

السَّلَامُ عَلَى نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ ايوب

PROPHET AYYOUB (JOB^{A.S})

(ع) ايوب نبي الله

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

SENIOR LEVEL

Prophet Ayyūb(Job) (as)

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Know the story of Prophet Ayyūb (as) in more detail
- Discuss the virtues of Prophet Ayyūb (as)
- Know the difference between the Biblical and Qur'anic versions of the story
- Understand the morals from the story of Prophet Ayyūb (as)

In this lesson we will discuss the story of Prophet Ayyūb (as) in more detail than in the previous years. Prophet Ayyūb (as) has been highly praised in the Holy Qur'an for his unwavering patience in the face calamities. His story has very important lessons and reminders for us about how to deal with calamities, the hidden blessings around these calamities and also the manner of supplicating to Allah (SWT). While the Bible has also mentioned this story, it is quite different from the version in the Holy Qur'an and in this lesson we will compare the two.

The name 'Ayyūb' in Hebrew means either 'the one attacked by Satan', or the 'the one who attacked Satan'. In Arabic it means 'the one who constantly returns to Allah (SWT)'. In English he is called Job. He was also one of the descendants of Prophet Abraham (as), and perhaps his wife was related to Prophet Yūsuf (as).

BIBLICAL AND QUR'ANIC VERSIONS OF THE STORY

In the Bible, Prophet Ayyūb (as) is not considered a Prophet. He was a pious man with lots of wealth – apparently the richest man on earth at the time - and a large family. He would never eat unless he left a share for the poor people. Satan tells Allah (SWT) that Prophet Ayyūb (as) is obedient and good only because he is living an easy and comfortable life and should he be tried with calamities, Prophet Ayyūb (as) will stray from the right path. The Bible then says that Allah (SWT) tried Prophet Ayyūb (as) and so this prophet began complaining about the cruelty of Allah (SWT). There are 42 chapters on his life story and complaints in the Bible.

The Holy Qur'an has mentioned the story of Prophet Ayyūb (as) in six short but profound āyāt.. As mentioned, there exists a stark difference in both the content and structure of the story between the Holy Qur'an and the Bible. Unlike the

ordinary reference of PAyyūb (as) in the Bible, the Holy Qur'an refers to Prophet Ayyūb (as) as one who has received special guidance from Allah (SWT):

“And We bestowed upon him (Abraham), Isaac and Job, each of them We guided...” (6:84)

Whilst the Bible has accused Prophet Ayyūb (as) of complaining to God about his calamities, the Holy Qur'an praises Prophet Ayyūb (as) for being patient and for being an excellent devotee and slave of Allah (SWT) i.e. one who has never preferred his desires over the will and command of Allah (SWT). Also, because Prophet Ayyūb (as) always resorted to Allah (SWT) in every situation he was in, similar to a baby who always seeks out its mother, Allah (SWT) gives him the title of 'oft-returning':

“Truly, We found him (Ayyūb) patient! How excellent a slave he was! Ever did he turn (to Us).” (38:44)

THE STORY

Prophet Ayyūb (as) was a very wealthy man with large amounts of land and cattle. He lived with a big family and he enjoyed a lot of respect from his community. Despite these riches, he was a very pious man and lived a life totally devoted to Allah (SWT). According to some narrations, even the angels admitted that there existed none in the Earth as pious as Prophet Ayyūb (as). Satan was unable to gain any sort of control over Prophet Ayyūb (as) and therefore he went to Allah (SWT) with a plan. He told Allah (SWT) that the reason why Prophet Ayyūb (as) is so pious is because of the comfortable life he is living and that the moment his wealth is snatched from him, Ayyūb (as) will turn away from Allah (SWT).

Allah (SWT), The All Wise, gave Satan the power to snatch away Prophet Ayyūb's (as) wealth from him. Within a short time, all of Prophet Ayyūb's (as) farms were destroyed and all his servants and cattle died. The once richest man of his time had now absolutely no means to provide even for the basic necessities. In this situation, Prophet Ayyūb (as) would repeatedly exclaim:

“Allah gives to whom He wills and takes from whom He wills.”

Prophet Ayyūb (as) saw no reason to panic and maintained a calm demeanour as if nothing had happened. His faith was untouched and his spiritual

connection with his beloved God only grew stronger. Satan's plan had failed!

Satan once again went to Allah (SWT) and argued that the real test for someone is not necessarily through loss of wealth but through loss of children. He once again sought power to take away Prophet Ayyūb's (as) children and family from him with the hope that this loss would turn him away from Allah (SWT). It was only a matter of time before Satan set the house of Prophet Ayyūb (as) crashing, killing all his family and children except his wife. Prophet Ayyūb (as) showed unfathomable patience at this great loss and once again said:

“Allah gives to whom He wills and takes from whom He wills.”

Satan was running out of options but tried one last attempt. This time he asked Allah (SWT) to give him the power to make Prophet Ayyūb (as) ill – an illness that would leave him bedridden for very many years. Allah (SWT) permits him but says: “I give you authority over his body but not over his intellect, soul and heart.”

