



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

BANI ISRAEL – LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THEM

INTRODUCTION

We will quote here a medium-length overview of Jewish history, by Dr Mahmoud Qadah, who said:

Our history begins with Israa'eel (Israel) – namely Ya'qoob ibn Is-haaq ibn Ibraaheem al-Khaleel (Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham the Close Friend of Allah – peace be upon them all) – who grew up and lived in the land of the Canaanites (Palestine), who had twelve sons from four wives, as follows:

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun – their mother was Leah

Joseph (Yoosuf – peace be upon him) and Benjamin (Binyameen) – their mother was Rachel (Raaheel)

Dan and Naphtali – their mother was Bilhah, the handmaid of Rachel

Gad and Asher – their mother was Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah

The twelve sons were the origin of the Israelite tribes.

Then comes the famous story of Joseph (Yoosuf – peace be upon him) with his brothers and their father Jacob (Ya'qoob – peace be upon him), and how Israel (Jacob) and his sons moved to live in the land of Egypt, where they were honoured and respected under the auspices of Joseph (peace be upon him).

After the deaths of Jacob and Joseph (peace be upon them), with the passage of time and the succession of kings, the situation of the Children of Israel in Egypt changed from one of honour and respect to one of humiliation and ignominy, because the Pharaoh of Egypt persecuted and enslaved the Israelites. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when We rescued you from Firauns (Pharaoh) people, who were afflicting you with the worst torment, killing your sons and letting your women live. And in that was a great trial from your Lord”

[al-A'raaf 7:141]

Then Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, sent Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them), the two sons of Amram son of Kohath son of Levi son of Jacob ('Imraan ibn

Qahaat ibn Laawi ibn Ya'qoob - peace be upon him) to Pharaoh and his people, supported with miracles, to call them to believe in Allah alone, and to stop persecuting the Children of Israel. But Pharaoh and his people rejected the message, disobeyed Allah and disbelieved in Him and his signs. So Allah commanded His Messenger Moses to depart from Egypt with the Children of Israel. Pharaoh pursued them with his troops, and Allah drowned them in the sea, but He delivered Moses and his people into the land of Sinai.

The people of Moses (peace be upon him), the Children of Israel - with whom he departed from Egypt - had lived in a state of servitude, humiliation and idolatry for many years. Their beliefs had become corrupted, their souls had been tainted with evil, and their resolve have weakened. Their stubbornness, laziness, fatalism, carelessness and disobedience to the command of Allah and His Messenger became obvious... Despite the many signs and miracles that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, bestowed upon the people of Moses, they showed an attitude of stubbornness and arrogance, and refused to believe unless they saw Allah with their own eyes. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) when you said: 'O Moosa (Moses)! We shall never believe in you till we see Allah plainly.' But you were seized with a thunderbolt (lightning) while you were looking.

Then We raised you up after your death, so that you might be grateful"

[al-Baqarah 2:55]

"The people of the Scripture (Jews) ask you to cause a book to descend upon them from heaven. Indeed they asked Moosa (Moses) for even greater than that, when they said: 'Show us Allah in public,' but they were struck with thunder clap and lightning for their wickedness. Then they worshipped the calf even after clear proofs, evidences, and signs had come to them. (Even) so We forgave them. And We gave Moosa (Moses) a clear proof of authority"

[an-Nisa' 4:153].

After these miracles and clear signs that Allah bestowed upon the Children of Israel, when Moses (peace be upon him) went to meet his Lord and receive the Torah on Mount Sinai, and they thought that he was taking too long to return to them, they reverted to what they were familiar with of idolatry in Egypt, and they took the calf for worship.

They continued to be impatient lazy, demanding, stubborn and rebellious, until they said what Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, tells us about in the Holy Qur'an, where He says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) when you said, 'O Moosa (Moses)! We cannot endure one kind of food. So invoke your Lord for us to bring forth for us of what the earth grows, its herbs, its cucumbers, its Foom (wheat or garlic), its lentils and its onions.' He said, 'Would you exchange that which is better for that which is lower? Go you down to any town and you shall find what you want!' And they were covered with humiliation and misery, and they drew on themselves the Wrath of Allah. That was because they used to disbelieve the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah and killed the Prophets

wrongfully. That was because they disobeyed and used to transgress the bounds (in their disobedience to Allah, i.e. commit crimes and sins)"

[al-Baqarah 2:61].

