*Nuh and the Flood*

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A man once asked al-Imam al-Shaf’i, “O Imam, I have a great deal of debts, what should I do?” “Seek Allah’s forgiveness,” al-Imam al-Shaf’i replied. Another man then asked, “O Imam, my wife cannot bear children. What am I to do?” “Seek Allah’s forgiveness,” the Imam replied. A third man said, “I have sinned!” and once again the Imam replied, “Seek Allah’s forgiveness.” The three dazzled men then said, “Don’t you have anything else to say?” He replied, “Allah says what can be translated as, ‘‘Ask forgiveness from your Lord, for He is always forgiving.” (71:10). The point here is that a Muslim gets all his guidance, not only spiritual but in real situations too, from Allah’s words. Whether you are facing financial problems, indebted, or cannot have children, just seek Allah’s forgiveness.

Let us remember Abu-Bakr’s life and his fervour towards Allah’s religion. Abu-Bakr said, “By Allah, I have never slept long enough to dream! I have no time for sleeping or dreaming, because my mind is always busy thinking about religion.” He was an amazing example of dedication to Allah.

Omar Ibnul-Khattab also said, “When can I sleep? I would rather spend the night praying and worshipping Allah, and I cannot sleep through the day because I have a responsibility to my people, so when can I sleep?” It is quite ironic to think how people can find the time to sleep twelve hours and more these days!

Let us go back to Nuh now. “What is the matter with you?” he questioned his people with an aching heart! He was literally taking them by the hand and asking them why they were not respecting Allah. In our current time, I would like to ask those young people who ridicule their religion everywhere, How can you forget and not give Him the respect that He deserves? I would like to ask the young ladies that put on the most revealing of clothes, how can you forget and not give Him the respect that He deserves? The people who are not praying, don’t you have enough respect for Allah to get down on your knees and pray? Life is one of the many blessings that Allah has given us, so does he not deserve some respect? He sees us and we know that he sees us, so are we not shamed? Anyone who prays correctly would tell you that it is not just a mechanical body movement and a show of respect, but also a form of relaxation and a feeling of security while being between Allah’s hands.

Up until now, we have been talking about seeking forgiveness and how Allah should be always on our minds and in our hearts; in other words: living with a conscience. That is the first step you should work on when convincing people during Da’wa. The next step is reflecting upon Allah’s creation. Nuh said to his people

“He has created you in (different) stages,” (71:14). There are so many blessings to reflect upon, and he started with the most basic one by reminding them of their own biological creation: the different stages the human goes through inside the womb, and how he changes through the aging process of life. Being a human itself is a blessing; the smartest and most beautiful creature on this earth. He reminds them of the different stages their bodies go through while they grow up and become more mature by age.

“He has created you in (different) stages. Can you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens on top of each other? And has made the moon a light within them, and the sun a lamp?” (71:14-16).

Do you want to get closer to Allah? Do you want to help the person sitting next to you get closer to Allah. Just sit there and meditate about Allah’s creation! Deep meditation is a form of worship that has been forgotten by many people these days. When you stand in front of the beach this summer to watch a sunrise or a sunset with your friends, try to ask yourselves, “Who is the creator?” Observe the waves and say to yourself, “These waves are alive, and that sound is their voice, glorifying Allah.” It is very important for a Muslim to sit there, wonder and reflect on everything around him. That is why Nuh was reminding his people, and why we should remind ourselves and our friends during Da’wa.

“Afterwards He will return you into it (the earth), and bring you forth (again on the Day of Resurrection)?” (71:18).

Nuh concentrates here on the issue of death and the Day of Judgment. You cannot really convince people without reminding them of death. You should not scare them away of course; just ask them what they are planning to say when they meet Allah. Nobody can deny that the time will come, so why shouldn’t you plan and prepare for it like you prepare for everything else in life?

“And Allah has made for you the earth such a wide expanse, so that you may travel through it freely in broad roads." (71:19-20).

The point here is to remember Allah’s generosity. Nuh was trying to remind his people of this by showing them how the earth has been created in a way that serves us as humans, with its food, water resources, and environment. It is also placed miraculously in a fixed position in this solar system so that it remains so balanced and suitable. How do you think that happened? Is it enough to be thankful for?

Let us now summarize these Ayat and list the methods that we should use to invite people to Islam, i.e. the act of Da’wa:

1- Love your religion with all your heart and be determined to spread the truth. (Ayat 5 and 7).

2- Be friendly with people, not angry or impatient. (Ayat 7 and 10).

3- Use more than one method of convincing them: organize a gathering, show them a video, or give a lecture. (Ayat 8 and 9).

