty years.

As in the narrations of the People of the Book, reports Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the period of separation between Sayyidnā Ya'qūb and Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليهم السلام was forty years. Then, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, after his arrival in Egypt, lived in the company of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام for seventeen years. After that, he died.

As in the annals of historians, reports the author of Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام died after having lived for twenty four years in Egypt. Before his death, he ordered Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام that his body should be sent to his home country and that he be buried by the side of his father, Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the body of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was placed in a coffin made of wood from saul tree and taken to Baytul-Maqdis. For this reason, it became common custom among Jews that they would take their dead from far away places to Baytul-Maqdis for a burial there. The age of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام was one hundred and forty seven years when he died.

When Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام entered Egypt with his family, says Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رحمه الله, they were a total of ninety three men and women - and when this progeny of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام, that is, the Banī Isra'īl, left Egypt with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, their number was six hundred and seventy thousand.¹ (Qurṭubī & Ibn Kathīr)

1. As pointed out earlier, this is based on Israelite narrations. Ibn Khaldūn, the well-known Muslim historian, has criticized this narration in his Muqaddimah and has urged that the number of Banī Isra'īl was not that big - (Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī)

It has been mentioned earlier that, after the death of the former 'Azīz of Miṣr, the king of Egypt had arranged the marriage of Zulaikhā with Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام.

It appears in the Torah and in the historical accounts of the People of the Book that they had two sons, Ifrā'īm and Manshā, and a girl, Raḥma bint Yūsuf. Raḥma was married to Sayyidnā Ayyub عليه السلام. Of the progeny of Ifrā'īm, there was Yusha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام who was a companion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام (Maḏharī)

Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام died at the age of one hundred and twenty years and he was buried by the bank of the river Nile.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رحمه الله تعالى, Ibn Ishāq has reported: When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to leave Egypt with the Banī Isrā'īl, it was revealed to him that he should not leave the body of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt and he was ordered to take it with him to Syria and bury him close to his ancestors. In obedience to this order, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made investigations and succeeded in locating his burial place. He found his body in a marble coffin which he took with him to Can'aan in Palestine. There he buried him beside Sayyidnā Ishāq and Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام. (Maḏharī)

After Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, the Amalkites took over Egypt as the new Pharaohs. As for the Banī Isrā'īl, they lived under them but kept adhering to the Faith of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام. However, they were taken as foreigners and subjected to all sorts of painful discriminations. Finally, Allah Ta'ālā delivered them from this punishment through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. (Tafsīr Maḏharī)

Rules and Points of Guidance

1. From the previous verses (99-100), we learn that paying due respect to parents is obligatory (*wājib*) - as it stands proved from what Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام did.

2. We also learn from here that a prostration of reverence was permissible in the religious code of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام which is why his parents and brothers prostrated to him. But, in the Shari'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this Sajdah or Sujūd has been declared as a particular mark of 'Tbādah (worship) and it cannot be done before anyone other than Al-

lah. If done, it is Ḥarām. The Holy Qur'an has said: لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ (prostrate not to the Sun and the Moon ... - 41:37). And in Ḥadīth, it is said that Sayyidnā Mu'adh رضي الله عنه, when he went to Syria, saw local Christians prostrating to their parents. After his return from there, he started making a prostration before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He asked him not to do that. He said: If I were to take prostration before anyone as permissible, I would have told a wife to prostrate before her husband. Similarly, when Sayyidnā Salmān al-Farīsī رضي الله عنه wished to prostrate to him, he said:

لَا تَسْجُدْ لِي يَا سَلْمَانَ وَأَسْجُدْ لِلْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ

Do not prostrate to me, O Salmān, instead, prostrate to the Ever-Living who would never die. (Ibn Kathīr)

This tells us that a prostration done as a token of respect for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not permissible. With that being the truth, how can it become permissible if done before a saint, or an elder or *pīr*?

3. From: هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُءْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (here is the fulfillment of my early dream - 100), we learn that the fulfillment of the interpretation of a dream could sometimes take a long time to materialize - as it was in the present case when it manifested itself after forty, or eighty, years. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

4. The words: فَدَا أَحْسَنَ بِي (He favoured me - 100) said by Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام prove that if a person after having been suffering from a disease or disaster, finds him or her delivered from it, then, following the traditional way of prophets, he or she must show gratitude to Allah for this deliverance, and forget about any remembrance of that disease or disaster.

