

السَّلَامُ عَلَى نُوْحٍ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ

PROPHET NŪH^[A.S.]

نبي الله نوح (ع)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

Prophet Nūh (Noah as)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Review Prophet Noah's position as one of the great law-making Prophets
- Review the details of Prophet Noah's mission, particularly focusing on his forbearance
- Discuss the importance of the quality of perseverance on the right path (al Istiq'amah)
- Discuss goal-setting, overcoming challenges and having determination

“It was said to Noah: disembark with peace from us and blessings” “Greetings (from Allah) upon Noah from among the creation” (37:79)

Prophet Noah was one of the very earliest Prophets sent by Allah (SWT) to a people who were worshipping idols and who had gone astray in their actions and beliefs.

“Surely We sent Noah to his people, saying: Warn your people before there come upon them a painful chastisement”

The Qur'an tells us that Prophet Noah was sent specifically to his people and not people in general. Prophet Noah was therefore a prophet and a messenger, who received revelation and had the responsibility of guiding his people to the right path.

Prophet Noah is also one of the five principal law making (ul'ul 'azm) Prophets who came with a message and a book of laws for people to follow.

PROPHET NOAH: AN EXAMPLE OF PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance means to have steady persistence in a course of action, a purpose or a state especially in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement. This means not giving up on the truth, no matter how difficult it becomes. Prophet Noah was one man who never gave up on his mission to guide his people to the right path. Let's see how the Allah (SWT) shows Prophet Noah's perseverance in the Qur'an.

Prophet Noah has been introduced to us as a symbol of patience. The reason behind this is that he was

preaching the message of Allah (SWT) for 950 years, with only 80 people believing in him. The Qur'an says he was a prophet who used very sound arguments to convince and guide his people – he used common sense and logic, kind words and was very gentle and compassionate to his people. However, even after so many years to teaching and preaching, not many people listened to him.

All of his followers were poor people, because the wealthy people were too proud to listen to what Prophet Noah (as) has to say. He told his people,

"Worship only Allah (SWT). There is no God but Him. Otherwise, I fear that you will see the punishment of a painful day." (7:59)

The chiefs of the people laughed at Prophet Noah (as). One of their leaders stepped forth and said: 'you are nothing but a man like us. We don't see anything special about you. You have only a few followers and they are the poorest and the lowest from among us. We do not think that you are better than we are. In fact, we think you are a liar!'

The chiefs thought that just because they had a lot of money, they were better than Prophet Noah (as) and his followers. They used this as an excuse not to believe in Islam. The leaders of the town became upset and angry because Prophet Noah (as) had made very good and convincing arguments but one of the chiefs finally said, 'O, Noah! You have argued with us so many times and we still don't care what you say. We don't believe you.'

The Qur'an then describes what Prophet Noah felt after so much effort and time with these stubborn people:

"He said: O my Lord! Surely I have called my people by night and by day! And whenever I have called them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride: Then surely I called to them aloud: Then surely I spoke to them in public and I spoke to them in secret..."

After preaching and being patient for 950 years, Prophet Noah's people reached such a stage that they would not believe anymore. Allah (SWT) knew in His Knowledge that not one more of Prophet Noah's people would come to believe. In addition to this, Prophet Noah's people asked and egged on Prophet Noah to bring on

the punishment. At this stage, Prophet Noah prayed for Allah (SWT) to punish these people.

Allah (SWT) only punished them when He knew that not even one more of them would believe if they were given more time. In fact, if they had been given more time, they would also mislead those who had already believed. When this happened, Allah (SWT) revealed to Prophet Noah to build an ark. His people started mocking and ridiculing him. He simply kept quiet and kept doing his job.

Prophet Noah then asks Allah (SWT) to not leave any trace of them on the Earth:

"And Noah said: My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers"

Then a huge flood began. Even after the flood began, people were given a chance to embark on the ark. Meanwhile the Qur'an says that Noah was ordered to take with him his family (except his son), a pair of each domestic animal and the believers who believed in Noah (as).

"Until when Our command came and water came forth from the valley, We said: Carry in it two of all things, a pair, and your own family– except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe. And there believed not with him but a few."

Allah (SWT) therefore destroyed all the disbelievers including the son of Prophet Noah who refused to believe in Allah (SWT), by drowning them in the flood and saving Prophet Noah and those who believed, with the Ark that was built.

