

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 19: Seeking God's Compensation

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Indeed I am a trusted apostle [sent] to you. So be wary of Allah and obey me. I do not ask you any compensation for it; my compensation lies only with the Lord of all the worlds. (Shu'arā' 26:107-109)

Reflections:

Honesty is an important quality in a person because it is what brings about trust. When a person is known to be honest, their words are generally trusted. All of the prophets (a) of God were trusted apostles when they began their mission. They needed to be trusted so that there would be no reason to doubt their message. Apart from reminding their communities that there was only One Lord governing the universe, the Prophets (a) also reminded them to be wary of Allah and to obey them. There was a clear connection between the two: to obey the prophets was to obey and be wary of God Almighty.

In addition to the above, one of the other common themes we find among the prophets (and repeated five times in this Surah alone) is the fact that the prophets never asked for any compensation from the people. They understood that their compensation was upon Allah (swt) to provide, since it was Allah's work that they were doing.

Mentioning this explicitly was important for two reasons: The first was to help people understand that what the Prophets (a) were offering was not motivated by self-interest or the expectation of getting something in return. In other words, there was nothing material—neither wealth nor fame—that the Prophets were hoping to gain out of their endeavours. In fact, this is precisely what separated their work from the work of others. Their work was not a job that required payment; it was a calling. And even though the disbelievers would ignore them by saying “You are just a human being like us,”¹ the wealthy felt threatened by the fact that the prophets never accepted any bribes or payoffs that could sway them from their mission.

The second reason for mentioning this to the people was to teach them that only Allah (swt) could truly compensate what the depths of the human soul desires, which ultimately is God alone. In other words, what the Prophets truly desired was something immaterial, and hence no human had the capacity to compensate a prophet or anyone else working for God.

One of the only prophets who was told by Allah to ask for compensation was our noble Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ): Say, ‘I do not ask you any reward for it except the love of [my] relatives.’² Here too, however, loving the Ahl al-Bayt (a) was not a compensation for the Prophet (ṣ) himself; rather, it was a compensation for those who accepted the finality of prophethood that would continue to benefit them even after his passing. If we truly wished to “compensate” the prophets, or those working in line with the prophets, the way to do it would be to give importance to their words and apply their teachings.

During these nights, we remember Imam ‘Alī (a), Lady Fāṭima (s), and all of the Ahl al-Bayt (a) who continued the work of God throughout their lives. In line with the prophets of the past, they also adhered to the same practice of not seeking compensation from the people for what was done for God: ‘We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We desire no compensation from you, nor thanks.’³ It is a difficult station to reach, but one that we can all aspire for.

To ponder: What are some ways we can develop the practice of not seeking compensation from people for the noble tasks that we engage in?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*

¹ 26:154 and 186

² 42:23

³ 76:9