

ALI 354: Sura Shu'ara, verses 30- 51

Session Three

Please have a copy of the Quran with English translation

Read and reflect on verses 43-51

How can you relate this passage to the struggle between Truth and Falsehood throughout human history? What are some common characteristics?

Agenda

- Calmness of Nabi Musa
- Attitude of the magicians
- The Event
- The Magician's Response
- Firaun's response
- Lessons from this passage
- Words to ponder over

Calmness of Nabi Musa

- He knows the shallowness of the power of magic and recognizes the power of God who has commissioned him. Allah had promised that He would be with him (26:15).
- There is no trace of anxiety or nervousness in his speech. He says *Throw down what you have to throw*. In Sura Taha he says, *you go first* (20:66) and in Sura A'raaf, he just says *throw*(7:116)

Attitude of the Magicians

- Inner fear and discomfort – Earlier they had said; *if we were to be the victors...*
- Brave slogans to display an apparent confidence – *we shall surely be the victors*
- Desire to please Firaun – *By the might of Firaun*

The Event

The appointed day arrives. Firaun comes with his advisors in pomp and glory. On one side are the magicians feted by Firaun. On the other side are Nabi Musa and Nabi Harun in their simple clothes and calm manner. People throng the place.

The magicians throw their sticks. The sticks start wiggling. Nabi Musa throws his stick which swallows up the other sticks.

People are aghast. Firaun and his advisors are confused. There are some people who flee the place. Others wait to see what will happen. One group of people believe in the truth they see.

The Magician's Response

- 1) They are overcome by the truth. They recognize it is not magic. – *Thereat the magicians were thrown down prostrating*
- 2) They submit to God. Their prostrations and verbal declaration of belief in One God, in front of Firaun and his people show a complete acceptance of faith.
- 3) Belief in the three roots of religion
 - Tauheed: *We believe in the Lord of the worlds*
 - Nubuwwat: *Lord of Musa and Harun*
 - Ma'ad: *Indeed we shall return to our Lord*
- 4) Different perspective of life. Worldly pain or pleasure does not matter anymore. *No harm, Indeed we return to our Lord*

Firaun's Response

- 1) Wants complete control, even over the thoughts and beliefs of people.
- 2) Starts accusing Nabi Musa – *he is your chief who has taught you magic*. Earlier he had accused him of being a madman, now he is their teacher. The magicians were gathered from around the country. How could Nabi Musa (a) have been their teacher?
- 3) Threatens the magicians not just with death but torture and death. Hadith says he carried out his threats and Nabi Musa wept over them.
- 4) Completely unreliable. He had earlier promised them closeness to him, now he is ready to torture them to death.

Lessons from the passage

- 1) Effect of Truth. Truth has an immediate effect on people who have knowledge and who are receptive to it. The Quran talks about a group of Christians who came to the Holy Prophet (s): *And when they hear what has been revealed to the messenger you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognize; they say: Our Lord! we believe, so write us down with the witnesses [of truth]. (5:83)*
- 2) Ability to change. Humans have an amazing ability to transform. The magicians changed instantly from being worldly and controlled by Firaun to spiritual beings who cared only for the Hereafter. This ability to change gives hope for the future.
- 3) Fear of sins. The only things the magicians are afraid of is their past sins. Imam Ali (a) says; *No-one should hope except their Lord and no-one should fear except from their sin (NB, H#67)*

Words to ponder over

تَلَقَّفُ – eating up fast

يَأْفِكُونَ – portraying something as something else, disguising, deceiving

أُلْقِيَ – thrown down, involuntarily

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَ هَارُونَ – Lord of Musa and Harun, to remove any confusion or misinterpretation

لَهُ – in Him. Firaun does not want to take the name of God.

قَبْلَ – cannot be translated as ‘before’. Firaun would never have given permission. It means ‘without’. Similar to verse 18:109