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Wisdom: Part II

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Abstract



This continuation of the series on wisdom in the Qur'an and hadith further examines the use of *hikmah* (wisdom) in the Qur'an. It begins with a discussion of the account of Talut and Jalut in the Qur'an, followed by the verbs associated with the giving of wisdom, and the relationship between wisdom and the story of Ibrahim and Isma'il. The remainder of the piece is dedicated to Luqman in the Qur'an and hadith.

Keywords

Islamic ethics, wisdom, Qur'anic exegesis, Talut, Dawud, Luqman.

In part 1 of this series, we explored the significance of wisdom or *al-hikmah*. When it appears with *al-*, it is used for Allah and the Qur'an; without *al-*, it is used for the affairs which are decided in the night of Qadr. *Al-hikmah* is mentioned in four verses relating to the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (S), including three verses describing the prayer of Ibrahim and Isma'il (A) and one in which Allah speaks of the mission and task of the Prophet (S).

Talut, Jalut, and Dawud

This section will begin with an examination of Qur'an 2:251, about the story of Talut and Jalut (Goliath). The background of the story is that the Israelites had suffered after being defeated. Finally, one of the prophets guided them and they had great trust in him. According to our sources, this prophet was likely Isma'il, but in Hebrew sources, the pronunciation is different from the name of Isma'il, and it may correspond with the Biblical Saul. Allah says that they told him:

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذِ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ آلِهِمْ ائْتِ بِآيَةٍ أَنْ نَقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ الْقِتَالُ أَلاَّ تُقَاتِلُوا قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا كُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلاَّ قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ﴾

Have you not considered the chiefs of the children of Israel after Musa, when they said to a prophet of theirs: 'Raise up for us a king, (that) we may fight in the way of Allah.' He said: 'May it not be that you would not fight if fighting is ordained for you?' They said: 'And what reason have we that we should not fight in the way of Allah, and we have indeed been compelled to abandon our homes and our children?' But when fighting was ordained for them, they turned back, except a few of them, and Allah knows the unjust. (2:246)

They asked how it could be possible that they would not listen to him while they had been sent into exile and separated from their families. So their prophet told them that Allah had appointed Talut to be their king (2:247). Talut was just a shepherd and did not come from a rich or noble family; therefore, the Israelites were surprised that he was going to become their king. Thus, they said:

﴿قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِّنَ الْمَالِ﴾

And their prophet said to them: Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you. They said: ‘How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than he, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?’ (2:247)

In their mentality, only those with money and from noble families could be leaders; this mentality is still found today among some Muslims who feel they have to appoint people who are rich and successful at business as leaders of the community, whereas being successful in business does not necessarily equate being a good community leader (although of course it does not rule it out). In any case, these people said: ‘We cannot follow someone who has not been given lots of money.’ Their prophet replied:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ﴾

Surely Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique. (2:247)

It was Allah who had chosen this person as their king, and Allah had now given him bodily strength. He did not have money, but knowledge is more important than money, and he had knowledge. Still, they declined to listen, so finally the prophet said, ‘There is

a sign from Allah for you and that is the box.’ They used to have a box which was very important for them; they used to carry it in their battles and were victorious. That box would be brought back by angels, so, when they saw that box which housed tranquillity (*sakinah*), it was a source of tranquillity for them; they believed in him although later they did not listen to him wholeheartedly. So, they said, they would follow him.

When they set off, Talut had a good number of soldiers. However, he was unsure of their loyalty, so, he told them they would soon reach a river and said:

﴿فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اعْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ﴾

Whoever then drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much of it as fills the hand. (2:249)

That is, whoever drank from this river would not be with him; only those who did not drink – except for a handful – would be counted as the same as him. Unfortunately, the majority of them drank plenty of water, so he had to leave them, and with very few people, he continued their journey. Some of his followers wondered, ‘We are too few in number; how can we fight the enemy?’ But those who were strong in their faith had a different response:

﴿قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا اللَّهَ كَم مِّن فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ﴾

Those who thought they would meet Allah said, ‘How often does a small force vanquish a large force, by the permission of Allah.’ (2:249)

There have been many cases in which people who were few in number defeated the people who were much larger in number. The next verse, verse 250, describes when they faced the enemies,

at which time they prayed to Allah:

﴿رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾

Our Lord! Pour out constancy on us and make our steps firm; help us against those that reject faith. (2:250)