5. From the statement: إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ (Surely, my Lord does what He wills, in a subtle way - 100), we learn that, when Allah Ta'ālā intends to do something, He has His subtle ways of arranging things and causes secretly in a manner that no one can get the slightest inkling about it.

6. The words of prayer: تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا (Make me die a Muslim - 101) refer to the prayer of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام in which he has wished to die while adhering to his Belief and Faith (Īmān and Islām). This tells us that to make a *du'ā'* for death under particular conditions is not prohibited. And

as for the prohibition of wishing for death in sound and authentic Ahādīth, the purpose there is to tell people that it is not correct to go about asking for death just because of depression from worldly hardships or simple lack of patience. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: Let no one ask for death because of some hardship. If one has to say something like that, let him say: 'Ya Allāh, keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and give me death when death is better for me.'

Verses 102 - 109

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ ۗ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا
 أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَا أَكْثَرَ النَّاسَ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ
 ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۗ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾
 وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا
 مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾
 أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ
 لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا
 وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي ۗ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا
 مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ ۗ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي
 الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ
 خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you. And you were not there before them when they determined their object and they were planning devices. [102]

And most of the people are not going to believe, even though you long for it. [103] And you do not ask of them a reward for it. It is nothing but a lesson for all the (people of the) worlds. [104]

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth

which they pass by and they are heedless to it. [105] And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him. [106]

Do they feel secure from that there comes to them Allah's enveloping punishment or that there comes to them the Hour suddenly while they are not conscious of it? [107]

Say, "This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the Mushriks*." [108]

And We did not send before you (messengers) other than men from the people of the towns whom We inspired with revelation. Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is much better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? [109]

Commentary

After a full description of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام, first to come in the verses cited above is an address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: ذَلِكَ: عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you), and that 'you were not there with the brothers of Yūsuf when they had decided to throw Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام into the well and were making plans for it.'

The purpose of choosing to say this is that the very act of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in describing this story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام correctly and in full details is a clear proof of his being a prophet and recipient of revelation. The reason is that this story dates back to thousands of years before his time. Neither was he present there on the scene to have described it as an eye witness, nor was he ever taught by anyone to have consulted books of history, or heard it from a teacher and described it. Therefore, there is no way he could have known it in the manner he did except that it be Divine revelation itself.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has considered it sufficient to say that 'you were not there.' It has not deemed it necessary to mention that this information did not come to him through another person or book because

*. Those who associate partners with Allah

the whole Arabia knew that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was an Ummiyy - that is, he did not learn to read and write from anyone. And also known to everyone was that he had lived his whole life in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. He did make one of his trips to Syria with his uncle Abū Ṭalib, a trip in which he came back home while still enroute. The second trip he made was for business. He finished his work there and returned in a few days. In this trip too, there was no chance of his meeting some scholar or going to an educational institution. Therefore, at this place, it was not considered necessary to mention it. And at another occasion in the Holy Qur'an this too was further clarified by saying: مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا , that is, 'you did not know them (events) before this (the revelation of the Qur'an), neither you nor your people -11:49"

Imām Al-Baghawī has said that the Jews and the Quraysh had joined hands to test the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. For this purpose, they had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to tell them everything about Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) as it had happened to him, if he was true in his claim of prophethood. When he told them what he had learnt through Divine revelation, they still remained sticking to their disbelief and denial. This shocked the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereupon, said in the next verse was: 'And most of the people are not going to believe' - even though, the proofs of his being a prophet were clear, and even if he himself longed for it, or tried his best. The sense of the statement is: 'Your duty is to spread the call and seek the betterment of people. That you succeed in it is not in your control nor is this your responsibility nor should you grieve over it.'

After that it was said: وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ , that is, 'your mission is to tell them the truth and call them to the straight path. For this you do not ask them to give you something in return - which could have caused them to find it difficult to listen to him or follow him. In fact, what you are telling them is for their own good. It is only an advice to heed to and a lesson to learn from. And it is for everyone. The text here also carries a hint to the effect: When the purpose behind your effort is no worldly gain, in fact it is nothing but the reward of the Hereafter and the betterment of your people, then, that purpose of yours already stands achieved. Why would you then grieve over it?

Then, in verse 105, the attitude of the disbelievers is portrayed by saying:

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا مُعْرِضُونَ

How many a sign there is in the heavens and the Earth which they pass by and they are heedless to it.

