

Fast 19: Everyone responsible for their own actions

- In the last Study, we saw that the Holy Prophet's duty and responsibility is only to deliver the message, and the recipients of his message, whether non-Muslims or Muslims, are accountable for acting on that message. As is well-known, the Quran teaches the following:

“And no bearer of a burden will bear another's burden. Then to your Lord is your return, then will He inform you of what you did. Surely He is Knower of what is in the hearts.” (39:7)

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم
مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ
تَعْمَلُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٣٩﴾

The highlighted words are also repeated in 6:164, 17:15 and 53:38. Each human being bears his own deeds and cannot bear, or be responsible for, anyone else's deeds. Even a prophet cannot bear the burden of the actions of his followers because he himself is a bearer of the burden of his own duties. Of course, a prophet never commits a sin for which he bears the burden. Nonetheless every prophet felt a heavy burden of duty upon himself and was greatly concerned in case he fell short of carrying out his duty, and also felt somewhat responsible when people did not accept his message. This is why Allah taught all prophets to ask His “protection” or *istighfar* for any shortcomings. This also shows that Jesus, who was a human being, could not pay the penalty for the sins of his followers to free them from accountability.

- There are Hadith reports showing that on the Day of Judgment the Holy Prophet Muhammad will refuse to save such of his followers as had deliberately neglected their duties. He said that if any of them, facing punishment for avoiding paying due *Zakat*, called on him “O Muhammad” to save him, he would say:

“I can do nothing for you. I had conveyed to you the message.”
(Bukhari, hadith number 1402)

لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ شَيْئًا قَدْ بَلَغْتُ

- No relationships or ties of this world can save a person. The Day of Judgment is:

“...the day when a man flees from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his spouse and his sons. Every man of them, that day, will have concern enough to make him indifferent to others.” (80:34–37)

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿٣٦﴾ لِكُلِّ
أَمْرٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ ﴿٣٧﴾

This is not only the case on the Day of Judgment but this life should be led as if the same principle also applies here. A person should be so concerned about his own deeds that the idea should never occur to him that he can fall back on his physical relations to save him, or they can fall back on him to save them, from the bad consequences of deeds. For example, a close relative of yours has committed some wrong, and you step in to save him by some unjustified use of your power or position. Or you have done something wrong and you have relatives who can shield you from the consequences that you would otherwise have to face. As this will not be possible on the Day of Judgment, we should not do it in this life either.

- Elsewhere it is put more generally and explicitly. On the Day of Judgment:

“...no friend will ask of friend,
(though) they are made to see them.
The guilty one will wish he could
redeem himself from the punishment
of that day by his children, and his
wife and his brother, and his kin that
gave him shelter, and all that are in
the earth — (wishing) then (that) this
might deliver him —by no means!
Surely it is a flaming Fire...” (70:10–
15)

وَلَا يَسْأَلُ حَمِيمٌ حَمِيمًا ۗ يُبْصَرُونَهُمْ ط
يَوْمَذُ الْمَجْرِمِ لَوْ يَفْتَدِي مِنْ عَذَابِ
يَوْمِذُ بَنِيهِ ۗ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَأَخِيهِ
ۗ وَفَصِيلَتِهِ الَّتِي تُكْوِيهِ ۗ وَمَنْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يُنْجِيهِ ۗ كَلَّا ۗ إِنَّهَا
لَنظَى ۗ

All these physical relations can save a person in this life from the consequences of his wrong actions by helping him to find some way of escape. He can always find someone or other to rely on in this life, like a prisoner on the run from the law whom friends can hide. But before God he will be judged by his deeds which he did, and forgiveness will only be available from God. As the Quran says:

“And it is not worthy of the
Beneficent that He should take to
Himself a son. There is none in the
heavens and the earth but comes to
the Beneficent as a servant. ...
And everyone of them will come to
Him on the day of Resurrection,
alone.” (19:92–93, 95)

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ۗ
إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي
الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا ۗ
وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا ۗ

This is the perfect oneness of God, that nothing and no one can save you, not even the highest chosen Prophet of God nor any so-called “son of God”, but only the One God.