

## Sūrat al-Baqarah Verse 247– Part 2

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا ۗ قَالُوا أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ  
بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ ۗ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ  
وَالْجِسْمِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

2:247 - Their Prophet said to them, ‘Allah has appointed Talut as king for you.’ They said, ‘How can he have kingship over us, when we have a greater right to kingship than him, as he has not been given a lot of wealth?’ He said, ‘Indeed Allah has chosen him over you, and increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-giving, all-knowing.

Note: The second part discusses the following part of the verse only:

He said, ‘Indeed Allah has chosen him over you, and increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-giving, all-knowing.

### Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why would Allah have chosen Talut as the king? What may have been some of his qualities?
- 2) When he was chosen for the position, why did Allah give him these two particular qualities?

### Commentary

The word ‘istafa’ (chose) is used many times in the Quran to show a selecting of that which is most pure. The word Mustafa, name of the Prophet (s), also comes from the same root and means the chosen one.

The answer of the Prophet counters both objections of the people. They cannot be better than Talut as God has chosen him. That fact gives him an honor which is above any that comes from lineage or family. The one who is most honored is the one who is most honored with Allah. There can be nothing above that.

Talut may not have wealth but he has been given knowledge and physical strength. The leader who leads society in a God conscious way does not require wealth to qualify for that position. His goal is to unite and strengthen the people, to enhance their quality of life so they can be good servants of Allah. When a society is led by a good leader each member is able to progress according to his or her own capacity. They are not restricted by false standards imposed by others in society. All can move towards perfection in their own orbit.

The people have a wrong image of leadership thus their criteria are also wrong. They see only worldly gain and achievements. Allah has a higher vision for society and leaders are supposed to help the members fulfill that vision. But short minded human beings who only see the apparent

world are unable to think beyond that. Thus, Allah chooses what is best for their progress and selects leaders who can help people realize their full potential in the world and the hereafter.

Two things are required for leadership that takes people towards perfection;

- 1) Knowledge of truth and falsehood, of what is good for society and what will harm it.
- 2) Strength and ability to put that into practice, to overcome evil and to adhere to the truth.

Talut has been given both qualities by Allah so he can be a good leader. Note that Allah says He has increased him in it. He had it from before but Allah made it more. The word 'bastatan' translated as abundantly refers to a wideness and expansion. The more knowledge and strength a person has the more his inner being expands.

Then the Prophet reminds them that Allah grants His kingdom to whoever he wishes. It is not enough to just have the above two qualities. Allah grants the kingdom to the person. He is in full control and no-one has the right to question Him. He is the Supreme creator of all things and decrees all things. Human beings are His servants and cannot question His actions with an attitude of rejection. No-one has a share in His authority unless he grants it to them, and even if He does it still belongs to Him. It is 'His Kingdom' that He grants.

The two names of Allah mentioned at the end of the verse emphasize the same point. Being all-Giving implies that nothing prevents Allah from giving to whoever He wishes. There is no obstacle in His way. The name also means that giving does not decrease Allah in anything. All-Knowing means His actions are based on knowledge and wisdom and are free of any mistake or imperfection.

#### Some Lessons

- 1) Members of a society are different, unique in their own capacities. A good leader is able to draw out the best in each member and help him/her grow towards perfection.
- 2) Wrong priorities in leadership lead to a dysfunctional society.
- 3) Allah's plan and vision for human society is often quite different from their own plan for themselves. This is because of the short sightedness of the human being.
- 4) Kingdom belongs to Allah and He grants it to whomever He wishes.

#### Connecting verses

Accepting God's decree, trusting His wisdom: 9:51, 33:36.

#### Connecting Topics

- 1) Knowledge vs wealth

<https://www.suficomics.com/sufi-comics/knowledge-better-wealth/>

<https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-2-letters-and-sayings/selections-sayings-and-preaching-amir-al-muminin-ali#hadith-n-147-amir-al-muminins-conversation-kumayl-ibn-ziyad-nakhai>

An interesting discussion could be on how/why society respects the wealthy.

- 2) Good leadership in Islam

<http://www.shiavault.com/books/imamat-and-khilafat/chapters/15-notes-on-leadership-in-islam>