

Sūrat al-Hud Verses 40-41

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَن سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ
وَمَن آمَنَ ۖ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ*

11:40 - Until when Our command came, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth, We said; Carry in it a pair of every kind [of animal], along with your family—except those against whom the command has already been given—and those who have faith.’ And none believed with him except a few.

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

11:41 - He said, ‘Board it, In the Name of Allah it shall set sail and cast anchor. Indeed, my Lord is all-forgiving, all-merciful.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What was the command of Allah referred to in this verse?
- 2) Who were the three groups of people who would go with Prophet Nuh (a)? Who would be exempt?
- 3) How does the Prophet apply the Bismillah in this situation? (in its movement and its stopping – all movement and action is done by the power and permission of Allah).

Commentary

The verses now begin narrating how the punishment came down on the people of Prophet Nuh (a). The Prophet and his small group of believers had built the ark and tolerated the mockery of the people. Now they awaited the command of Allah. The word Tannur refers to the earthen ovens in the walls where normally there would be fire. Bread would be baked in it. When the water began rising from underground, it bubbled through the walls and out of these earthen ovens. It was a sign that something was happening. For Prophet Nuh (a) and his followers it was a sign to get ready. The disbelievers ignored the signs and didn’t give it much thought. Sometimes there are signs which God gives us and we fail to pay attention. Receptive hearts are those which are quick to see and understand the signs around them.

Then the Almighty tells Prophet Nuh (a) to take with him a pair of every animal, so their species does not perish in the flood. He is also told to take his family members, except those against whom there has been a previous command, and the people who believed in him. The phrase ‘those against whom the command has already been given’ refers to the wife of Prophet Nuh (named Waghila, according to some reports) and his son Kan’an. Both had not believed in the message of the Prophet and had lost the right to be part of the family that would be saved. The wife of the Prophet betrayed him. Not only did she not believe in his message, she sided with his enemies and worked against him. She joined them when they would mock him. She would also tell the people that her husband had become old and feeble and was not aware of what he was saying, so they should not believe in him.

Only a few people accepted the message of Prophet Nuh (a). Despite struggling for so many years, some traditions say only about 80 people accepted him. Others say it was less than that. The verse specifically mentions that it was a very small group. The Prophet worked hard to guide each of the members of this small group who were receptive to his mission.

The Prophet gathered all the believers and when it was close to the time of the flood, he asked them to embark on the ark. It was in the name of Allah that they would set sail and they would stop and anchor the ark in his name also. The ark was just a means. It was Allah's power that moved things. All movement or cessation of movement cannot happen without the permission of Allah.

Everything that a believer does is in the name of Allah. The Holy Prophet (s) says; *Anything that does not begin in the name of Allah is cut off (incomplete)*. This means that although the physical act may be done, the spiritual part of the act which makes it remain forever is missing. Any action done in the name of Allah, even a small one, will always remain. It has an inner core and essence that is indestructible. But actions done without God's name are fleeting and short lived.

Verse 41 ends with two beautiful qualities of Allah, His forgiveness and mercy. It is these two qualities that helped the believers who were saved despite their faults and sins. And it is these two qualities that gave the non-believers so much chance before the punishment came down. These qualities existed for them also, but they chose not to benefit from them.

Lessons

- 1) Signs of Allah should not be ignored. Receptive hearts are quick to see them.
- 2) Faith in Allah is a necessary condition for salvation.
- 3) Anything which is not done in the name of Allah is incomplete.

Cross reference verses

- 1) Wife of Prophet Nuh (a) – 66:10
- 2) Guidance and salvation through belief in Allah – 2:285, 4:136, 9:18,

Connecting topics

- 1) Differences in the family members of Prophets
<https://www.aljumuah.com/even-the-prophets-had-family-problems-maryam-amirebrahimi/>
- 2) Actions done in the name of Allah
<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-1/surah-al-fatihah-chapter-1>
<https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/uae-friday-sermon-start-every-action-with-the-name-of-allah-1.707285>

Interesting Links

<https://timfrankarchaeology.wordpress.com/2012/05/10/building-a-tannur/>