4- Concentrate on reflecting upon Allah’s magnificent creations. (Ayat 15-17).

5- Remind them of the Day of Judgment. (Ayah 18).

6- Remind them of the bounties and blessings that Allah (SWT) has literally showered them with. (Ayat 19 and 20).

***Following These Points Will Help You Have A Great Influence On People.***

Let us move on to the next ayah. After all these efforts that Nuh (AS) made in order to bring his people back to the right path, this is what he gets, “Nuh said, "My Lord! They have disobeyed me.” (71:21).

How many people had actually followed him? The total number, by the greatest estimates, is 80 people only. This is a prophet who was doing this for almost 1,000 years! That gives an average of one person every 12 years! Can you imagine how frustrating that would be for one of us? Did he lose hope? No.

Our duty is to talk to people and try to convince them and that is all; we will not be held responsible for any negative results. If they do not believe, that should not worry us as long as we are doing our part. Our duty is not to force people into believing in Allah and drag them into Islam. Nobody believes by a twist of the arm anyway! We should do our best to deliver the message peacefully, but leave it up to them to decide. Look at what Allah says to Prophet Muhammad about this

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“This is not an issue for you to worry about,” (3:128), “You are only there to warn.” (35: 23).

"My Lord! They have disobeyed me, and followed one whose wealth and children will do him no good. They have plotted a mighty plot. And they have said, “You shall not leave your gods: you shall not leave Wadd, Suwa‘, Yaghuth, Ya‘uq or Nasr (the names of their idols). They have led many astray. And (O Allah), grant no power to these Zalimun (polytheists and disbelievers).” (71:20-25).

Allah then decreed that the non-believers from Nuh’s people would be drowned because of their sins, at which point Nuh began to pray

“And Nuh said, "My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on this earth!” (71: 26). They were given so many chances, but still refused to believe. What Nuh asked for would be answered.

Here is a point I would like to stop at. Prophet Muhammad said that every prophet has an answered dua’a, and that all of them used that chance during their life on Earth except him. He saved his dua’a until the Day of Judgment so that he can intercede for his Umma. Can you imagine the love that the Prophet has for us? He was tortured and hurt by many non-believers during his time, but nevertheless, he did not supplicate against them at that time. Why? He believed that being patient at that time would enable him to ask for our forgiveness on the Day of Judgment. He wants to save us! He wants to save all the Muslims who may have sinned; peace and blessings be upon him.

“If You leave them, they will mislead Your slaves, and their offspring will be nothing but wicked disbelievers.” (71:27).

Nuh worried that these people would affect others. His intention was to save others from their mischief, and not out of revenge for the way they treated him. His intention was for Allah alone. Does anyone today have such true intentions?

“My Lord! Forgive me, my parents, whoever enters my home as a believer, and all the men and women who believe. And destroy the Zalimun (polytheists, wrong-doers, and disbelievers)." (71:28).

Therefore, you start by making dua’a for yourself, and then your parents. Many people have not made dua’a for their parents in years! They are not to be forgotten. Then make dua’a for your friends, followed by one for the whole Muslim Ummah (nation). Do you make dua’a for the martyrs in Palestine? Do you make dua’a for al-Aqsa mosque, and for all the believers on this earth? It is selfish to restrict our dua’a to ourselves and our children, when we are part of a whole nation.

***Let Us Put This Guide For Dua’a In Point Form:***

1. Yourself

2. Your parents

3. Your friends

4. All the Muslims, and finally

5. Against the wrongdoers

“And construct the ship …” (11:37).

Do you know how long it took to build the ship? Historians and scholars say that it took 300 years, and this number does not surprise me. Although it is not mentioned in the Qur’an, I think that this figure can be a good approximate. Keep in mind that Nuh was in a desert. He was required to build a ship and place in it a male and female from every species; camels, cows, donkeys, chickens, roosters, insects, birds… etc. Can you imagine the size of that ship?

Moreover, a ship requires tough, strong wood, so where would he get all this wood from in the middle of the desert? He would have to start by planting some trees of course! Nuh had a great deal of patience to wait for that indeed! You may feel so lazy sometimes to do the simplest things in religion! Nuh began planting trees in the desert! If his people were ridiculing him when he was inviting them to believe in Allah, can you imagine what they did when he began planting trees to build a ship? However, that was what he did. He planted the trees, waited for them to grow, becoming a farmer and a carpenter just to serve Allah.

Here is an interesting question: if Allah said that no one else would believe in Him after the 80 that already did, why did He not destroy them straight away? Why spend 300 years building a ship? The people of ‘Aad were taken by a strong wind, and the people of Lut had their village destroyed, so why was it not so simple in Nuh’s case?