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, instructed them to enter the holy land (Bayt al-Maqdis – Jerusalem – and the land of goodnes) and promised them victory, and Moses asked his people to do that. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) when Moosa (Moses) said to his people: 'O my people! Remember the Favour of Allah to you, when He made Prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other among the Alameen (mankind and jinns, in the past).

'O my people! Enter the holy land (Palestine) which Allah has assigned to you, and turn not back (in flight) for then you will be returned as losers.'

They said: 'O Moosa (Moses)! In it (this holy land) are a people of great strength, and we shall never enter it, till they leave it; when they leave, then we will enter.'

Two men of those who feared (Allah and) on whom Allah had bestowed His Grace (they were Yoosha (Joshua) and Kalab (Caleb)) said: 'Assault them through the gate, for when you are in, victory will be yours, and put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed.'

They said: 'O Moosa (Moses)! We shall never enter it as long as they are there. So go you and your Lord and fight you two, we are sitting right here.'

He (Moosa (Moses)) said: 'O my Lord! I have power only over myself and my brother, so separate us from the people who are the Fasiqoon (rebellious and disobedient to Allah)!'

(Allah) said: 'Therefore it (this holy land) is forbidden to them for forty years; in distraction they will wander through the land. So be not sorrowful over the people who are the Fasiqoon (rebellious and disobedient to Allah).'"

[al-Maa'idah 5:21-26].

Therefore Allah decreed that they should wander in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years, constantly travelling and not finding their way out of it, until that disobedient, careless generation that had left Egypt with Moses died, from whom he had encountered indescribable offence and disobedience. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says, describing the offence they caused to Moses (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (remember) when Moosa (Moses) said to his people: 'O my people! Why do you hurt me while you know certainly that I am the Messenger of Allah to you?' So when they turned away (from the Path of Allah), Allah turned their hearts away (from the Right Path). And Allah guides not the people who are Fasiqoon (rebellious, disobedient to Allah)"

[as-Saff 61:5].

Aaron died, followed by Moses (peace be upon them both) in the wilderness, and Allah brought forth among the Children of Israel Yoosha' ibn Noon (Joshua son of Nun), the servant of Moses (peace be upon them both), as a Prophet and successor to Moses (peace be upon him).

When their sojourn in the wilderness ended, Joshua (peace be upon him) brought the Children of Israel out to Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), which they besieged and Allah granted them the conquest thereof. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, commanded them, when they entered the holy land (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when We said: ‘Enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish, and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: Forgive us, and We shall forgive you your sins and shall increase (reward) for the good-doers.’

But those who did wrong changed the word from that which had been told to them for another, so We sent upon the wrong-doers Rijzan (a punishment) from the heaven because of their rebelling against Allah’s Obedience.”

[al-Baqarah 2:58].

After they entered the holy land, Joshua (peace be upon him) began to complete the conquest thereof, and he divided the conquered lands among the twelve Israelite tribes.

After the death of Joshua (peace be upon him), leadership of the Children of Israel was taken over by their judges.

End quote from *Majallat al-Jaami’ah al-Islamiyyah* (issue no. 107, p. 246-253)

LESSONS

In the Quran, we find that Allah directly addresses the Children of Israel in many places, for instance:

“O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I have bestowed upon you and fulfill My covenant [upon you] that I will fulfill your covenant [from Me], and be afraid of [only] Me.”
(2:40)

This makes you wonder why the Quran addresses the Bani Israel so often. Why is the Quran filled with their stories? One very important reason for this which is relevant to us Muslims is that the Bani Israel are our predecessors. Like us, they were blessed by Allah; they were also given a special status and some special responsibilities. However, they made mistakes and failed in their responsibilities, which was why the blessings of Allah were taken away from them. It’s crucial for us to know their mistakes so that we can guard against them.

LESSONS

1. They were sent one of the greatest prophets (Musa AS) – but most of them disobeyed him

2. They were sent the Torah ---- but they ignored the content and changed at a price

The likeness of those who were entrusted with the (obligation of the) Taurat (Torah) (i.e. to obey its commandments and to practise its legal laws), but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is as the likeness of a donkey who carries huge burdens of books (but understands nothing from them). How bad is the example (or the likeness) of people who deny the *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah. And Allah guides not the people who are *Zalimun* (polytheists, wrong-doers, disbelievers, etc.). 62: 5

3. They saw many miracles

- sea parted
- stick becomes serpent to eat magic of the sorcerers
- white hand

4. Given many ni'mah - blessings

- manna and salwa
- clouds

5. Allah Preferred the Bani Israel over other nations

O Children of Israel! Remember My Favour which I bestowed upon you and that I preferred you to the '*Alamin* (mankind and jinns) (of your time period, in the past). 2: 47

BUT due to continuous disobedience - they are no longer the best nation. WE ARE!