The sense is that these people are not of the kind who would simply not listen to a well-wisher out of their obstinacy. They are worse. They would not even learn from the very open signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā visible to them all the time, yet keep passing by them without paying any attention and without wondering whose signs they were. These signs of Divine wisdom and power are widely spread out and many in number. Out of these are many signs which remind people of punishments which descended upon past peoples, and they themselves see their overturned habitations, but they would still refuse to learn their lesson.

This was a description of people who simply did not believe in the existence of Allah Ta'ālā, the great Creator, and in His wisdom and power. Mentioned next are those who do believe in Allah as the Creator, but also associate other things as partners in His Divinity. It was said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating partners with Him - 106.

It means that those of them who profess a belief in Allah would do so by lacing it with Shirk. They would suggest others as partners in the attributes of knowledge and power which are exclusive for Allah Ta'ālā - which is rank injustice, and ignorance.

Ibn Kathīr has said that included under the sense of this verse are Muslims who, despite having *Īmān*, are involved with different kinds of *Shirk*. According to the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: The most dangerous of things I apprehend for you is the small Shirk. When the Ṣaḥābah asked as to what could that be, he said: Hypocrisy is the small Shirk. Similarly, swearing by someone or something other than Allah has been called Shirk in another Ḥadīth. (Ibn Kathīr from Tirmidhi) Vows and offerings (Mannat and Niyāz) in the name of anyone

other than Allah is also included under it, on which there is a consensus of Muslim jurists.

After that, in verse 107, questioned and deplored is their heedlessness and ignorance as to how could these people, despite their denial and rebellion, become so carefree of the possibility that there may come on them some punishment from Allah which overtakes them from all sides, or that the fateful Hour of the Day of Doom itself descends upon them all of a sudden while they are not ready for it?

In verse 108, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to state his position before these people:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعِيَ ۖ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ -

"Say, (you believe it or not) "This is my way. I call (people) to Allah with full cognition - myself and my followers. And pure is Allah. And I am not among the associators - 108."

It means that the *da'wah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not based on some summary view of things, instead, it is the outcome of insight, reason and wisdom. In this act of 'full cognition,' the Holy Prophet ﷺ has included his followers as well. According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ it refers to the noble Ṣaḥābah, may Allah be pleased with them all. They are the soldiers of *Allah subhānahū wa Ta'ālā*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ said: The Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are the best people of this whole Ummah. Their hearts are pure and their knowledge is deep. They are far removed from formality. Allah Ta'ālā has chosen them to accompany and serve their Rasūl. You should learn their morals, habits and ways because they are the ones who are on the straight path.

It is also possible to take the expression: *مَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي* (and my followers) in the general sense whereby it would mean every person who is doing the duty of conveying the *da'wah* of the Rasūl of Allah to his Ummah right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. According to Kalbi and Ibn Zayd, this verse also makes it necessary for one who claims to follow the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he should spread his *da'wah* among people and make the teaching of the Qur'ān available to all. (Maḥzarī)

The last sentence of verse 108 is: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (And pure is Allah [that is, free from *Shirk*]. And I am not among the Mushriks [that is, not of those who practice *Shirk*]). Since, a little earlier, mention was made that there are people who, when they profess belief in Allah, would mix it up with *Shirk*, whether open or padded or concealed. Therefore, he has declared that he has absolutely nothing to do with *Shirk*. The gist of what has been said here is: My *da'wah* does not aim at inviting people to become my servants. In fact, I myself am, also a servant of Allah - and it is this kind of servitude, servitude to none but Him, that I invite people to. However, since I am the *dā'i* (the original maker of this call), it is obligatory that faith be put in me.

To this, the disbelievers of Makkah used to object. They took the plea that a Rasūl or messenger of Allah should not be a human being. He should, rather, be an angel. A reply to this doubt has been given in the next verse where it was said: وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى : It means that their thinking that it is an angel who should be the messenger and prophet of Allah and that a human being cannot occupy this station is baseless and ineffectual. Quite contrary to this, the case is just the reverse - that is, for human beings, a prophet of Allah has always been a human being. Nevertheless, he is distinct from human beings in general in that the Waḥy and message of Allah Ta'ālā comes to him directly. It is never the outcome of an individual effort or act by anyone. It is always Allah Ta'ālā Himself who would choose from among his servants the one who, in His knowledge and judgement, is the fittest for this mission. And this selection is based on particular attributes of personal excellence which are not found among human beings at large.