AL-ISTIQA'AH

It is important to note the difference between perseverance and effort. There are some people who do make efforts in the beginning, yet they break down when confronted with difficulties. The important thing, therefore, is that we do not just start a task and then give up easily. Instead, we should keep our motivation and determination and overcome any obstacles we might face and work through them. This is what we learn from the story of Prophet Noah.

persevere

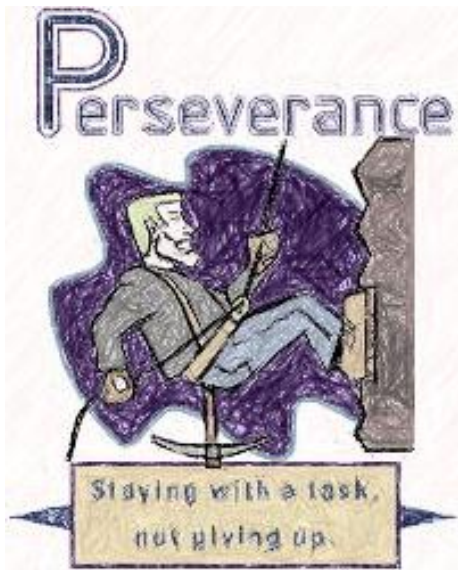
to persist in anything undertaken; maintain a purpose in spite of difficulty, obstacles, or discouragement; continue steadfastly.

Every triumph is not of the same kind. Sometimes it arrives early and sometimes it takes a long time. One must not expect that everything would be done in the same manner and that everything will end in success.

So if success does not arrive early one must not give up efforts. One must not imagine that victory is impossible and very difficult.

A great Muslim scholar narrates the following

story: 'I have learnt firm determination from an insect called 'Bijju'. Once I was sitting near a clean and shining pillar in the Masjid when I observed that a tiny insect was attempting to climb the upright stone pillar to reach a lamp that was on the top. I kept sitting the whole night and observing until dawn how relentlessly that insect was struggling to climb up the slippery column. I counted 700 attempts when he was falling down from the middle of the path because the pillar was very smooth and glassy. His legs could not hold on. I was extremely astonished to see the extraordinary determination of that little worm. As it was time for Fajr Prayer I got up from my place, made ablution and engaged myself in worship. After concluding my prayers I looked back toward the pillar to find to my absolute astonishment that, as a result of its perseverance and untiring effort the insect had achieved its aim and was sitting close to the burning light!"



THE ROLE OF PERSEVERANCE IN LEARNING

The story of a famous seventh century Muslim scholar, 'Sakkaki', is also very interesting. He began to study at the age of thirty. Though his teachers were not at all hopeful of his success he continued his study with wonderful zeal and enthusiasm. With a view to test the extent of his intelligence a teacher once posed a problem of jurisprudence before him.

The teacher said: 'the teacher says that the skin of a dog becomes clean and pure by pounding.' Sakkaki was supposed to learn this sentence by heart. So he repeated it many times and became ready to recite it when called for. The next day the teacher asked him to recite the sentence in front of all the other students. He stood up at once to say: 'The dog says the teacher's skin becomes clean and pure by pounding.'" Hearing this, everyone, including the teacher, burst into laughter.

Yet the aged pupil's determination was so sound that despite this experience he did not give up his study, but followed the same course for another ten years. Of course, due to advancing age, his grasping power was becoming weak day by day.

Once he had gone to the forest to study where he noticed that drops of rainwater constantly fell on a rock and made marks on that hard stone. He thought over it and told himself, "My heart is not harder than this rock. If drops of knowledge fall on it constantly like these raindrops they too would certainly leave imprints on it, at least to some extent." He returned home and began to study with added zeal.

At last, as a result of his untiring and continuous efforts and non-stop endeavour he became a distinguished personality of the literary circles of the Arab world. He authored a book, which was, for many years, a textbook in the course of Arabic education.

Therefore, perseverance and uprightness are among the distinctive features of a believer. Allah (SWT) has given glad tidings to those who observe fortitude and perseverance in their affairs. In fact, this is the best means of leading one's life. Then one who wishes to succeed in this world and hereafter must embrace these characteristics.



Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

“One who is steadfast (perseveres) shall get Paradise, but the one who is afflicted with doubt and disbelief shall get the fire.”ⁱⁱ

Review Questions

Q1. How long did Prophet Noah guide and preach his people for:

- a. 2000 years
- b. 950 years
- c. 300 years

Q2. Why did Prophet Noah's son also get punished and drown?

- a. He disbelieved in Allah (SWT)
- b. He thought he could swim out of the flood
- c. He tried to save other people

Q3. What is the most important lesson we learn from Prophet Noah's Life?

- a. That we should always remain firm and persevere in the path of Allah
- b. That we should train our children to be more obedient
- c. That we should pray to Allah to punish the bad people immediately

ⁱ REFERENCES

- Secrets of Success, by Ayatullah Ja'far Subhani - http://www.al-islam.org/secrets_of_success/title.htm
- Ancient Prophets for a Modern World – Lecture by Sheikh Mansour Leghaei
- Nahjul Balagha
- The Story of Prophet Noah - http://en.rafed.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3074:prophet-noah&catid=361:the-prophets&Itemid=865

ⁱⁱ (*Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 119*)