

Prophet Ibrahim
Sura Maryam, verse 47

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ ۖ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا

He said, 'Peace be to you! I shall plead with my Lord to forgive you. Indeed, He is gracious to me.

Commentary

Despite the anger shown by Āzar, Prophet Ibrāhīm is calm and patient. This is how all the Prophets responded to those who rejected them. They did not get angry at them or show any form of disrespect.

The Salām of Ibrāhīm could have different meanings;

- a Salām of farewell, said before he left Azar and went away
- a Salām as the end of a dispute, saying there was no need to continue any more.

Instead of showing anger or being offended, Ibrāhīm tells his uncle he will seek forgiveness for him from God. This is a way of showing concern and love. He also has the hope that his uncle will be guided and hence he says he will seek forgiveness for him. A gentle reply to an angry person often calms the situation or at least keeps it from escalating into a full-blown conflict. It is difficult to do, for it is natural to become angry when the other person is angry. But with faith and self-control it is possible to achieve such a response to anger.

Ibrāhīm describes Allah as 'Hafīyya' – it means one who is perfect in virtue and respect for the rights of others. It also means one who knows all things. He knows that despite Āzar's anger and rejection, Allah will help him in his mission and has a plan for him.

Repelling evil with good

One of the highest signs of a noble character is to be able to do good to someone who has been mean to you. It requires strength of character and an ego free mind.

The Ma'sūmīn (a) have taught us this noble trait through their dealings with people. Many of those who treated them with disrespect and abuse were shown gentleness and forgiveness. A person from Shām, for instance, came to Madīna and began verbal abuse against Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba (a). The Imam responded gently and offered him help and accommodation, since he was stranger in the city. Such exalted morals of the Infallibles (a) were a key factor in winning people over to Islam and was behind the success of the leadership of the Holy Prophet (s). Of courses there will always be a small group of people who would not benefit from such gentleness and who would need to be treated firmly. These are the exceptions rather than the rule.

When the Muslims conquered Makkah, many of them felt they now had the upper hand over the people who had tortured them and turned them out from their homes. Some Muslims went around

proclaiming that now it was the day of battle, and of taking revenge. When the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (s) heard that, he immediately told them to stop. Instead he declared that now it was the day of mercy, and of showing kindness. He announced that he would say to the people of Makkah what Nabī Yūsuf (a) told his brothers: There shall be no reproof against you this day (12:92).

In life we will always get treatment that is not very pleasant from others. We must train ourselves to rise above it and not let it affect our own standards of behavior. Ultimately, it is not about us, but about the noble manners expected by the Creator. In Du‘ā Makārimul Akhlāq, Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn (a) prays for the *tamfiq* to be thus: O God . . . help me to answer him who is dishonest toward me with good counsel, repay him who separates from me with gentle devotion, reward him who deprives me with free giving, recompense him who cuts me off with joining relations to him (Du‘ā No. 20, passage 9)

Cross reference verses

Salām instead of arguing - 25:63

Salām as the end of a dispute – 28:55

Repel evil with good – 41:34

(You could also check and go over verses with ‘Salām’ in them)

Hadith

Three qualities are from the most noble and generous characters of this world and the hereafter; to forgive the one who is unjust to you, to keep relations with one who cuts off from you, and to forbear when one acts ignorantly with you.

Imam Sādiq (a)