Onwards from here, there is an admonition to those who contravene the instructions given by the maker of the call on behalf of Allah (*dā'i*), and invite the wrath and punishment of Allah upon them. It was said:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ
لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Have they not travelled in the land where they would have seen how was the fate of those before them? And surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah. Would you, then, still not understand? - 109

and continue to prefer the short-lived comfort of the present world over the everlasting and perfect blessings and comforts of the 'Ākhirah.

Rules and Guidance

The Difference between the News of the Unseen and the Knowledge of the Unseen

1. The statement: **ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ** (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 102) has appeared in the same words in verse 44 of Sūrah Āl-'Imrān in the context of the story of Sayyidah Maryam, that is: **ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ** (That is a part of the reports of the unseen We reveal to you - 3:44). Then, with a slight change, the same statement appears in verse 49 of Sūrah Hūd where it is related to the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ **رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ**: **تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ** (These are reports from the unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49).

From these verses we learn that Allah Ta'ālā communicates to his prophets many a news of the unseen through Waḥy (revelation). He has particularly blessed our Rasūl **ﷺ**, known as the Head of all the messengers, with a special portion of the news from the unseen, which is more than that which has been given to all past prophets. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** has informed the Muslim Ummah of many events due to happen right through the day of Qiyāmah, either briefly, or in details. All Aḥādīth given in the Kitāb al-Fitan of Ḥadīth books are full of them.

Since common people take the Knowledge of the Unseen (*ʿIlm al-Ghayb*) only in the sense that a person somehow gets to become aware of the news of the unseen, and this quality is found at its best in the Holy Prophet **ﷺ**, therefore, they think that the Holy Prophet **ﷺ** was *ʿAlim al-Ghayb* (knower of the Unseen). But, the Holy Qur'an has declared in very clear words that: **لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ** (No one in the heavens, or on the Earth, knows the unseen except Allah - 27:65) which proves that no one, other than Allah Ta'ālā, can be called the *ʿAlim al-Ghayb* or the Knower of the Unseen. The *ʿIlm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is the unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Taking an apostle, messenger, prophet or angel as a sharer in this attribute amounts to equating him with Allah, and is what the Christians do, who declare a Rasūl to be the son of God, and a partner in Godhead. The

verses of the Holy Qur'ān quoted here make the truth of the matter very clear. It stands settled that the *ʿIlm* of *al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen) is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā and the only *ʿĀlim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen) is *Allah jalla thanā'uh* Himself. However, there are many news of the unseen which Allah Ta'ālā does give to his messengers through the medium of Waḥy (revelation). This, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān, is not known as the *ʿIlm of al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the unseen). Since common people do not understand this fine difference, they tend to take the news of the unseen as the knowledge of the unseen. This is why when one adheres to the terminology of the Qur'ān and asserts that no one, other than Allah, can claim to know what is unseen, they would prefer to differ, rather than accept truth as it is.

Messengers are from Men

2. From the word: رَجَالًا (*rijālan* : men) in verse 109:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ

And We did not send before you [messengers] other than men from the people of the towns - 109,

we learn that messengers are always men. A woman cannot become a *nabiyy* (prophet) and *rasūl* (messenger).

Imām Ibn Kathīr has reported the consensus of 'Ulamā' that Allah Ta'ālā has not made any woman a *nabiyy* or *rasūl*. Some 'Ulamā' have identified some women as being a *nabiyy* or prophet, for example, Sayyidah Sārah, the wife of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidah Maryam, the mother of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام. The reason is that there are particular words in the Holy Qur'ān about these three respected women which give the impression that angels talked to them as Divinely commanded, gave them good news, or they themselves came to know something through the medium of Divine revelation. But the majority of 'Ulamā, though they do accept that the words of such verses prove that these respected women had a high spiritual rank in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, but, according to them, these words are not sufficient as proofs of their being prophets and messengers.

Messengers are from Towns

3. The expression: أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ (men from the people of the towns) appear-

ing in the verse quoted immediately above tells us that Allah Ta'ālā sends his messengers generally from among those who live in cities and towns. Messengers are not from among those who reside in the countryside and forest lands - because the dwellers of these habitations are generally rustic, hard and less perfect in comprehension and understanding. (Ibn Kathīr, Qurṭubī & others)

Verses 110 - 111

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَوَظَنُوا أَنَّهُمْ قَد كَذَّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا لَا
فَنَجِّيَ مَنْ نَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ لَقَدْ
كَانَ فِي قَصصِهِمْ عِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ۗ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ
وَلَكِن تَصَدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهَدًى وَرَحْمَةً
لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty. [110]

