

Sūrat al-Hud Verses 38-39

يَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ ۗ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ

11:38 - And he began to make the ark; and whenever the chiefs from among his people passed by him they laughed at him. He said: If you laugh at us, surely we too shall laugh at you as you laugh at us.

فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ

11:39 - Soon you will know whom a disgraceful punishment will overtake and on whom a lasting punishment will come down.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why would the chiefs laugh at Prophet Nuh (a)? Would the rest of the society also react in the same way? How are the chiefs different?
- 2) What is the Prophet referring to when he says they too will laugh at them?
- 3) Are there two different punishments being mentioned in verse 39, or the same punishment with different effects?

Commentary

It is the habit of arrogant and hard-hearted people to reject what they don't want with an air of false superiority. They want to show that they are better – in their thinking, their speech, and their lifestyle – so they put down that which they reject. There is no trace of humility or space left for the possibility that they may have to accept it one day.

Such were the people of Prophet Nuh (a). They rejected his mission. But the way they did it and their behaviour towards the Prophet aggravated the sin of their rejection. It is one thing to turn away from the truth. But it is another to embark on ridicule and mockery to put it down.

The process of building the ark was a huge one. Some historians have given the details of how large the ark was and the amount of time it took to build it. As the Prophet and his close companions worked hard to obey the command of Allah to build the ark, people who passed by them laughed at them. They passed comments to deride the Prophet and the believers and tried to make others laugh at them. They asked if the Prophet had decided to become a carpenter, or where the water was, why he was building an ark in the desert, and why he was building such a huge one when he only had a few followers. These people ridiculed him and discussed him in their homes and workplaces. They portrayed him as an old man who had gone mad and felt justified at not following him.

This behaviour was especially true of the group of people who were the chiefs at that time. They were the people in authority and controlled society. They were proud of their power and wealth and

considered the weak among them as lowly and inferior. Even if these people had pure hearts, special virtues, and noble ways of thinking, in their eyes they did not hold much value. This is how society often is. People with certain positions and power become arrogant and hard-hearted. Not only do they dismiss the truth, but they work actively to campaign against it. They spread their evil and falsehood to others.

Mockery is a strategy used by those who wish to put down a serious truth. When they cannot answer it with reason and facts, they resort to a base form of behaviour - making fun of it. This was used in history against those who preached the truth. And it is also used in today's society. Muslims are mocked for their way of dressing, for their life style, their devotion to religion, etc. It is not a new thing. The mockery takes on the form of discrimination, even institutionalized discrimination. Human beings are often cruel and insensitive and can bully those who they do not accept. Believers have to remain firm against this and see through the mockery. Then it would not affect their spirit.

Prophet Nuh (a) was not affected by their mockery. His faith and determination did not waver and he continued to build the ark. He had a strong will and the mockery of people whose souls were dead did not weaken his will. Occasionally he would stop and answer the people; *If you laugh at us, surely we too shall laugh at you as you laugh at us.* There would come a day when the water would drown these people, and the believers could laugh at their ignorance and lack of understanding.

Verse 39 tells them that though they may inflict emotional hardship on the believers for a while, that would soon pass. It cannot be compared to the punishment that would come from Allah. That punishment would be an actual humiliation for them and would be for eternity. According to Tafsir al-Mizan, the humiliating punishment refers to the drowning, and the lasting punishment to that in the hereafter.

Lessons

- 1) Mocking other is a sign of arrogance and hard-heartedness.
- 2) People mock and ridicule that which they cannot understand.
- 3) True believers are not overly affected by mockery.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Mockery of the unbelievers – 83:29-34
- 2) Mocking the truth – 13:32, 45:9

Connecting topics

- 1) Mocking others - <https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-534-on-q-4911-mocking-others/>
- 2) Mocking God's signs - <https://academyofislam.com/quranic-reflection-no-731-ayat-459-mocking-gods-signs/>
- 3) Dealing with mockery of religion - <https://muslimmatters.org/2012/09/16/39567/>

Story

Abu Aqil Ansari was one of those companions of the Prophet (a) who had the smallest of pockets but the biggest of hearts. When the Prophet asked Muslims to bring forth their sadaqah (charity) for the expedition of Tabuk, he had nothing to give. So he went looking for work and found a job with

someone who needed some water hauling. Abu Aqil was hence among the last to come forth with charity – a Sa` of dates (few dates). He said: `O Allah's Messenger! This is a Sa` of dates. I spent the night bringing water and earned two Sa` of dates for my work. I kept one Sa` (for my family) and brought you the other Sa`. The Messenger of Allah ordered him to spread it over all the charity (that others brought). His sadaqah was little but carried the weight of Uhud mountain. Some men mocked Abu Aqil, saying, `Allah and His Messenger are not in need of this charity. What benefit would this Sa` of yours bring'. They laughed at him, saying, `Allah does not need the Sa` of Abu `Aqil." – Upon which Allah revealed the verse of Quran; *They who taunt those of the faithful who give their alms freely, and those who give to the extent of their earnings and ridicule them; Allah will pay them back their ridiculing, and they shall have a painful chastisement.* [9:79]

Lessons learned from his story:

- a) Growth mindset is a gift. He didn't limit himself to what he didn't have. He didn't let a fixed mindset take hold of him. He went out looking for work so he could contribute something, even if it's little.
- b) Nothing is too small in front of Allah as long as our hearts are big and our intentions are pure. May Allah accept our sadaqah – little and big – and turn them into valuable treasures with Him too.

(Story adapted from <https://www.facebook.com/113792563648615/posts/115135503514321/>)