



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL  
**LESSONS WE SHOULD LEARN FROM THE MISTAKES OF VARIOUS  
PROPHETS**

“We relate unto you (Muhammad SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam) the best of stories through Our Revelations unto you, of this Qur'an. And before this (i.e. before the coming of Divine Inspiration to you), you were among those who knew nothing about it (the Qur'an).” 12: 2

“Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding. It (the Qur'an) is not a forged statement but a confirmation of the Allah's existing Books [the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel) and other Scriptures of Allah] and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a Mercy for the people who believe.” 12: 111

## INTRODUCTION

Prophets and Messengers, including Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), never committed any sin intentionally as an act of disobedience towards Allaah after receiving their Mission (risaalah). This is according to the consensus of the Muslims. They were protected from major sins (kabaa'ir) but not from minor sins (saghaa'ir).

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The view that the Prophets were protected from major sins (kabaa'ir) but not from minor sins (saghaa'ir) is the view of the majority of the scholars of Islam and all the sects... It is also the view of the majority of the scholars of tafseer and hadeeth, and of the fuqahaa'. Nothing was reported from any of the Salaf, Imaams, Sahaabah, Taabi'een or the successive generation that does not agree with this view.

Prophets and Messengers made mistakes, but Allaah did not approve of their mistakes; rather, He pointed out their mistakes as a Mercy to them and their ummahs, and He forgave their mistakes and accepted their repentance as a Grace and Mercy, for Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] said:

Most of the reports from the majority of scholars state that they were not infallible with regard to minor mistakes, but they were not allowed to persist in them; they do not say that this could never happen at all. The first suggestion that they were completely infallible came from the Raafidis, who say that they are so infallible that they could never make any mistake even by way of forgetfulness and misunderstanding.

(Majmoo' al-Fataawaa, 4/320).

They are infallible with regard to conveying the Message from Allaah, may He be exalted.

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

The aayaat which indicate the Prophethood of the Prophets also indicate that they are infallible with regard to the conveying of the Message from Allaah; so what they say can only be true. This is the meaning of Prophethood, which implies that Allaah tells the Prophet something of the Unseen and he tells it to the people. And the Messenger is commanded to call the people to Allaah and to convey the message of his Lord.

(Majmoo' al-Fataawaa, 18/7)

Mistakes which are committed unintentionally are of two types:

With regard to worldly matters: this happened to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). With regard to agriculture, medicine, carpentry, etc., he was like all other people. Allaah did not tell us that he was sent to us as a businessman or a farmer or a carpenter or a doctor. His mistakes in these fields are quite natural and do not impact on his Message at all.

It was reported that Raafi' ibn Khudayj said: The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came to Madeenah, and they were pollinating the date-palms. He said, "What are you doing?" They said, "We always used to pollinate them." He said, "Perhaps if you do not do that, it will be better." So they did not do it, and the harvest was lacking. They mentioned that to him, and he said, "I am only a human being like you. If I tell you to do something with regard to religion, then follow it, but if I tell you to do something based on my own opinion, I am only a human being."

(narrated by Muslim, 2361).

We note that the Messenger (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) made a mistake in this worldly matter, because he was like all other human beings, but with regard to matters of religion he did not make mistakes.

With regard to unintentional mistakes concerning matters of religion:

The most correct view among the scholars is that the way this happened with regard to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is that he might do something which is OK but it was not the more appropriate choice.

He was sometimes faced with issues concerning which there was no shar'i text on which he could base his decision, so he sought to make ijtihaad based on his own opinion, just as any Muslim scholar may make ijtihaad, and if he makes the right decision, he will be given two rewards, and if he makes the wrong decision, he will still be given one reward. This is what the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "If the judge makes ijtihaad and gets it right, he will have two rewards, and if he makes ijtihaad and gets it wrong, he will have one reward."

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6919; Muslim, 1716, from the hadeeth of Abu Hurayrah). This also happened to him concerning the prisoners of Badr.

Anas said: the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) consulted the people concerning the prisoners who had been captured on the day of Badr. He said, "Allaah has given you power over them." 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allaah, strike their necks [execute them]!" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) turned away from him. Then the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came back and said, "O people, Allaah has given you power over them and they were your brothers." 'Umar stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allaah, strike their necks [execute them]!" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) turned away from him. Then the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came back and said something similar to the people. Abu Bakr stood up and said, "O Messenger of Allaah, why don't you forgive them and accept payment of ransom from them?" The worried expression left the face of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and he forgave them and accepted their payment of ransom. Then Allaah revealed the words (interpretation of the meaning):

"It is not for a Prophet that he should have prisoners of war (and free them with ransom) until he had made a great slaughter (among his enemies) in the land. You desire the good of this world (i.e. the money of ransom for freeing the captives), but Allaah desires (for you) the Hereafter. And Allaah is All-Mighty, All-Wise" [al-Anfaal 8:67]

Narrated by Ahmad (13143).

