

Ashre Zaynabiyya 1435
Lecture 2, Monday 16th December 2013
Syed Ali Hur Kamanpoori

Introduction:

Throughout the course of the lectures, the themes that will be focused on are:

- Criticisms and objections which are raised against Islam in general
- Criticisms and objections which are raised against Shia Islam in particular

Different kinds of objections:

- Objections which are unfounded and need to be exposed because they carry ignorance
- Objections which have some truth in them, in which case the truth needs to be differentiated from falsehood.

This was the approach of Imam Ali (a):

At the time of Imam Ali, the khawaarij raised a slogan to reject Imam Ali. This slogan was based on the verse that says "authority is only with Allah". The Imam did not reject this objection, he had to differentiate the truth in the objection from the falsehood.

Imam Ali said the statement is true, however the intention behind this and the interpretation of rejecting my authority based on this is false.

From the issues raised against the Sh'ia, one is that we focus too much on history. Every year we commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein and the incident of Kerbala took place 1400 years ago.

when the issue is raised by our brothers and sisters in the Muslim ummah, we are asked by them if there is any Qur'anic foundation or support from hadith literature as to why we remember these personalities every year?

ANS: Any personality from whose life useful lessons can be derived from, Allah swt has mentioned their stories so that we can learn from them. Surahs such as Maryam and Luqmaan are a testimony to this. For example, the advice Luqmaan gave to his son was so important that Allah considered it worthy to place in the Qur'an.

Surah [19:16]

And mention, [O Muhammad], in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place toward the east.

God commands the prophet to mention the story of Lady Maryaam when he says "and mention" in the start of the verse.

Surah [19:41]

And mention in the Book [the story of] Abraham. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet.

Here, again he gives the command to recall the story of Ibrahim when he says "and mention"

Surah [19:51]

And mention in the Book, Moses. Indeed, he was chosen, and he was a messenger and a prophet.

What we notice here is that throughout the Surah, the command of "And mention" is often repeated, the question that is raised is why is God asking us to recall all these personalities and their events which took place in the distant past.

The answer to this is given in verse 58 of the same surah:

Before this verse is understood, we must first understand the verse in surah fatiha where we ask God to guide us to the straight path, thereafter we ask him to guide us to the path of those whom God has given his favour and not of those whom his wrath has descended on. (Verses 6-7)

The focus here is that God places a subjective meaning to the straight path, it is described by those individuals whom God has given his favour. It is not described by objective characteristics. Therefore to follow the straight path we need to identify those individuals whom God has placed his favours on and we have to seek to emulate them. It now makes sense as to why God always mentions to the Prophet in surahs such as surah maryam to account stories of people of the past whom God has placed his favours on.

We can now appreciate verse 58 of Surah Maryam:

"Those were the ones upon whom Allah bestowed favour from among the prophets of the descendants of Adam and of those We carried [in the ship] with Noah, and of the descendants of Abraham and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose."

These are some example of people whose lives we ought to study and lessons to follow which can ensure we walk on the straight path. Once these role models are identified, anyone who opposes them automatically become the people who are astray, the people whom we ask God to steer us away from in surah Fatiha.

e.g If prophet Ibrahim is one whom God has favoured. Namrood (his adversary) automatically becomes one who is astray.

An authentic hadith to help us establish whether Imam Hussein is of the people whom God has favoured and one whose story we should constantly remember year on year is as follows:

"Al hassan and Al hussein are the masters of the youth of paradise" - Prophet Muhammad pbuh. This hadith is classified as mutawattir. This means it is agreed by all scholars that this hadith is undoubtedly authentic.

This hadith establishes that Imam Hussein is more than worthy of being of the people that God has favoured that we have to follow. The Qur'anic principle is that these people's lives need to be recalled often such as it has in one instance in surah Maryam. Ultimately, we are the beneficiaries of these stories. Remembering these pious personalities is not to increase historical awareness, it is the means to a goal. The goal is as stipulated in surah yusuf:

Surah [12:7]

Certainly were there in Joseph and his brothers signs for those who ask

The goal is to answer questions which we may have as individuals because of our inquisitive nature.

Similarly, this goal and purpose is reiterated towards the end of this Surah:

Surah [12:111]

There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Qur'an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe.

The goal is to derive inspiration and guidance from the numerous stories that are there in the Qur'an.

Again, the purpose of these stories is narrated in Surah Hud.

Surah [11:120]

And each [story] We relate to you from the news of the messengers is that by which We make firm your heart. And there has come to you, in this, the truth and an instruction and a reminder for the believers.

The purpose outlined here is to make the firm the "heart" of the prophet, and by extension, to all the readers of these stories. To inspire with courage.

We have to remember Imam Hussein (a) so that we can derive inspiration from his sacrifice. The goal is not to remember him, for when the goal becomes just to remember him, we become ritualistic in our performance of Aza and lose sight of the purpose.

The Gham part of the lecture looks at how the Prophet (saw) was seen to have cried uncontrollably when Jibraeel informed him of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussein when the Imam was just a baby. This means that it is the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) to shed tears and weep for Imam Hussein (a) whilst remembering the goal is to derive inspiration.

The inspiration from karbala can be derived for all ages. One particular age group is the elderly which can gain inspiration from Muslim ibn Awsaja. He was one of the oldest companions of Imam Hussein, he was so old that his back was bent.

When the Imam said on the night before the battle that people are free to abandon him right now as the night has fallen on them. They have no obligation to stay and fight. The reply was synonymous from everyone. Hz abbas representing the youths said that 'we will never leave your side'. The children of Aqeel spoke for their family. The older group was represented by Muslim ibn Awsaja when he said 'Oh son of the prophet, what answer will we give to Allah if we abandon you now, on the day of judgement? - by Allah, I will not rest until I attack your enemies. O Imam I realise I am a very old man, but I promise you I will fight them till my last breath.'