The Biblical version reports that Prophet Ayyūb (as) fell so ill that his body gave out a bad stench such that no one could even come close to him. As Muslims we do not agree with this because we believe that since the bodies of the Prophets are so pure, holy and dignified in the eyes of Allah (SWT), they can never smell bad even when they are dead, let alone when they are alive. The narrations about his body having horrible ulcers and wounds is also not considered true.

Prophet Ayyūb's (as) illness left him isolated. Even his wife had become more a nurse. At one point when Satan realised that Prophet Ayyūb's (as) faith was almost impenetrable, he decided to try to misguide him through his wife. So he approached her in the form of a human being and promised her a cure only if Prophet Ayyūb (as) acknowledged that it was he (Satan) and not Allah (SWT) that cured him. Thus, she began to frequently nag Prophet Ayyūb (as) with the hope of instilling doubt into his heart. Prophet Ayyūb (as) realised that she had been influenced by Satan and he got upset. He said to her in a soft voice: “If I ever regain health, I swear I will punish you with strokes”. He then asked her to leave him alone.

A few days later a group of Rabbis came to visit Prophet Ayyūb (as) and said to him condescendingly: ‘God has

left you! We wonder what kind of sin you have committed to deserve this divine torment.'

Prophet Ayyūb (as) still remained patient and said to them that this was simply a trial.

THE PRAYER OF PROPHET AYYŪB (AS)

Throughout this trial, Prophet Ayyūb (as) never complained to Allah (SWT) about his situation nor supplicated to Him in a demanding tone. The Holy Qur'an quotes Prophet Ayyūb's (as) plea for relief from Allah (SWT). Pay attention to the politeness of the supplication despite the desperation:

"O My Lord, harm has touched me and You are The Most Merciful" (21:83)

Allah (SWT) answered the prayer of his beloved Prophet and reunited him with his family and friends, returned his wealth and provided him good health. Allah (SWT) has promised to answer all our prayers too when He says:

"And your Lord said: "Call on Me, (and ask Me for anything) I will respond to your (invocation)." (40:60)

Through this story, Allah (SWT) also exposed the weakness of Satan and proved him wrong.

Since Prophet Ayyūb (as) had promised his wife that he would punish her on getting well, Allah (SWT) ordered him to gently strike her such that she does not get hurt:

"And take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith (your wife), and break not your oath" (38:44)

LESSONS FROM THE STORY

- The first lesson that we learn from this story is that this world is a place for trial and tests and no one, including the Prophets, are spared from it. While the trials for ordinary people are a means of purification for their sins, the trials that Prophets undergo are a means of elevating them spiritually. To live in this world and not expect any difficulty and hardship is like diving into water and expecting to come out dry.
- While everyone must be tested and tried, the difficulty of each test varies from person to person depending on their spiritual make-up. Each test is 'tailor-made' to suit the individual

and to strengthen a particular weakness in him. Allah (SWT) will never place on our shoulders the responsibilities that He placed on His Prophets. We should therefore never complain that what has befallen upon us is too difficult and unfair. Allah (SWT) says:

"Allah burdens not a person beyond what he can bear" (2:286)

- Each test and trial is surrounded by blessings and each calamity will be compensated by Allah (SWT). For example when a person becomes ill, Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) says:

"Indeed, when a believer is affected by fever, his/her sins drop like the leaves of a tree. Then if he/she moans in bed, his/her moaning is a glorification of God and his/her cry is unification of God"

"Then there is so much reward for those who became the victim of some calamities after their death – given they had been patient – that were they given the opportunity to return to this world to experience the calamities they would have chosen to return to gain more reward"

- The best weapons that shield us against the influences of Satan are patience and prayers or supplications:

"And seek help in patience and prayer, and truly it is extremely heavy and hard except for those who have awe of Allah." (2:45)

- Whatever situation we may find ourselves in, Allah (SWT) is always watching over us and is in fact with us. Even if the whole world turns against us, Allah (SWT) alone is sufficient for us, especially if we are on the right path.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1) The two weapons which best protect us against Satan in the face of calamities are:

- a. Anger and Intelligence
- b. Patience and Prayer
- c. Kindness and forgiveness
- d. Knives and Daggers

2) Prophet Ayyūb has been praised in the Holy Qur'an for:

- a. Patience

- b. Being Oft-returning
- c. An excellent devotee
- d. All of the above

3) The differences between the Biblical and Qur'anic versions of the story are:

- a. The Bible has got a lengthy account of the story and does not consider Ayyūb as a Prophet whereas the Holy Qur'an has mentioned the story in only 6 āyāt and has honoured Prophet Ayyūb (as)
- b. There are no significant differences in the two versions
- c. The Bible says that Prophet Ayyūb (as) complained of his situation while the Holy Qur'an says that Prophet Ayyūb (as) was very patient
- d. Both a and c.