

السَّلَامُ عَلَى دَاوُدَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ

PROPHET DAWUD^{AS}

نبي الله داود (ع)

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Prophet Dawud (David) (as)

Prophet Dāwūd (as) was one of Allah's (SWT) principal prophets as he was sent down with a divine book, al-Zabūr (The Psalms). His name appears 16 times in the Holy Qu'ran. Like all other Prophets of Allah (SWT), Prophet Dāwūd (as) was divinely protected from all sins. He possessed sublime character and has been praised in the Holy Qu'ran for being totally submissive to the will of Allah (SWT) despite enjoying special and unique bounties. Allah says:

اصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُودَ ذَا الْأَيْدِي ۗ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ {17} إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ {18} وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً ۗ كُلٌّ لَّهُ أَوَّابٌ {19} وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصَّلَ الْخِطَابِ {20}

"And remember Our slave Dāwūd (as) endued with power. Verily, he was ever oft-returning in all matters and in repentance (toward Allah).

Verily, We made the mountains to glorify Our Praises with him in the evening and in the morning. And (so did) the birds assembled: all with him did turn (to Allah).

We made his kingdom strong and gave him wisdom, and sound judgement in speech and decision." (38:17-20)

In this lesson we will discuss the life of Prophet Dāwūd (as) with particular focus on his role as a just judge and leader.

Objectives

Student should:

- Be introduced to Prophet Dāwūd (as) as a sinless prophet of Allah (SWT)
- Discuss the story of David and Goliath
- Discuss the justice of Prophet Dāwūd (as)
- Discuss the importance of judging fairly between people
- Understand that Islam encourages us to aid the process of justice
- Discuss the implications of lack of justice in today's world:

PROPHET DĀWŪD AS A JUDGE

One day, Prophet Dāwūd (as) was praying in his prayer niche and ordered his guards not to allow anyone to interrupt him, but two men managed to enter and disturb him.

"Who are you?" he asked.

One of the men said:

"Do not be frightened. We have a dispute and have come for your judgment.

Prophet Dāwūd (as) said:

"What is it?"

The first man said:

"This is my brother, he has ninety-nine sheep, and I have one and he is strongly demanding that I hand over mine to him"

Without listening to the other brother, Prophet Dāwūd (as) blamed him for demanding the one sheep. As soon as he did so, he realised that Allah (SWT) had put tested him and that he had made a mistake. Instead of listening to only one party, he should have listened to both sides of the story before passing a judgment.

The Prophet (saw) also advises in regards to this situation:

"When two people bring a case against each other before you to be judged, do not judge the first before you hear out the second. If you adhere to this, the judgment will become clear for you."ⁱ

Prophet Dāwūd (as) immediately sought forgiveness from Allah (SWT) and regretted his haste. The Holy Quran says

"O Dāwūd, Verily! We have placed you as a successor on earth, so judge you between men in truth (and justice) and follow not your desire for it will mislead you from the Path of Allah." (38:26)

Prophet Dāwūd (as) brought the brothers back and atoned for his error. He was generally a very just and wise king and Prophet, who maintained justice among his people, as did his son Solomon (as) after him.

PRINCIPLES OF MAKING A JUDGEMENT

Islam places a lot of emphasis on fair judgment. This issue is discussed in many places in the Holy Qur'an. We are expected to follow the below principle if we are ever required to make a judgment:

- Do not hasten or hurry in issuing a judgment about people or between them.
- Before making a judgment ensure that you have full knowledge about the whole story or problem.
- Ensure that the source or witness providing the information is reliable and trustworthy.
- Ensure to judge based on the truth even if it may go against your own personal desires or interests
- Do not pass judgments while in a disturbed emotional state such as being angry.

Imam 'Ali (as), said to Shurayḥ, a judge of that time:

"Do not whisper to anyone in your court, and if you get angry leave, but do not judge whilst you are angry."ⁱⁱ

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISLAM

Judging fairly between people is one example of establishing social justice. Islam is a religion built on the pillars of justice and all Muslims must live their lives on its principles. While social justice is apparent only on a societal level as the name suggests, its foundation lies in each and every individual within that society upholding justice e.g. speaking the truth, being non-discriminative and standing up to any form of oppression.