This beautiful *du'a* is also often recited in *qunut*. They asked Allah to shower them with patience, to strengthen their stand, and to make them victorious. And, with the blessing of Allah, this small army defeated Jalut and his large army. How? There was a young boy named Dawud, who became a prophet and the father of Sulayman. According to some sources, he did not actually go to fight but rather to give provisions to his brothers. He threw a few stones; those stones hit Jalut, and Jalut was killed. So, this young boy routed the army of Jalut with the blessing and the leave of Allah. When the army of Jalut saw that their king had been killed by a young boy, they fled, and so Talut's side became victorious:

﴿فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

So they put them to flight by Allah's permission. And Dawud slew Jalut, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom (*hikmah*), and taught him of what He pleased. And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder, but Allah is gracious to the creatures. (2: 251)

This is a general rule. Allah uses some people to push back or stop others, so, through them, he prevents some bad people from causing harm. Otherwise, the earth would have become corrupt.

Here, in this *ayah*, we realize that this Dawud is the same Dawud who is the father of Sulayman, who was given kingdom and wisdom, and whom Allah taught whatever He wanted. (Perhaps these things were not gifted at that exact time but eventually these things were given to him.) Dawud's being given kingdom and wisdom (*hikmah*) is referred to again in this verse:

﴿وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَضَّلَ الْخِطَابَ﴾

We made his kingdom strong and firm, and We gave him wisdom and conclusive speech. (38:20)

Other merits of Dawud are mentioned in the same *surah* (Surah Sad); however, this verse is relevant insofar as it is about wisdom. Both verses say that Allah gave him kingdom; this one adds that Allah strengthened it and made firm. Both verses also say that Allah taught him wisdom; this verse adds that he was taught 'conclusive speech' (*fasl al-khitab*). This means that he was able to judge between people in such a way that no dispute remained and there was no need for any further discussion after he gave judgment. Similarly, the Qur'an says that Allah told Dawud:

﴿يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ﴾

O Dawud! We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice and do not follow desire, lest it should lead you astray from the path of Allah. (38:26)

Even though Dawud was a prophet, it was still a merit for him to be considered someone who was given wisdom. This *ayah* tells us that wisdom is so important that it can be mentioned as a quality of a prophet; it is not something simple. In contrast, literacy is important for being able to read and write, but no one would ever

say that someone who has a PhD is able to read and write; it is obvious. However, Dawud was a prophet and it still says he was given wisdom. So wisdom is one of the top qualities that a person can ever achieve.

Jesus

Beside Dawud, there are also verses discussing Jesus and wisdom - for instance, Qur'an 3:48. Before Jesus was born, Allah informed Lady Mary about Jesus and what would happen to him. One of the things that Allah said through the angel Gabriel was that Jesus would be able to speak in the cradle and that he would be a righteous person:

﴿وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾

And He will teach him the book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. (3:48)

In the previous article, we discussed how the task of the Prophet Muhammad was to teach the book and wisdom and the nature of the book; this *ayah* confirms that the book is different from the actual Torah, Injil, and Qur'an. The book is a higher reality, and the Torah, the Injil, and the Qur'an are manifestations of that higher reality. That Allah is saying that He will teach Jesus the book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel also indicates the significance of wisdom; this is similar to the previous verse discussed.

Qur'an 5:110 is addressed to Jesus himself:

﴿إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَتِكَ إِذْ أَيَّدتُّكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ﴾

When Allah will say: O Jesus son of Mary!
Remember My favour on you and on your mother,
when I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit. You
spoke to the people in the cradle and when mature,
and when I taught you the Book and wisdom and
the Torah and the *Injil*. (5:110)

This verse confirms that the glad tidings given to Lady Mary were fulfilled – that Allah actually did teach Jesus the book, wisdom, the Torah, and the *Injil*. So, one of the things that Allah did to help Jesus was to give him wisdom. It was wisdom of Jesus in addition to his knowledge and other qualities that helped him in his mission and in his ministry, and it was because of his wisdom that Jesus managed to change people. Jesus was one of the few personalities that have changed the entire world. People like the Prophet and Jesus changed the entire world; after Jesus, the world was not the same. Many people come and go and leave some impact, but not a great one; however, it is not possible to imagine what the world would be today without Jesus, In some verses of the Qur'an, Allah says that the role of Jesus and those who follow Jesus will continue till end of the world, because Allah says that He will place those who follow him over those who deny him until the Day of Judgment. So, those who believe in Jesus, which includes Muslims, will always be above the people who have rejected Jesus.