Surely, in the narratives of these, there is a lesson for the people of understanding. It is not an invented story, rather, a confirmation of what has been before it, and an elaboration of everything, and guidance and mercy for a people who believe. [111]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the sending of prophets who invited people to take the straight path, and also answered there were some doubts about them. Then, people were admonished that they do not take into consideration the sad end they would face as a result of their antagonism towards prophets of Allah. Only if they were to pay some attention and look around and read signs from ruined cities and the history of lost places they pass by, they would find out how harsh has been the sad end of those who had opposed the blessed prophets, and that too, right here in this world. The habitation of the people of

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام was overturned upside down. The people of 'Ād and Thamūd were destroyed through various punishments. And the punishment of the Hereafter, that is far more severe.

Then, towards the end, they were instructed that the pain and pleasure of the present life is, after all, very short-lived. One's real concern should be about the life to come, the 'Ākhirah, the Hereafter, where one shall stay for ever, and where the pain, or pleasure, too shall be eternal. So, it was made clear that a good end of life in the 'Ākhirah depends on Taqwā, the fear of Allah and the abstention from sins, and which, in a nutshell, means that one should strictly adhere to all commandments of the Shari'ah.

Since the purpose in the previous verses was to warn people of the time by telling them to take their lesson from what had happened to past prophets and their communities, therefore, in the next verse (110), one of their doubts was removed. The doubt they had was about the warnings of Divine punishment given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They were hearing about it from him for a long time, but they did not see any punishment coming upon them. This made them all the more daring. If there was some punishment to come, it would have come by now, they thought. Therefore, it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy and wisdom, would often keep giving respite to erring and sinning people - and this respite, at times, could also become fairly long. That is why contumacious people become more daring and aggressive which causes a certain anxiety to prophets. So, it was said:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا لَمْ نَشَاءْ وَلَا يَرُدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

(Punishment was often delayed) until when the messengers were in despair and thought that they were wrong in their estimation, Our help came to them, then saved were those whom We willed. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty - 110).

To explain it in detail, it can be said, that: 'The disbelieving and disobedient people of past communities were given long respites, until when, because of the punishment not coming upon them, the messengers were in despair over the possibility that the punishment of Allah will not come upon such people and truth will not manifest itself in the manner

and at the time they had hoped it to be, and thought that, while determining the time of the Divine promise, they were wrong in their estimation - that Allah Ta'ālā had not told them of a definite time, and the time was fixed by them as based on particular signs. It was in this state of despair that Our help came to them, that is, the punishment on disbelievers came as promised, then saved from the punishment were those 'whom We willed (that is, believers in prophets were saved and disbelievers were destroyed) because Our punishment is not averted from the guilty,' instead, it does come upon them, therefore, the disbelievers of Makkah should not be in any doubt about a delay in the punishment due. [Bayān al-Qur'ān: Gist of Tafsīr by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī]

The word: كَذِبُوا (*kudhibū* : were wrong) in verse 110 has been read as in the well-known reading (*Qirā'at*) of the Qur'ān - and the Tafsīr (exegesis or explanation) which we have chosen to follow is the one which is most sound and free from doubts. The essential sense of the word: كَذِبُوا (*kudhibū*) is to find one's estimation or thinking as being wrong, which is a kind of Ijtihādī mistake (as based on personal opinion), and some such Ijtihādī mistake can issue forth from the blessed prophets. However, there is a difference between prophets عليهم السلام and other *mujtahids*, that is, when some Ijtihādī mistake issues forth from the prophets عليهم السلام, Allah Ta'ālā would not let them stay by that mistake, rather, He would make them become aware of it and enable them to see reality clearly. Other *mujtahids* do not occupy this station. The event of the Peace Pact of Ḥudaibiyah associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ is sufficient as proof on this subject - because it has been stated in the Holy Qur'ān that this event is based on the dream which was seen by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He had seen that he was doing the Ṭawāf of the Baytullah with his Ṣaḥābah - and the dream of the blessed prophets is also an imperative form of revelation - therefore, the happening of this event became certain. But, in the dream itself, no particular time or duration was identified for it. The Holy Prophet ﷺ, according to his estimation, thought that it would happen the same year. So, he announced it before his Ṣaḥābah and taking a good number of them with him left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah for their 'Umra. But, the Quraysh confronted them enroute and they could not avail of their intended Ṭawāf and 'Umra. In fact, the full manifestation (of the dream) came to unfold itself two years later, in the Hijrah year 8, in the form of