Seeking justice is a natural thing inherent in all human beings. Take an example of a child who kept his apple with you. After a while he comes back and he finds that you have eaten a small portion of it. He becomes displeased and looks at you with an accusing eye as if he is saying that you are guilty of a breach of trust. Even a child knows about injustice even though he may not tell you so with his tongue.

Unfortunately, because people fall prey to his personal whims and desires, they taint and corrupt this pure innate disposition. There is hardly any society which does not talk of truthfulness, justice and rational laws. Nor there is any regime which does not claim to uphold the people's rights and welfare.

However even a superficial look at the state of their affairs would reveal that their poor state is a result of rampant corruption, deceit and hypocrisy both in their domestic and foreign affairs. We have seen in recent years huge protests in several countries against the injustice and corruption of their leadership.

We also see huge injustice on a global scale. Some countries have attained wealth, power and prestige, and they use these to take advantage of poorer, struggling countries. They invade them, take their resources or punish them economically, simply to further their own interests.

Another example of injustice is the double-standard that exists in our world. 'Western' countries allow themselves certain rights, while they deny these rights to other countries.

To avoid such a predicament, if we are ever in a position of leadership, we must base all our actions on the Islamic teachings and follow closely the lives of the Prophets whose main mission was to establish justice on earth. Furthermore, we should always stand up for justice and oppose injustice wherever it may be happening in the world. We can do this by spreading the word about injustice to friends and family, by protesting or through other forms of activism.

“Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice” (57:25)

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF PROPHET DĀWŪD

We can learn many lessons from the life of this great prophet for our modern world. Some of these include the following:

- The leaders of our world should be people who are God-conscious, no matter how much power they achieve. Prophet David's power was so great, yet he remained so afraid and conscious of Allah (SWT). This God-wariness can be seen in our faithful legitimate leaders in one or two parts of our modern world. We mentioned one example of a movement with such a leader in previous years' lessons on Prophet David (as).

However, most other leaders seem to have only one agenda, and that is to maintain or extend

their power. We see leaders lie, back down from their values, create environments of fear and pander to the majority all in order to stay in power.

Worse than this, their lies and deceptions can lead to vast destruction and loss of a great amount of lives. We see in the mid-second decade of the 21st century in which we live that the Middle East has seen upheaval like never before. Certain wealthier nations have acknowledged that they played a major role in creating this upheaval, with the excuse that they were trying to bring about democracy. The ensuing displacement of millions of people and loss of hundreds of thousands of lives is truly sickening.

- If leaders of nations and communities truly submit to God, their power will only increase. Prophet David was given power over even the mountains and birds. He was given wisdom, eloquence and discerning judgment. This is all because he was God-conscious. In another part of the Qur'an (Surat Nūḥ), God promises the community of that prophet (but of course this applies to all communities) that if they simply turned to Allah and asked forgiveness, he would send abundant blessings upon them from all sources.

Looking into these Qur'anic passages, we must understand that if we make national and international policies that are God-conscious, we will only thrive. If we back God-conscious leaders, and support policy which is God-conscious, then blessings will abound for us, although this will always involve a struggle.

We must not read these Qur'anic passages as stories or fairy-tales. Instead, we should read them as a guideline for our leaders, and our community, national and international policies. This is the only way that we will come to live in a better world.

Review Questions

Q1. From the story of Prophet David & Goliath, what is the most important lesson that can be derived?

- a. Trust in Allah (SWT) is the key to victory however difficult the circumstances may be.
- b. Proper planning and strategic moves are the key to defeating a powerful enemy
- c. The Israelites will always be victorious in any confrontation

Q2. Social justice can be achieved if:

- a. The individuals comprising the society live along the principles of justice
- b. People judge fairly, speak the truth and stand up against oppression is practiced
- c. Both a and b

ⁱ al-Faqih, v. 3, p. 13, no. 3238

ⁱⁱ al-Kafi, v. 7, p. 413, no. 5