We may note that in this case, the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) did not have any clear text so he made ijtihaad and consulted his companions, and he made a mistake in deciding what was the best thing to do.

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## 1. Prophet Adam (AS)

i. Mistake made by the prophet

Disobeyed Allah by eating from the forbidden fruit

ii. Consequences

The Blessings which Allah has Provided for him and his wife were removed (20: 121-123)

iii. How did Prophet Adam (AS) react after realising his mistake

Sought forgiveness from Allah Immediately (7: 23)

iv. Lessons for be learnt

- Allah's Command is absolute - no means no
- Some blessings of Allah will be removed from us if we disobey Allah
- Immediately repent to Allah if we disobey Allah.

## 2. Prophet Nuh (AS)

i. Mistake made by the prophet

Prophet Nuh (AS) questioned Allah when his son drowned - asking Allah why did He take away his "family" (11: 45-47)

ii. Consequences

Received admonition from Allah

iii. Reaction of prophet Nuh (AS) after this

Seek forgiveness to Allah immediately 11: 47

iv. Lessons to be learnt

- “Family members” must be interpreted by what Allah has defined to us 11: 46. Allah also Defined believers as brothers (49: 10)
- It does not mean that just because one is pious the children will automatically get Allah’s Mercy. Each will have to be accountable for his/her deeds
- Patience – do not question Allah for the trials we receive, as everything is a win-win situation and Allah would always test a believer

One of the greatest blessings of faith is the fact that everything Allah decrees for the believer, whether in ease or hardship, will be good for him. If he experiences ease, he remains grateful and is rewarded. If he experiences hardship, he remains patient and is rewarded.

Suhaib reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

Wondrous is the affair of the believer for there is good for him in every matter and this is not the case with anyone except the believer. If he is happy, then he thanks Allah and thus there is good for him, and if he is harmed, then he shows patience and thus there is good for him.

Source: Sahih Muslim 2999, Grade: *Sahih*

Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

I am amazed by the believer. Verily, Allah does not decree anything for the believer except what is good for him.

Source: Musnad Ahmad 12495, Grade: *Hasan*

(TALK ABOUT KARIM)

3. **Prophet Ibrahim (AS)** – a little bit of an exception because Allah Gave an excuse – as to why Ibrahim (AS) did this mistake

i. Mistake by the prophet

He asked Allah for forgiveness of his father who died as a polytheist

ii. Consequence

Allah Forbid the believers from praying for forgiveness of idol worshippers/polytheists who died in that state (9: 113-114) – BUT Allah Defended prophet Ibrahim (AS) because he was seeking forgiveness due to the promise he made to his father (19: 47)

iii. Lessons to be learnt

When you know that your loved ones died in a state of disbelieve, you are not allowed to seek Allah to forgive them.

#### 4. Prophet Ismail (AS)

i. Mistake made by the prophet

Made a wrong choice for a wife

ii. Consequences

His father, Ibrahim (AS) advised his son to divorce the wife

iii. Reaction of Prophet Ismail (AS)

He divorced his wife and married another more pious wife

iv. Lessons learnt

- Choose a wife in accordance to the hadith on choosing a wife:

Hadeeth was narrated by al-Bukhaari (4802) and Muslim (1466) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) who said: “A woman may be married for four things: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religious commitment. Seek the one who is religiously-committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper).”

- Be grateful to Allah at all times, regardless your financial situation

## 5. Prophet Yusuf (AS)

### i. Mistake made by the prophet

After helping to interpret the dreams of his 2 inmates in jail, prophet Yusuf (AS) was relying on the one who was released to mention his name to the king in order to get released. He did not rely on Allah's Help solely but instead chose to ask others to help him get out of prison (12: 42)

### ii. Consequences

Prophet Yusuf (AS) stayed in prison for a few more years

### iii. Reaction of prophet Yusuf(AS)

He still remains patient and eventually was released after he was able to interpret the King's dream accurately.

### iv. Lessons learnt

- Trust in Allah completely (65: 2-3)
- Be patient when Allah Tests us (2: 153)
- Allah is the Best of Planner, as Yusuf (AS) eventually became the Minister of Finance of Egypt

## 6. Prophet Yunus (AS)

### i. Mistake made by the prophet

He was sent to a nation to remind them of Allah, but they refused to listen to him. Prophet Yunus (AS) abandoned his nation before Allah Grant His permission to leave his people.

### ii. Consequences

He was eventually swallowed by a whale as a punishment by Allah.

