

Sūrat al-Hud

Verse 87

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَاتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ نَتْرِكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَنْ نَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ

11:87 - They said, 'O Shu'ayb, do your prayers require that we abandon what our fathers have been worshiping, or that we should not do with our wealth whatever we wish? You are indeed a forbearing and sensible person.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What type of freedom were the people looking for? (to worship what they want and do what they like with their wealth)
- 2) Why do they think the salāt of the Prophet makes him tell them not to worship their gods and do what they want with their wealth?
- 3) What does their description of the Prophet's qualities reveal about them?

Commentary

The people reply to Prophet Shu'ayb by trying to convince him to stop inviting them to the truth. They are stubborn in their rejection of what he told them and are not willing to consider changing themselves. Instead they argue with the Prophet. They tell him that they should be free to decide who they want to worship and what they do with their wealth. If something seems wrong to him, he should not impose it on them.

They refer to his prayer and worship and say that if he wishes to get close to Allah he should do that for himself and not go beyond that. He is not responsible for them. The people pose these points in a question, in a manner that is condescending. 'Is it your salāt that is making you talk like this?' implying that the salāt should be for personal taqwa only and he was making a mistake by extending that to warning his people.

The reason for mentioning the salāt in this verse has been interpreted in different ways;

- 1) It is possible that salāt here refers to religion as it is the main pillar of religion.
- 2) Prophet Shu'ayb used to pray a lot and told his people that prayer prevents indecency and corruption. These ignorant people made fun of it and asked him if his prayer told him to stop them from freedom in what they wanted to do.
- 3) It is an indication that salāt should be for personal God consciousness only. It was wrong if it led him to impose his God consciousness on others.

If they really reflected on it, salāt leads a person to be more God conscious and righteous. It helps him to recognize the truth and creates an inner light in him. It keeps him away from falsehood and more aware of the consequence of good and bad deeds. One who prays regularly can see things more clearly and is thus able to guide others. The Prophet was fully aware of the truth of worshipping only One God and he wanted to guide his people to that truth.

The Prophet wanted to educate the people that possessing something does not mean there is complete freedom in using it as desired. Whatever we own is actually from Allah and we are trustees

for Him. We use it as He expects us to. Freedom without any laws or restrictions is not true freedom, because people then become slaves of their own desire and passions. Obedience to Allah brings freedom of subjection to anyone else, and also from subjection to the lower self. This was the reality behind the message of Prophet Shu‘ayb.

The people told the Prophet that he was forbearing and sensible and thus should not make such unreasonable demands of them. He should not rush into condemning them as he was ‘Halim’, a person who is able to tolerate much before judging. He was also sensible and should not be acting foolishly. They believed he was wrong, or even foolish, to tell them such things. Wrong is always bad, but when it comes from someone who has good qualities, it becomes worse. This was the message they were conveying. They did not expect such words from someone who was forbearing and sensible. Some commentators have said it could be out of mockery, but according to Allāmah Tabātabā’ī in *Tafsīr al-Mizām* the emphasis on the qualities show they were not mocking.

Lessons

- 1) Stubborn people find different excuses to justify their rejection of the truth.
- 2) Freedom is not just being able to do what you like with what you have.
- 3) Forbearance and common sense are good qualities that everyone recognizes.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Stubborn rejection of other Prophets; Holy Prophet (s) – 21:5, Prophet Ibrahim (s) – 21:55, Prophet Nuh (a)- 54:9,
- 2) Allah as Forbearing – 2:225, 2:263, 35:41. Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail as forbearing – 11:75, 37:101

Rislatul Huquq

- a) Right of the adversary who has a claim against you - The right of the adversary (khasm) who has a claim against you is that, if what he claims against you is true, you give witness to it against yourself. You do not wrong him and you give him his full due. If what he claims against you is false, you act with kindness toward him and you show nothing in his affair other than kindness; you do not displease your Lord in his affair. And there is no strength save in God.
- b) Right of the adversary against whom you have a claim - The right of the adversary against whom you have a claim is that, if your claim against him is true, you maintain polite moderation in speaking to him and you do not deny his right. If your claim is false, you fear God, repent to Him, and abandon your claim.

Connecting topic

Forbearance - [https://en.wikishia.net/view/Hilm_\(forbearance\)](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Hilm_(forbearance))

True Freedom - <https://academyofislam.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ALI-352-Spiritual-Freedom.pdf>