In the previous article, we were discussing how one of the Prophet's tasks was to teach the book and wisdom. Here, we are discussing how Allah taught Jesus the book and wisdom. So, if Jesus was given wisdom, and one of the tasks of the Prophet was to teach the book and wisdom, this means that the Prophet was able to teach people what Allah taught Jesus. This is very beautiful, for it means that if someone follows the Prophet, they can also be taught the book and wisdom. It is one of the great achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (S) that he is able to teach the people who truly believe in him. How many people have actually received this

from the Prophet? This is another issue, but the Prophet is capable of offering knowledge of the book and wisdom to whoever wholeheartedly believes in him and follows him.

The other verse about wisdom is Qur'an 2:269. Before and after this verse, many verses speak about charity; for instance, to be careful not to annoy those to whom you give charity, that sometimes Satan comes to stop people from giving charity by making them fear poverty or telling them not to give too much. Of course, a person must find the balance, but Satan does not want them to have a balance; he wants them to give little or nothing at all and always tries to discourage them. But, here, Allah says:

﴿يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good, and none but people of understanding remember this. (2:269)

Allah gives wisdom to whomever He wills. Whenever the Qur'an says 'whom He wills' (*ma yasha*'), this is not arbitrary; it means those who are qualified, those who have done something to deserve this. So Allah teaches wisdom to the people that He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom, has been given abundant good (*khayran kathiran*) – not a little good, but abundant good.

'And none but people of understanding remember this.' The only ones who keep this in mind are those who have intellect, those who are thoughtful. What is this wisdom? Is this wisdom general or, as some people have said, does it mean wisdom about understanding the significance of charity? While it includes wise advice about charity, and charity is important, it seems to be more general; whoever has been given wisdom has been given an abundant good.

In contrast, Allah describes the entire material life as ‘little’:

﴿مَتَاعٌ قَلِيلٌ﴾

This is a little good. (3:195)

A person can live in this world for a hundred years and enjoy himself, but, in the sight of Allah, this is insignificant; but when it comes to wisdom, He says: ‘This is an abundant good.’ The entire world compared to wisdom is nothing. So, if someone is given a choice – if someone offers you either wisdom or billions of pounds – a clever person will say ‘I want wisdom.’ Billions of pounds are nothing. Wisdom is important. Without wisdom, a person with billions of pounds can harm himself and others. But a person who has wisdom without money can benefit himself and others. So, wisdom is much more important than anything that is material or physical, and whoever has been given wisdom has been given an abundant good.

Hitherto, two verbs have been used for wisdom. The first is *ta’lim*, teaching:

﴿عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ﴾

I taught you the Book and wisdom. (5:110).

﴿يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ﴾

To teach them the book and wisdom. (2:129, 3:164, 62:2)

The other verb is *ita’* (giving), as in *atayna* (we gave). Hence, Allah either teaches or gives wisdom; a third verb (*inzal*, ‘sending down’) is also used, which will be discussed later. The use of these verbs is important. Wisdom is not something that you go and buy; wisdom is something that comes from Allah. Either he gives it to you or He teaches it to you.

Abraham and Isma'il

This verse, which is about the family of Abraham, says:

﴿أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا﴾

Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them out of His grace? But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a grand kingdom. (4:54)

Why should people envy someone for being given something from Allah? One can pray to Allah to be given the same, but, one shouldn't be sad if someone has been given something good from Allah. If one of us has been given a good gift from Allah, we should be thankful. I should not say that I want it for myself and otherwise I don't want it for anyone. If any of us receives something from Allah, it will be good for all of us, and we should ask Allah to receive the same for ourselves.

Among the things Allah says that He has done out of his grace is giving the family of Abraham the book and wisdom. All the prophets after Abraham are his progeny, either through Isma'il or Ishaq. The Israelite prophets go back to Abraham through Ishaq, then Ya'qub, then the children of Ya'qub; the prophets normally go back to Lavi but not through Yusuf. Yusuf himself was a prophet, but the rest of the prophets go back to Ya'qub through Lavi. The Prophet of Islam and all the imams go back to Abraham through Isma'il. So, in the end, any prophet after Abraham is a descendant of Abraham. It is amazing that Abraham was worried that he would not have a child. He prayed hard to have a child and did not know what Allah had reserved for him. If someone had told Abraham that not only would he be given a child, but he would be given two prophets and then all of the prophets and

imams will be descended from him, he would not have been able to accept it. Maybe if only Allah had told him, he would have accepted this, but if it had come from anyone else, it would have been unbelievable. So, sometimes we should be patient. Sometimes we pray hard and think that nothing will happen. Never lose hope or trust in Allah; Allah may have some plan but the right time must come. So, Allah says that he gave the family of Abraham the book and wisdom and great kingdom. So, this concept of giving the book and wisdom is mentioned also here.

