

Fast 25

Holy Prophet does justice to his enemies

The Holy Prophet was an embodiment of the following teaching given to all Muslims:

“And do not let hatred of a people — because they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque — incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression, and keep your duty to Allah.” — 5:2

“O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and do not let hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty. And keep your duty to Allah. Surely Allah is Aware of what you do.” — 5:8

Notes: Notice that: (1) this teaching, of not letting your hatred of another people make you act unjustly towards them, is repeated within the space of six verses, and (2) it is in verses revealed at a very late date. Unfortunately, many Muslims today are reluctant to help one another in doing good works, but are only too happy to assist and join in with those from their community who are acting wrongly towards others. The Prophet Muhammad acted on the above teaching most scrupulously, as shown below.

“Listeners for the sake of a lie, devourers of forbidden things, so if they come to you (O Prophet), judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them, they cannot harm you at all. And if you judge, judge between them with equity. Surely Allah loves the equitable.” — 5:42

Notes: The people referred to here are some of the Jews of Madinah. When the Holy Prophet arrived in Madinah, an agreement drawn up between the various nationalities of Madinah by which he was to judge all disputes, including judging disputes between the Jews themselves by the standards of their religious teachings. But later the Jews became hostile to the Prophet. So God allowed him the choice of whether to judge between them or refuse to do it. But in case he judged between them, he is still told to judge with equity. To be equitable, despite their severe enmity, shows that the Prophet had reached the highest point of moral rectitude to which man can attain.

“Surely We have revealed the Book to you with truth that you may judge between people by means of what Allah has taught you. And do not be one pleading the cause of the dishonest, and ask the forgiveness of Allah. Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. And do not contend on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls. Surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful.” — 4:105–107

Notes: The occasion of the revelation of these verses was a dispute between a Muslim and a Jew, in which judgment was given by the Prophet against the Muslim. A Muslim had stolen something, and having hidden it at a Jew's, afterwards accused the Jew of the theft, while the Muslim's tribe supported him. The Prophet, despite the open enmity of the Jews, cleared the Jew of the charge. It was a time when every Muslim hand was sorely needed for the defence of Islam, and a verdict against a man supported by his whole tribe meant the loss of that tribe. But such considerations did not carry any weight with the Prophet.

Thus these verses lay down the broad principle that dishonesty must be punished, and the balance of justice must be held equal between Muslims and non-Muslims and between friends and foes.

Here is a Saying, in fact a warning, of the Holy Prophet addressed to Muslims about pleading their disputes before him for judgment:

“I am only a human being and you bring your disputes to me, some perhaps being more eloquent in their plea than others, so that I give my judgment on their behalf according to what I hear from them. Therefore, whatever I decide for anyone which by rights belongs to his brother, he must not take anything for I am granting him a portion of hell.”

The Holy Prophet here allows the possibility that a person may win a false claim against someone by clever pleading before him. That person will be liable before God for falsely taking something from the rightful owner. He is not entitled to say that his claim is correct because the Holy Prophet awarded it to him.