

Prophet Ibrahim ﷺ
Sūra An'ām, verse 83

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ ۖ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَاءٍ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ

*This was Our argument that We gave to Abraham against his people. We raise in rank
whomever We wish. Indeed your Lord is all-wise, all-knowing. (Q 6:83)*

Commentary

This verse comes after the discussion on the argument between Prophet Ibrahim and his people. Allah says it was Our argument that we gave Ibrahim. The Prophet was made to understand what to say to the people through two things – his fitrat (natural instinct) and his aql (intelligence). Both of these are gifts granted by Allah which allow human beings to reach the correct conclusion about things. For some people these two abilities are clouded by sin and indulgence and cannot think in the correct perspective.

The word **تِلْكَ** is a demonstrative pronoun used to refer to something far. But here it is used to show something important.

This verse tells us that when we are able to reason and argue convincingly, or say anything sensible and wise, it is granted by God. When we say the right thing we are saying it on behalf of God, as His representative on earth. It is His argument that we are conveying. He inspires us His argument through our faculties and chooses whom to inspire according to His knowledge about them. This type of inspiration is a tawfiq from Allah granted only to those who deserve it.

دَرَجَاتٍ originally meant steps. Over time it became used metaphorically to show ranks and status, especially spiritual ones based on faith, knowledge, piety, wisdom, and other similar manifestations of perfection. Many verses of the Quran mention the different ranks of believers (see cross reference verses). Ranks are earned through having deep faith, consistent actions, knowledge, staying away from sins, serving God and His people etc. Life is meant to be an opportunity to rise in rank. It is like a ladder which we climb as we go through life. We should be going upwards to rise to the top. Sometimes we may slip and fall down a step or two but we have to pick ourselves up and rise again.

One passage that clearly outlines the qualities of the believers that give them high ranks is in Sūra Anfāl, verses 2-4. These verses mention five qualities of the believers;

- a) Their hearts are affected when Allah is remembered
- b) Increase of faith when listening to the Quran
- c) Trust in God
- d) Establish prayers
- e) Giving charity

These are the true believers who have high ranks with Allah. The ranks are not just for the Hereafter but apply in the world also. There is also the possibility of fluctuation of ranks.

Allah ends the verse with two of His qualities, wisdom and knowledge. The rank and status he gives to people is based on those qualities. It is not at random that people are chosen. Those who He knows deserve it and will do good with it are given certain ranks.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Ranks of the active vs. the passive - Sūra Nisaa, no.4, verse 95
- 3) Ranks in heaven – Sūra Israa, no.17, verse 21
- 4) Everyone is given ranks according to their actions – Sūra An'ām, no.6, verse 132

A story

The Humility of Prophet Ibrahim

Ibrahim spent many years in God's service. He sought out the poor and hungry and fed them generously out of what God had given him. He would pass long hours of the night prostrating upon the earth, worshiping the Almighty while others slept. And throughout his life, no matter what tribulations he faced, he never sought the help of anyone besides God

Every morning and evening, as part of his daily routine, he would say, "I awaken in the morning, praising my Lord. I awaken in the morning without ascribing partners to God or calling any other alongside God or taking any other as a helper." For all this, God wished to bestow on him a unique rank.

One day, according to his habit, Ibrahim went out to search for a poor person to bring home as a guest. After some hours, he returned, unsuccessful in his search for a guest. But when he unlocked and opened the door, there was a handsome man standing before him. Puzzled, he asked, "By whose permission did you enter this house?" The man answered, "I entered by the permission of its owner." Ibrahim understood the man's words and heartily greeted him as the Archangel Jibra'il. He asked him what had brought him here to which Jibra'il answered, "God Almighty has sent me to one of his servants. He wants me to award him with the rank of al-Khalil, the Friend of God."

Ibrahim eagerly asked, "I beg you to tell me who he is so that I may serve him for the rest of my life."

Jibra'il gave him a knowing smile, impressed by his utter humility and unassuming nature. He said, "Ibrahim, you are he." The Prophet was taken aback. Jibra'il told him, "It is because you never asked anybody besides God for anything. And he never asked you for anything but that you said, 'Yes."

(Extracted from *God's Emissaries: Adam to Jesus*)