Luqman

Then there are the verses about Luqman. An entire chapter is named after Luqman. According to our hadith, Luqman was not a prophet, but was a good person, and Allah gave him wisdom:

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ﴾

And certainly We gave wisdom to Luqman, saying: ‘Be grateful to Allah. And whoever is grateful, he is only grateful for his own soul; and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is self-sufficient, praised.’ (31:12)

This is strongly connected to wisdom. The wisdom which was given to Luqman required him to be thankful. It is not possible to find a wise person who is not thankful. A wise person is always thankful and appreciative of what people do for him, and tries to make use of them in the best way. So, one way to become wise is to be thankful.

Allah says that the one who is thankful is thankful for his own benefit, but if someone is ungrateful, Allah does not need anyone to praise Him because He is already self-sufficient (*ghani*) and praised (*hamid*). His angels and good servants are already

praising Him, and so there is no need. Even if no one praised Him, it would not harm Him. He doesn't need our praise or prayers; it's for our own sake. If a student is thankful and appreciative, who will benefit? The student himself. After being provided with the school, teacher, textbooks, library, laboratory, and everything in the school, if the students are thankful and appreciative, they benefit; if they are not thankful, they do not benefit.

So, our thankfulness is to our own benefit; this is part of the wisdom which was given to Luqman. Some hadiths tell us why Luqman was given wisdom; it was not arbitrary or through drawing lots or a lottery. A person has to have some merit to receive wisdom. One hadith is from Imam al-Sadiq (A) and the other is narrated from Imam al-Baqir (A). The hadith says:

أَمَّا وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ أُوتِيَ لُقْمَانُ الْحِكْمَةَ لَا بِحَسَبِ وَلَا مَالٍ وَلَا أَهْلِ وَلَا بَسْطٍ
فِي الْجِسْمِ وَلَا جَمَالٍ

By Allah, Luqman was not given wisdom because of his ancestry or wealth or family or bodily strength or handsomeness.

Neither his physical appearance nor wealth nor strength nor his family was what qualified him to received wisdom.

وَلَكِنَّهُ كَانَ رَجُلًا قَوِيًّا فِي أَمْرِ اللَّهِ مُتَوَرِّعًا فِي اللَّهِ سَاكِتًا

It was because he was a man who was strong in [respecting] the command of Allah. He truly followed the path of his Lord and was silent.

Indeed, if one speaks much, the chance of being given wisdom is little.

سَكِينًا عَمِيقَ النَّظْرِ طَوِيلَ الْفِكْرِ حَدِيدَ النَّظْرِ

He was tranquil, deep in his sight and sharp in his thinking.

Among his characteristics mentioned in this hadith is:

لَمْ يَمُرَّ بِرَجُلَيْنِ يَخْتَصِمَانِ أَوْ يَتَنَبَّلَانِ إِلَّا أَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمَا

He never passed by two people fighting or disagreeing without reconciling them.

That is, he never left people to fight each other; he always tried to bring peace and reconciliation between people.

وَلَمْ يَسْمَعْ قَوْلًا قَطُّ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِسْتَحْسَنَهُ إِلَّا سَأَلَ عَنْ تَفْسِيرِهِ وَعَمَّنْ أَخَذَهُ

Whenever he heard something from someone, he never accepted it without asking the person to explain it and tell him where he had learnt it.

That is, he had a thirst for good advice and wise words.

وَكَانَ يُكَثِّرُ مُجَالَسَةَ الْفُقَهَاءِ وَالْحُكَمَاءِ

And he used to sit copiously with the knowledgeable and the wise.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) continues to explain that Luqman was also sad when he met the people who were given power, like the kings and rulers. He also always tried to take lessons from what had happened to others. He tried to learn how to overcome his own lower desires and how to fight against his lust and appetite. He occupied his heart with contemplation and only spent his time on things which were beneficial. Then, Imam al-Sadiq (A) says:

فَبِذَلِكَ أُوتِيَ الْحِكْمَةَ وَنُحِيَ الْعِصْمَةَ

It was because of these qualities that he was given wisdom and protection (*'ismah*).

