



DAY 12

RAMAḌĀN 2024



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وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ

And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you (O Prophet) are in their midst [8:33]

ANSWER:

Protector [against mass punishment]

COMMENTARY

Nadr ibn Hārith was a businessman who used to travel to different countries where he had repeated opportunities of seeing religious books of the Jews and Christians as well as witnessing their modes of worship. When he heard about the accounts of past communities appearing in the Holy Qur'ān, he said: **(we have heard, if we wish, we can say something like this. It is nothing but the tales of the ancient - 31)**. Thereupon, some of the Companions challenged him: If you can say something like this, why would you not say it? The Qur'ān had already spoken on the subject and made it the very criterion of the true and the false. The challenge of the Qur'ān was beamed at the whole world. If its opponents were true, let them come up with the like of even a very small Sūrah. In contrast, those who claimed to stake their lives and sacrifice their wealth and children for the sake of upholding their counter-assertion could not even join up their abilities together and come out even with a small Sūrah which could stand on its own against the Qur'ān. Now, after all this, to stand up and say that we too can say something like this, if we so wished, is something no self-respecting person would venture to say. Thus, when the Companions told him that the Qur'ān was nothing but the Divine word, he tried to counter the assertion by showing his own firm adherence to his incorrect faith by saying: **O Allah, if this be indeed the truth [revealed] from You, then, rain down upon us stones from the heavens, or bring upon us a painful punishment - 32.**

The answer to this was given by the Qur'ān itself. First, it was said: **(And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst [in Makkah] - 33)**. The reason is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā with all blessed prophets that He would not send His punishment over a habitation where they are present until He takes out his prophets from there. This is as it happened in the case of Sayyidnā Hūd, Sayyidnā Sālih and Sayyidnā Lūt, may peace be upon them all. Punishment did not come as long as they remained in their towns. Punishment came when they were taken out from there. As for the Prophet of Islam ﷺ, he was sent to this world as universal mercy. That Divine punishment would come on him while he was present in a town was an eventuality counter to his station.

In a nutshell, the answer is: Because of your hostility towards Qur'ān and Islam, you very much deserve to have stones rain at you but the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Makkah prohibits it.



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According to Imām Ibn Jarīr, this part of the verse was revealed at a time when he was present in Makkah.

This explanation given by Ibn Jarīr rests on the assumption that the factor of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ presence in Makkah should be considered as the hinderance to punishment while others have maintained that the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the world is itself the prohibitive factor against any mass punishment. As long as he graces the world with his presence, no punishment can come over his people. The reason for this is obvious. The state of his call to prophethood is different. It is not similar to that of other blessed prophets as they were sent to particular areas or tribes. When they left these and arrived at some new place, punishment would overtake the people they left behind. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ whose prophethood and messengership is universal until the Last Day of this mortal life. So, the place of his blessed arrival and the scope of his mission as a Messenger of Allah extends to the whole world. Therefore, as long as he is present in any part of the world, no punishment can visit his people.

To sum up, it can be said that the verses cited here leave beneficial information for us: (1) That Allah Ta'ālā does not send punishment upon a locality in which people seek His forgiveness. This is His customary practice. (2) That no punishment would come upon the community of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, believing or disbelieving, while he is present among them. This is as it came to pass in the case of the people of Sayyidnā Nūh, Lūt and Shu'ayb *'alayhim salām*. Their people were destroyed to the last person. Should some punishment visit individuals or a limited number of them, that would not be considered contrary to it - as was said by the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the punishment of *khasf* and *maskh* will visit his Ummah. *Khasf* means to sink into the ground or be swallowed by it while *Maskh* means disfiguration and transformation into an animal such as monkey or swine. The intimation intended is that there will be those limited few individuals of the community who would be visited by such punishments as well.

As for the phenomenon of the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in this world, it will remain operative right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah because his mission of prophethood is operative till then. In addition to that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is alive even at this time, though the nature and form of this life is different from his previous life. Now, any effort at this stage to engage in the debate as to what is the difference between these two lives will be ineffectual and futile - because, nothing that this community of Muslims has to do in terms of its religious or worldly duties depends on it. Neither has the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, nor his noble Sahābah have liked such wasteful and unnecessary debates. In fact, they have prohibited it.

The essence of the submission is that the marvel of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, being alive in his resting place and the unbroken continuity of his prophethood right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah prove that he **is** in this world right through Qiyāmah, therefore, this community of his shall remain safe against any mass punishment until that fateful Day.

And Allāh Ta'ālā knows best.

