



A walk through the
NOBLE
QUR'ĀN

*A clear, simple and powerful translation of the Noble Qur'ān,
elaborated with invaluable verse-by-verse commentary*

Juz 1

01 Sūrah al-Fātiḥah - 02 Sūrah al-Baqarah 01-141

WAQAR GULAM DASTAGUIR

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The Favours Given to the Banū Isrā'īl ~ Verses 49-54

BACKGROUND

AFTER SUMMARISING the favours earlier as such that no group of people received in their time, Allāh ﷻ now begins listing each favour individually to remind the Banū Isrā'īl how much they had been favoured by Him over the rest of the people.

Sometimes when a person is ungrateful, they need to be reminded by Allāh ﷻ of what people have done for them. However, it's wrong for us humans to remind others of our favours, as Allāh ﷻ tells us in the Noble Qur'ān (Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:264). All of our good should be done only to please Allāh ﷻ and not to expect a return from others. As for Allāh ﷻ, He has every right to remind us of His favours because He expects our obedience in return. He created us for a test and a purpose, and He wishes for us to pass that test and fulfil that purpose.

Some people, like the Banū Isrā'īl, really needed that wake-up call, so He now begins listing each favour one-by-one in order to soften their hearts and make them grateful to Him by obeying Him, putting aside their prejudices and accepting Islam.

TRANSLATION &

COMMENTARY

VERSE 49

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنَ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُم سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ
وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

And (remember) when We saved you from the people of Fir‘awn dealing upon you the worst of punishments: slaughtering your sons and keeping your women alive. In it there was a great test from your Lord.

Fir‘awn was a pharaoh in Ancient Egypt. Most likely, he was the one identified by archaeologists as Ramses II. He had enslaved the Banū Isrā‘īl, who had been seen as the inferior race by him and his people, the *Qibt* (the Copts). He would mistreat them and enforce hard labour on them, making them construct the monuments he left behind. These years of humiliation were a test for the Banū Isrā‘īl, as Allāh ﷻ wished to see who would turn to Him to ask for help, and then follow His Prophet Mūsā ﷺ when that help would arrive.

Fir‘awn's tyranny took a turn for the worse when he had a certain dream. He saw that a fire raging from the direction of Jerusalem had headed towards Egypt and engulfed it, burning every member of the *Qibt*, but sparing the Banū Isrā‘īl. Shaken by this, he asked his priests, who were able to correctly predict that his kingdom would be destroyed at the hands of a boy born in the Banū Isrā‘īl. This led Fir‘awn to campaign against them by killing the boys that were born amongst them. However, since there was no threat from the women, he didn't kill them, but kept them alive for the *Qibt* to use as slaves for their service.

This genocide and humiliating slavery lasted many years, until the Prophet Mūsā ﷺ was miraculously saved from being killed. When he was older, he defeated Fir‘awn and saved the Banū Isrā‘īl. Allāh ﷻ reminds the Banū Isrā‘īl how this turn of events was a favour from Allāh ﷻ.

VERSE 50

وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ

And (remember) when We split for you the sea and thus saved you, and drowned the people of Fir‘awn, and all the while you were watching.

Allāh ﷻ here describes the extraordinary way that Fir‘awn was killed, as Mūsā ﷺ was making his way out of Egypt with the Banū Isrā’īl. Unable to see the Banū Isrā’īl leave without the king's permission, Fir‘awn followed them with his army. The Banū Isrā’īl had reached the shoreline with nothing but the sea in front and with Fir‘awn and his army right behind them (it isn't specified which sea it was, though there are differences of opinion among the 'Ulama in their research). It was at that tense moment that Allāh ﷻ caused the sea to split open for Mūsā ﷺ and the Banū Isrā’īl, carving out a way for them to cross the sea on foot without drowning.

Boasting that it was his own doing, Fir‘awn too tried to traverse the sea. However, once he and his army had positioned themselves well between the two walls of the mighty sea, the waters collapsed on them, drowning both him and his army. The Banū Isrā’īl saw this happening with their own eyes: the apparent king of kings and his army being put to an end within seconds. This indeed was a miracle and an eye-opener for them. Allāh ﷻ reminds the Banū Isrā’īl of this incident too, and how they should remember it and thus turn to the one who saved them from such a despot.

Just as with the Banū Isrā’īl, Allāh ﷻ has saved us from countless situations. However, we shouldn't be like the Banū Isrā’īl that we need reminding by Allāh ﷻ. We should take notice when things go our way and we see success, especially if we are saved from some difficulty. We should thank Allāh ﷻ and devote our lives to Him.

VERSE 51

وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

And (remember) when We gave a promise to Mūsā of forty days, then you wrongfully made the calf your god after he went.

After being saved from Fir‘awn, Allāh ﷻ helped the Banū Isrā’īl settle down by giving them a set of laws to follow and create order. However, He asked for Mūsā ﷺ to come to Mount Sinai for forty days of worship before such a great book, the Torah, could be revealed to Him. Considering the importance of the event, Mūsā ﷺ trusted his people would behave by leaving them for those forty days. Unfortunately, they didn't.