It was a test for the 80 believers; not a chance for the rest.

“Construct the ship under Our Eyes and with Our Revelation, and call not upon Me on behalf of those who did wrong; they are surely to be drowned” (11:37).

In this Ayah, Allah reminds Nuh and his followers that He is watching them in order to comfort them, especially when the others would be making fun of them. However, after all that Nuh was put through, and all the ill treatment he received from his people, he still made dua’a to Allah for them to be forgiven and guided! How caring and forgiving can you get? A mother can be patient with her son, but a man so patient with his people? Can you appreciate the passion that he held for his religion, and how keen he was on saving these people? Where is our passion for the truth, and for helping others find their path? Allah orders him to stop his dua’a, and tells him that they have already had their chance.

The following Ayah can be translated as, “And as he was constructing the ship, the chiefs of his people passed by, mocking him. He said, "If you mock us now, we will mock you later.” (11:38).

I wish that, if Allah wills, we could meet Nuh and his 80 believers in Jannah. I want to ask them how they felt when they were helping Nuh build the ship! Do you have the confidence and trust in Allah that those 80 believers had? They were building a ship in the middle of the dry desert!

A great deal of our young people nowadays feel embarrassed to show their strong faith, or to talk about it with their friends. Nuh however, had complete trust in Allah and was not ashamed of his convictions. He had self-confidence in spite of his weak position. The day you become linked to Allah, and follow His book, is the day you become the strongest person on earth.

“(So it was) Till Our Command came, and the oven gushed forth (water like fountains from the earth)” (11:40). What does the ‘oven gushed forth’ mean? That was the sign Allah gave Nuh to indicate when the flood would take place; the oven in his house would begin to spurt out water. This would be the sign for Nuh to bring everyone together and get on the ship.

If a specific time was allocated, how would the relationship between Nuh and the believers have been? After 300 years of working together, they would go off to their normal lives and get together later on the pre-determined date. On the other hand, if they were waiting for a specific sign and had no knowledge of the date, they would stay close and in contact with each other and with Nuh. They would constantly ask about the oven and keep each other informed about their whereabouts and their minute-by-minute movements just in case the sign takes place. This constant contact creates strong bonds within the group.

In Nuh’s case, his own family had its disbelievers too. His parents were believers, but his wife and one of his four sons were disbelievers. That was another important test for Nuh; inside his own household.

“Allah sets forth an example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut. They were under two of our righteous slaves, but they betrayed them (their husbands).” (66:10).

“And he (Nuh) said, ‘Embark therein: in the Name of Allah will be its (moving) course and its (resting) anchorage. Surely, my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, and Most Merciful.’” (11: 41).

Notice how he sets the ship to sail in the name of Allah. Nuh invoked Allah’s name even though Allah already granted them safety on that ship. A good way of keeping Allah’s name alive in our hearts is by constantly repeating it. It is a habit, and a good habit it is.

Allah goes on to describe the flood for us in what can be translated as, “So it (the ship) sailed with them amidst waves like mountains.” (11:42).

This ship is a metaphor, if we really study the circumstances and replace them with those in our current time. There is a ship that is going to be saved, but not a tangible ship like that one. It is a ship for the believers, constructed from their faith and willpower. The way to this ship is through the Qur’an and Hadith, and the way overboard is that of committing sins. At the end of the path, some people will be drowning in their sins, while others will be raised and saved by their good deeds. Which group would you like to be with then? Of course, we will all make mistakes no matter how hard we try, but Allah will forgive us with His vast mercy if we prove that we are worthy, so let us all board Nuh’s ship, and let us be patient.

Board the ship, Nuh’s ship was made of planks of wood and of nails and our ship today is the Qur’an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. “Embark therein: in the Name of Allah will be its (moving) course and its (resting) anchorage.” (11: 41). People may laugh because you are boarding our imaginary ship, just like they were laughing at Nuh and his followers, so you must show your patience. Be careful though, because Satan will try to tempt you in every weak spot you have.

“So it (the ship) sailed with them amidst waves like mountains, and Nuh called out to his son, who had separated himself (apart): "O my son! Embark with us and be not with the disbelievers." (11: 42).

Nuh loved his son very much. He saw him standing on a high area, thinking that he would be safe there. “The son replied, ‘I will betake myself to some mountain; it will save me from the water.’ Nuh said, ‘This day there is no saviour from the Decree of Allah except him on whom He has mercy.’ And waves came in between them, so he (the son) was among the drowned.” (11: 43)