1. Qomi, 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, Tafsir al-Qomi, vol. 2, p. 162

Although he was not infallible (*ma'sum*) in the sense used for the prophets and Imams, he was given a type of protection. It is natural that such a person who was also given wisdom would be immune from errors; not only would he avoid sins, but he would avoid the mistakes that people make because they are under pressure from their souls, temptations, or their emotions. A wise person will never be confused; his mind will not be clouded by the pressure of anger or excessive love for someone or something. If someone can dispense with these pressures and just think rationally, most of the time, they will find the right answer; if they do not, they will go to those who have been given wisdom and ask them for help. Why do we make so many mistakes? Either we do not have enough information, or we have information but cannot use it, because our emotions push us towards a conclusion which we have already decided upon. Most of the time, for instance, when I want to do something, I think in such a way that leads me to this conclusion. This is the problem; we do not think free from these pressures and emotions. However, if someone is like Luqman, they will rarely err.

There is another hadith about Luqman cited in *Tafsir Nemuneh* by Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, who quotes it from Tabarsi's *Majma' al-Bayan*:

حَقًّا أَقُولُ لَمْ يَكُنْ لُقْمَانٌ نَبِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ عَبْدًا كَثِيرَ التَّفَكُّرِ حَسَنَ الْيَقِينِ
 أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَأَمَّا عَلَيْهِ بِالْحِكْمَةِ كَانَ نَائِمًا نِصْفَ النَّهَارِ إِذْ جَاءَ نِدَاءُ يَا
 لُقْمَانَ هَلْ لَكَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَكَ اللَّهُ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ
 فَأَجَابَ الصَّوْتُ إِنْ خَيَّرَنِي رَبِّي قَبِلْتُ الْعَافِيَةَ وَلَمْ أَقْبَلِ الْبَلَاءَ وَإِنْ عَزَمَ عَلَيَّ
 فَسَمِعًا وَطَاعَةً فَإِنِّي أَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ إِنْ فَعَلَ بِى ذَلِكَ أَعَانَنِي وَعَصَمَنِي فَقَالَتْ
 الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِصَوْتٍ لَا يَرَاهُمْ لَمْ يَأْتِ لُقْمَانَ قَالَ لِأَنَّ الْحُكْمَ أَشَدَّ الْمَنَازِلِ وَأَكْثَرُهَا
 يَغْشَاهُ الظُّلْمُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ¹

1. Makarem Shirazi, *Tafsir Nemuneh*, vol. 17, p. 44; Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan*, vol. 8, p. 494.

I tell you, Luqman was not a prophet. He was a servant of God who thought and contemplated a lot. He had certainty. He loved Allah, and Allah loved him and obliged him with wisdom.

One day he was resting in the middle of the day and heard a call. ‘O Luqman! Do you want Me to make you the vicegerent of God on the earth, so that you judge between the people, like Dawud?’

Luqman said: ‘If Allah gives me the choice, I seek to be exempted from this and to avoid this enormous test. But if it is the decision of my Lord, I am at His service, for I know that if He decides something for me, He will give me the strength and ability to do it, and he will protect me.’

The angels replied – and he could hear their voice but not see them – ‘Why not, O Luqman?’

He said: ‘Because judgment is the severest of stations and opens the door to spreading injustice in every place.’

Sometimes people ask why the majority of Muslim jurists say that women cannot be judges. They think this is a form of deprivation, but this is exemption from a burden; even when Luqman was offered the opportunity to be a judge, he declined. According to some hadith, there are four groups of judges; three go to hell and one goes to heaven.

The angels were surprised at how eloquently Luqman argued and spoke. Then, he went back to sleep. He was not disturbed as we often are when we receive an offer for something and cannot sleep for days. Luqman had a call from Allah and an angel talk to him; he said, ‘I’m fine, thank you; I don’t want this,’ and then he went back to sleep. When he was sleeping, he woke up a new person. He started using wise words and was helping Dawud – who lived contemporaneously with him – until Dawud himself was given wisdom.

This is how Luqman was given wisdom. To be able to think and contemplate, to reduce one's speech, to have no attachment to the material world or power, to be able to derive lessons from what has happened to people and benefit from their experience, to be able to reconcile between people – these are qualities that Luqman had even before he was granted wisdom, and then Allah obliged him even more by granting him wisdom.

This discussion shall be continued in the next instalment of this series, God willing.

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