As mentioned later in the Noble Qur‘ān in detail, a man from amongst them named Sāmīrī made a calf statue out of gold and told them that it was their god. They were already fond of the idea of having a statue to worship—they even asked Mūsā ﷺ himself to give them one after seeing other people worship their own statues! Consequently, they became enamoured by the idea of worshipping the golden calf and did so despite everything that happened before and how Allāh ﷻ was the one that helped them. They were only harming themselves and setting themselves up for consequences by taking such a foolish step. Allāh ﷻ reminds them how far they had gotten with their disobedience, that they left Him and His worship at such a crucial time. This should have ideally made the Banū Isrā’īl feel guilty about their past and turn to Allāh ﷻ to promise the same never happens.

VERSE 52

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

Then We forgave you after that so that you could be grateful.

Despite such insolence, Allāh ﷻ still forgave them. He describes how He chose not to destroy them all because of this, and forgiving them for such a crime was one of the biggest forms of mercy He had showed them. This was all so that they could have another chance and be grateful for being given it.

We can learn from this incident that we too disrespect Allāh ﷻ by sinning, especially with the major sins that we do knowingly. Just as with the Banū Isrā’īl, Allāh ﷻ overlooks our sins too and pardons us, though we don't deserve it. Our hearts should soften towards Allāh ﷻ for His kindness and therefore wish to obey Him at all times.

VERSE 53

وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

And (remember) when We gave Mūsā the Book and things that differentiate (the right from the wrong) so that you could come onto the right path.

Allāh ﷻ aided the Banū Isrā'īl with many miracles. He gave them the Torah, one of the four major books to be revealed along with the Noble Qur'ān, the Injīl (Evangel) and the Zabūr (Psalms). Though inaccessible in its pure form today, it was the most important book of its time. Such an essential unadulterated book full of wisdom and guidance to life was an important asset to their lives. It was everything they needed.

Besides this, Allāh ﷻ also showed miracles at the hands of Mūsā ﷺ. These miracles allowed them to see the truth from the false, as his miracles showed who truly was inspired by the divine and who was just a sorcerer or a tyrant. Allāh ﷻ had painted the right and wrong in black and white for them.

This was a great favour, as there are many people even today who feel they are rightly guided though are actually astray. Being on the right path itself is a blessing from Allāh ﷻ. We should be thankful that we have the Noble Qur'ān, a book even greater than the Torah, in our hands. It is the living miracle of Islam, besides the countless other miracles reported in the Ḥadīths performed by the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. We are on the right path as Muslims, and we too should be thankful for it. We didn't earn this guidance, but we were given it by Allāh ﷻ's choice, especially if we were born in a Muslim family!

VERSE 54

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجَلَ فُتَوُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

And (remember) when Mūsā said to his people, "O' my people! Indeed, you have (only) harmed yourselves by making the calf your god. So turn in repentance to the One who created you and thereafter (some of you) kill (others from) yourselves. That is the best for you according to the One who created you." He (Allāh) then accepted your repentance. Indeed, it is He who readily forgives and is Very Merciful.

Allāh ﷻ reminds the Banū Isrā'īl of His pardoning again, but in more detail. He repeatedly shows how heinous the crime of worshipping the golden calf was by repeating the fact that it was He who created them, yet they worshipped a cow, an animal normally known for its slowness and lack of visible intelligence. For the disrespect they showed by worshipping the calf, those guilty should have really been destroyed and sent to hell immediately. However, He decided to forgive them, but with a condition.

He commanded for those who didn't take part in the calf-worshipping to kill those who did. This punishment was necessary, as committing *Shirk* of this nature can't be overlooked, especially with the way the Banū Isrā'īl did it so shamelessly after all the help they received. This punishment was also to make an example out of them so that it would deter the rest from going down the same road in the future. Though they lost their lives, they were forgiven and gained eternity in heaven.

In Islam, if someone were to commit such an act, they would not need to be killed. As long as they accept that they were wrong and repent, Allāh ﷻ has instated in Islam for them to be forgiven without a punishment. This is only one of the ways that Allāh ﷻ has shown a greater portion of His mercy for Muslims especially. He created us as part of a religion where the rulings are easier than those in the previous nations. Yet, we complain that being a Muslim is hard!

LESSONS

- ~ Allāh ﷻ reminds us of His favours so we can be grateful and obey Him.
- ~ We shouldn't remind others of our favours to them, as we should have done them for the sake of Allāh ﷻ only.
- ~ We have been saved by Allāh ﷻ from many difficult situations. He has shown us many miracles in the form of our circumstances changing dramatically. We should take notice and thank Him.
- ~ When we commit sins, we only harm ourselves, as we set ourselves up for the ill-effects of these sins and their consequences in the Hereafter.
- ~ We disrespect Allāh ﷻ by sinning whilst He can see us. Yet, He forgives us out of His kindness, though we really deserve to be punished for it.

- ~ Allāh ﷻ has given us the Noble Qur'ān as our living miracle. We should appreciate it by reciting it, understanding it, and acting upon it.
- ~ We should be grateful that we are on the right path as Muslims without having done anything to truly deserve it by default.
- ~ Islam is an easier religion than the previous ones. We should make the most of this, and try to carry out its injunctions and avoid its prohibitions without complaining and finding faults.