2: 143 , 3: 110

6. No trust in Allah

- Sabbath

7. too many questions - on the slaughtering of the cow 2: 67-71

8. Interpret Torah or Allah's instructions in accordance to their whims:

And they (Jews) say, "The Fire (i.e. Hell-fire on the Day of Resurrection) shall not touch us but for a few numbered days." Say (O Muhammad Peace be upon him to them): "Have you taken a covenant from Allah, so that Allah will not break His Covenant? Or is it that you say of Allah what you know not?" 2: 80

9. Change words of instructions

And (remember) when We said: "Enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish, and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: 'Forgive us,' and We shall forgive you your sins and shall increase (reward) for the good-doers."

But those who did wrong changed the word from that which had been told to them for another, so We sent upon the wrong-doers *Rijzan* (a punishment) from the heaven because of their rebelling against Allah's Obedience. 2: 58-59

10. Ungrateful to Allah's Blessings

Manna and salwa boring – wants more varieties 2: 61 - And (remember) when you said, "O Musa (Moses)! We cannot endure one kind of food. So invoke your Lord for us to bring forth for us of what the earth grows, its herbs, its cucumbers, its *Fum* (wheat or garlic), its lentils and its onions." He said, "Would you exchange that which is better for that which is lower? Go you down to any town and you shall find what you want!" And they were covered with humiliation and misery, and they drew on themselves the Wrath of Allah. That was because they used to disbelieve the *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah and killed the Prophets wrongfully. That was because they disobeyed and used to transgress the bounds (in their disobedience to Allah, i.e. commit crimes and sins).

11. Trying to outsmart shariah law

Sabbath – 2: 65 - And indeed you knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath (i.e. Saturday). We said to them: "Be you monkeys, despised and rejected."

12. Lack of faith – want to see Allah

And (remember) when you said: "O Musa (Moses)! We shall never believe in you till we see Allah plainly." But you were seized with a thunderbolt (lightning) while you were looking. 2: 55

 The Jews are the followers of Prophet Musa, who used to refer to the Tawrah for judgment. Yahud is a word that means, 'repenting', just as Musa said,

﴿إِنَّا هُدْنَا إِلَيْكَ﴾

In the Qur'an, the Arabic masculine singular for "Jew" is *Yahudi*, whose plural cases are *Yahud* or *Hud*. But the Qur'an gives *Yahudi* a different etymology. The verb is *hada* which

means “repented” or “returned to the right path.” This name comes sometimes in the plural verb form of *Allathina hadu* which means “those who repented.”

The Qur’an implies that the term “Jew” did not exist before Moses or, more precisely, the Torah. In other words, it was coined by Allah Himself, as He coined the term “Muslim” (22.78). The following verses confirm this fact by stressing that neither Abraham nor any of his sons

and grandsons, including Israel (Yacub), could have been a “Jew” or *Nasrani* (Christian), because both the Torah and the Injil, where these terms came from, were revealed after them.

Why the christians were called nasara

اللَّهُ أَنصَارُ نَحْنُ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ قَالَ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ أَنْصَارِي نَمُو

("Who will be my helpers in Allah's cause" Al-Hawariyyun said: "We are the helpers of Allah.") (61:14)

Ansar - helpers /supporters< p>O you who believe! Be Allah’s ansar (supporters), as Isa (AS) son of Maryam said to the companions: “Who are my ansar (supporters) in the cause of Allah?” The companions said: “We are Allah’s ansar</p>< p>(supporters).” Then a party of the Children of Israel believed and a</p>< p>party disbelieved, therefore we aided those who believed against their</p> enemy, so they became the ones that prevailed (61.14).

When Allah sent Muhammad as the Last and Final Prophet and Messenger to all of the Children of Adam, mankind was required to believe in him, obey him and refrain from what he prohibited them; those who do this are true believers. The Ummah of Muhammad was called ‘Mu'minin' (believers), because of the depth of their faith and certainty, and because they believe in all of the previous Prophets and matters of the unseen.