### iii. Reaction of prophet Yunus (AS)

Immediately regretted his decision to leave his nation and seek forgiveness from Allah 21: 87

iv. Lessons to be learnt

- Enjoining good and obligation is obligatory.
- Do not give up on enjoining good forbidding evil – for us, it is a lifetime duty inshaAllah (3: 104, 3: 110)
- A very good du'a was made by Prophet Yunus (AS) – especially in times of desperation.

## 7. Prophet Dawood (AS)

i. Mistake made by the prophet (38: 23)

Prophet Dawood (AS) was asked to judge between 2 people who had a problem with their ewe. Prophet Dawood did not investigate the matter thoroughly and did not listen to both parties.

ii. Consequences

He made a wrong decision by not listening to the other party.

iii. Reaction from prophet Dawood (AS)

He sought forgiveness from Allah

iv. Lessons to be learnt

- An arbitrator MUST listen to both sides during arbitration. Failure to be fair would lead to wrong decision or advice made.

## 8. Prophet Musa (AS)

i. Mistake made by the prophet

Prophet Musa (AS) was approached by his tribe who was having a dispute with a man of another tribe. Prophet Musa (AS) immediately came to the defence of his tribe without investigating the other party on the dispute. 28: 15



ii. Consequences

Prophet Musa (AS) ended up defending the wrong party who is always causing mischief. One should not defend someone just because he or she is of your race or culture. He accidentally killed the man of the other tribe. The next day he saw the same person of his tribe having another dispute with someone else.

iii. Reaction from prophet Musa (AS)

Prophet Musa (AS) seek forgiveness with Allah, and he was advised by a secret believer that he should leave the town immediately because the authority was looking for him as they immediately found him guilty for the murder he committed. 28: 16

iv. Lessons to be learnt

- You need to investigate a dispute fairly and not be swayed by one party just because he is of your race or even family. Justice is very important.

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both (than you). So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you may avoid justice, and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, verily, Allah is Ever Well-Acquainted with what you do. 4: 135

- Things happened for a reason and Allah is the Best of Planner. Prophet Musa (AS) migrated to another land of less evil and he was able to meet his wife and lead a more peaceful life

## 9. Prophet Muhammad (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam)

i. Mistake made by the prophet (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam)

He (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam) frowned and ignored a blind man who was rushing to him (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam) for advice on religious matter, because he (SallAllahu

alayhi wa sallam) was very busy doing da'wah to the rich Quraish men.

ii. Consequence

Allah Revealed the verses in surah Abasa (80: 1-11) admonishing the prophet (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam) not to ignore the blind man just because he was very sincere to seek advice, and not to put too much attention to the rich Quraish who refused to submit to Allah.

iii. Lessons to be learnt

More attention should be paid to help those who are sincerely turning to you in order for you to help him/her to understand the Deen of Allah. Do not waste your time on giving da'wah to people who clearly refused to submit to Allah. Our job is just to remind and we are not their guardians. They will be accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgment if they refuse to submit to Allah.

### ANOTHER MISTAKE

i. Mistake made by the prophet

Making his own rules to stop eating honey, without Allah's consent, in surah Tahrim (66) verses 1-5

ii. Consequence

Allah immediately revealed verses in surah at Tahtim admonishing the prophet (SallAllahu alayhi wa sallam) that if he were to do forbid himself from doing something which Allah did not forbid then some people may follow him and causes confusion.

iii. Lessons to be learnt

- Allah has completed the Deen (5: 3) so whatever is halal and haram is very clear. In acts which is not related to worship,

the rule of thumb is that everything is allowed UNLESS there are restrictions in the Qur'an or in authentic hadeeths

- Wives of the prophets are also just humans who were prone to jealousies and competitions. BUT when they exceeded their limits, Allah admonished them by threatening to replace them with other women.=

## CONCLUSION

The Qur'an is meant for all of us to think and reflect (tadabbur)

Allah (Subhaanahu Wa Ta'aala) said in Surat Saad (38:29):

*"(This is) a Book (the Qur'an) which We have sent down to you, full of blessings that they may ponder over its verses, and that men of understanding may remember."*

Allah (Subhaanahu Wa Ta'aala) also said in Surat Muhammad (47:24):

*"Do they not think deeply in the Qur'an, or are their hearts locked up (from understanding)?"*

If man turns away from the Qur'an, his heart will be hardened and become sick at the end he will not reach the guidance nor he will get a light in his heart and this is because he did not ponder over the meaning of the Qur'an.

Allah (Subhaanahu Wa Ta'aala) said in Surat an-Nisa' (4:82):

*"Do they not then consider the Qur'an carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much contradictions."*

And in Surat al-Mu'minun (23:68), Allah (Subhaanahu Wa Ta'aala) said:

*"Have they not pondered over the Word (of Allah i.e. what is sent down to the Prophet(Salla-Allaahu alaihi wa sallam))."*

May Allah Guide us to think and reflect from the various stories of the prophets.