

Sura Taha, verses 92-94

قَالَ يَا هَارُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا

He (Musa) said: O Harun, what stopped you, when you saw them going astray,

أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي

that you did not follow me? Did you disobey my order?

قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ
فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

He said: O son of my mother! seize me not by my beard nor by my head; surely I was afraid that you would say: You have caused a division among the children of Israel and not waited for my word

Reflections

- What did Nabi Musa want Nabi Harun to have followed when he saw them going astray? (answer - his command, his way of dealing firmly with his people as a leader)
- How is Nabi Musa feeling at this time? What about Nabi Harun?
- If Nabi Harun was a Divine Prophet why was Nabi Musa talking to him like this?
- What does Nabi Harun say to calm his brother?
- What two things was Nabi Harun afraid of, so he did not stop the people? (answer - divisions within the people, Nabi Musa telling him he should have waited)

Tafsir

When Nabi Musa comes back to his people he talks to three different people;

- the people of the Banu Israel
- his brother Harun
- Samiri

In these verses he talks to his brother Nabi Harun who he had left in charge of the people. Nabi Musa is upset at what has happened and wants an explanation. He asks his brother why he had

not stopped them by being firm and insisting that they not worship a calf, and why he had not followed what he told him before - to succeed him among his people and not follow the path of the mischief makers (7:142). Nabi Musa had taken hold of Nabi Harun's beard and was asking him these questions. He was angry at what had happened.

Why did Nabi Musa talk to his brother like this when his brother was a Prophet who was sinless and would not commit wrong? The answer could be;

- he wanted to send a strong message to the people that what they had done was so serious that he had to ask for an explanation of why it had not been stopped.
- he showed that religion was more important than brotherly relations. Even if it was his own brother he would still demand an explanation. No relations can come in the way of following God's words.
- he allowed Nabi Harun to present his reasons so the incident would not be used against him.

Nabi Harun replies calmly. He calls him 'son of my mother' or brother. This is an affectionate term and he used it to calm Nabi Musa's anger. When a person is angry, an appeal to the heart and emotions is helpful and can make the person feel better. It was a message saying we are brothers and are on the same side. After that, as the Quran shows in another place (7:151) Nabi Musa prayed for himself and his brother and asked God to forgive them.

The reason Nabi Harun gives is that he did not want to cause a lot of conflict and disunity in the people. As he explains also in 7:150 the people were very strong in their desire to worship the calf and would have killed him if he had insisted that they stop. This would have created conflict and division within the community while their leader was away. It would be difficult for the community to ever get back to God's worship. Unity is very important for a community's success and intense conflict and hatred within breaks up a community and makes it very weak.

It is important to understand that Nabi Harun told the people not to worship the calf. He did his duty. But he did not go beyond that because of the intense reaction of the people. He did not want the situation to escalate.

Relevant Verses

Nabi Musa's words to his brother before he left - 7:142

Nabi Harun explains his condition - 7:150

Almighty Allah talks about the greatness of Nabi Musa and Nabi Harun - 37:114-120

Hadith of *Manzilat* (Position)

The Holy Prophet (s) told Imam Ali (a) - Your position to me is like the position of Harun to Musa, except that there will be no Prophet after me.

Students should learn this hadith and know that it is one of the authentic hadith found in both Shia and Sunni books. Let students find similarities between Nabi Harun and Imam Ali.

For a discussion on this famous Hadith see:

<http://www.shiopen.com/comprehensive/hadith-manzila/analyzing-meaning.html>

Important Lessons

- 1) Family relations and family loyalty must not come in the way of fulfilling duties to God.
- 2) When someone is upset and angry, don't be angry in return. Instead show kindness and love, that will ease the situation.
- 3) Weighing consequences of actions is important. Sometimes a right response can have a very negative consequence.
- 4) Unity within a community is important for its success and progress.

Practical Implementation

Don't respond to anger with anger.

If saying or doing something makes a situation worse then it is better to wait for another time.

Possible Ideas for activities

- act out the conversation between Nabi Musa and Nabi Harun.
- discuss or act out scenarios where one person is upset and the other person responds with love. What would be the impact?

Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

Allama Tabatabai, *Tafsir al Mizan*

Sh. Rizwan Arastu, *God's Emissaries*