

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 27 – September 7

Topic: (S) State

- “Surely Allah commands you to make over trusts to those worthy of them, and that when you judge between people, you judge with justice. Surely Allah instructs you with what is excellent.” — 4:58

“Trusts” are the responsibilities with which you entrust someone to exercise on your behalf. Muslims, if granted worldly rule, are here told to entrust the affairs of State to people who are *worthy* of this responsibility, while the authorities and judges so entrusted are required to judge with *justice*. The doing of absolute justice is a fundamental principle of Islam.

- “O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is best and more suitable to (achieve) the end.” — 4:59

Muslims are required to obey God and His Messenger in the first place; secondly, in the state of Islam they must obey those in authority from among them; but in case of a dispute with those in authority they must refer the matter to God and His Messenger, i.e. the Quran and the example of the Holy Prophet, who are thus the final authority.

- “and (Muslims are) those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are (decided) by counsel among themselves, and who spend (on good works) out of what We have given them” — 42:38

Muslims are here enjoined as usual to observe prayer and to spend out of what Allah has given them, yet between these two injunctions, which always go together in the Quran, is placed a third: *whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves*. At the early period when this verse was revealed, the Muslims had no important matters to decide for which they might have stood in need of counsel. The injunction is clearly meant to prepare them for transacting the momentous affairs of State and all matters connected with national weal or woe. All affairs of the Islamic state must be transacted *by mutual counsel*. In this, Islam has laid the basis of Government by parliaments.

- “And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you a leader of people. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring? My covenant does not include the wrongdoers, said He.” — 2:124

This shows that only a tried and tested person, with a record of service and sacrifice, should be made a leader of people. It also shows that his offspring cannot inherit leadership from him unless they are also fit for it like him.

- “And their prophet said to them (the Israelites): Allah has raised Saul to be a king over you. They said: How can he have kingdom over us while we have a greater right to kingdom than he, and *he has not been granted abundance of wealth?* He said: Surely Allah has chosen him above you, and has *increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique.*” — 2:247

The people believed that a wealthy man should have been appointed to rule them. But they are told that the qualities required of a ruler are *knowledge* and physical capability.

- “And the king said: Bring him (Joseph) to me, I will choose him for myself. So when he talked with him, he said: Surely you are in our presence today dignified, trusted. He said: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land; surely I am *a good keeper, knowing well.*” — 12:54-55

Only people who are trustworthy and possess the right knowledge should be given charge of the national treasury.

Leaders must obey the same law as the ordinary people:

- “Say: Surely I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a grievous day.” — 6:15
- “I am the first of those who submit to God.” — 6:163

The Prophet Muhammad says in the above two verses that he also, like everyone else, is subject to the rule that he must not disobey God. He also says that he is the first and foremost in submitting to God. He sets the example of obedience to the law in practice, which he asks others to follow.

- The prophet Joseph was appointed to a high position (controller of national treasury) by the Pharaoh:

“And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked” — 12:56.

Yet, when Joseph wanted to retain his younger brother, Benjamin, in Egypt, it was against the law of the land:

“He could not take his brother under the king’s law, unless Allah pleased.” — 12:76.

Joseph did not use his position to circumvent the law.

Leaders and authorities not to support dishonest people, but do justice:

- “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

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. 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.

These injunctions are meant for every Muslim who is called upon to act as a judge. He must be strictly just as between his own people and aliens, and must further ask the protection of Allah from being guilty of an act of injustice, even unknowingly.

A ruler must uphold the rights of the weak against the strong:

- Incident of the two men and King David: “(we are) two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other, so decide between us with justice (O King David), and do not act unjustly, and guide us to the right way. This is my brother. *He has ninety-nine ewes and I have a single ewe.* Then he said, Make it over to me, and he has prevailed against me in dispute. He said: Surely he has wronged you in demanding your ewe (to add) to his own ewes. And surely many partners wrong one another except those who believe and do good, and very few are they! ...

O David, surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between people justly, and do not follow desire that it should lead you astray from the path of Allah.” — 38:22-24, 26

The ruler must not be swayed in his decision by the wealth of one side.

All treaties must be adhered to faithfully:

- “O you who believe, fulfil the obligations.” — 5:1

“Obligations” (*‘uqūd*) include the agreements and treaties that a state enters into.

- “...do not break (your) oaths after making them firm, and you have indeed made Allah your surety ... You make your oaths to be means of deceit between you because (one) nation is more numerous than (another) nation. Allah only tries you by this. ... And do not make your oaths a means of deceit between you, so that a foot should slip after its stability” — 16:91, 92, 94.

Faithfulness to covenants is stressed here. Attention is drawn in the words, *you make your oaths to be means of deceit between you*, to the conditions generally prevailing in the world, to the breach of covenants between nations, which is ruining the stability of human society.
