

Sharhu Babi 'l-Hādi 'Ashar 28 Rabi II 1442 / 14 Dec 2020 1

Justice of God

- Section IV of Sharh Bābi 'l-Hādi 'Ashar deals with 'adl (العدل), the Divine Justice.
- The last issue was about the belief that those who suffer in this world deserve recompense for their suffering.
- A quick look at the last three slides of that discussion.

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Recompense for the Sufferings (2)

Suffering & Pain

element of evil is known	element of evil is not known
↓	↓
this is our doing (<i>qabīh</i>)	there is good in it (<i>hasan</i>)

1. The person deserves the pain.
2. The suffering entails extra benefit for the person.
3. The suffering everts greater danger for him.
4. It is a common or natural occurrence.
5. It entails defending oneself.

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Recompense for the Sufferings (3)

➤ If it is caused by God, then:

1. There must be a benefit in that suffering for the person or someone else. (Based on wisdom.)
2. God must adequately compensate the person who suffered.

= Not compensating will constitute injustice.

➤ If it is caused by us, then:

- It is wājib on God to avenge the wrongdoer either in this world or the hereafter.

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Recompense for the Sufferings (4)

➤ More about the compensation for suffering:

1. The person deserves the compensation; it is not luft or thawab.
2. The compensation should be continuous.
3. The compensation could be in this world or in the hereafter based on God's wisdom.
4. In the hereafter, if the person is
 - a) ahlul Jannah: it will be spread out for him.
 - b) ahlun Nar: some of his 'azab will be reduced.
5. The suffering caused by nature or other situations – God should compensate those who suffered: in this world or in hereafter.

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Contemporary Discussion on Suffering

- Our previous author, Shaykh Ja'far Subhani, in his advanced level lectures on theology, explains the philosophical discussion on the issue of sufferings. This is based on the transcript of his lectures published in Arabic by Hasan Makki al-'Amili as *al-Ilāhiyyāt* in two bulky volumes.
- This issue has been discussed even among earliest known thinks, e.g., the Greek philosophers. Aristotle had said that when we look at the world, we see two possibilities:
 1. either it has fully goodness in it, without any evil at all.
 2. or it has mostly goodness and slight elements of evil.

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A Philosophical Angle

- A philosophical angle to the issue of suffering is to look at the world in from a broader perspective.
 - a) One should not look at things and events in isolation, from a narrow perspective; a broader perspective will show the overall goodness in the world.

e.g., the daylight for a bat is bothersome but it is useful for millions of other creatures on this earth.
 - b) The world events are related to one another, and a localized view will make one think that the event is evil.

e.g., flood in one area might be a disaster but for another area it could be beneficial..

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A Philosophical Angle (2)

- As Muslims, we believe that we don't know the wisdom of everything:
وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
you have not been given the knowledge except a little. (17:85)
- As Bu 'Ali Sina once said:
- "My knowledge reached to a point where I came to know that I was not an 'ālim."
 In other words, what the more I know, the more I realize how much I don't know!

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Yet Another Philosophical Angle

- Another philosophical angle is more complex than the previous one:
- "Evil is a relative entity; it does not exist by itself, rather it manifests only in comparison to something else."
- For example, the scorpion by itself is not evil; but in relation to a human being, it is evil. So, the evilness of scorpion is a relative matter.
- Otherwise, by itself, there is nothing evil in it; rather the poison is good for it as a means of its defence against other predators.
 ➔ Actually, if the scorpion was without its venom, then it is defective, imperfect!

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Yet Another Philosophical Angle (2)

- What does "relative" mean?
- An attribute

}	real, essential = "Zayd exists."
}	relative only = "Zayd is taller than Bakr."
- Being "tall" or "short," "big" or "small" are relative; they don't exist by themselves; they are only meaningful in comparison to something else.
- Similarly, "evil" as an attribute for things in this world is only relative, it doesn't have its own independent existence.

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Yet Another Philosophical Angle (3)

- The implication of this “essential” verses “relative” has an important impact in our discussion:
- *Since evil is a relative entity, therefore it cannot be linked to God in a cause-and-effect relationship.*
- For example: God created the scorpion, but He did not create the evil scorpion. The scorpion is described “evil” only in relative to its negative interaction with a human.
- For example: God created Shaytan, but He did not create the evil Shaytan. Shaytan became evil by his own actions.

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts

(1) Suffering and hardship in general brings about the hidden and potential qualities of human beings:

- Those who are put to test and trial come out of it stronger and they are able to realize their potentials.
- For example, Imam ‘Ali (a) alludes to this concept:
 أَلَا وَإِنَّ الشَّجَرَةَ الْبَرِّيَّةَ أَصْلَبُ عَوْدًا وَالرَّوَاتِعَ الْخَضِرَةَ أَرْقُ جُلُودًا
 وَالنَّائِبَاتِ الْعِذِيَّةَ أَقْوَى وَقُودًا وَأَبْطَأَ خُمُودًا.
 “Remember that the tree of the forest is the best for timber, while green twigs have soft bark, and the wild bushes are very strong for burning and slow in dying off.”
 (Letter no. 45 in Nahjul Balagha)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (2)

فَقَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا
 “...it may be that you dislike a thing while Allāh has placed abundant good in it.”
 (4:19)

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَب
 “Surely with difficulty comes ease; surely with difficulty comes ease. So when you are free *from one task*, then start another; and *in these deeds*, make your Lord your exclusive object.”
 (94:5-8)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (3)

(2) Suffering and hardship sometimes also work as a warning or a wakeup call for the wrongdoers so that they may reform themselves:

- There are examples of individuals & nations who were blessed with material wealth and power, then they become arrogant.
- A general verse:
 كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظٍ
 “The human being indeed becomes rebellious *especially* when he thinks of himself to be free from need of God.”
 (96:6-7)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (3)

- A general verse:
 وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ
 “We did not send any prophet to any city but *that many opposed him, therefore* We seized its people with *financial* stress and *physical* distress so that they might be humble.” (7:94)
- A specific verse:
 وَنَقَدْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسَّمْتِينَ وَنَقَصْنَا مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ
 “Then We seized the people of Fir‘awn with droughts and decrease of fruits so that they may be mindful.”
 (7:130)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (4)

(3) Humans were sent to follow Divine guidance to gain salvation. Sins become the barrier in that path. Sometimes, sufferings and challenges bring people back to the reality.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ
 “Calamities & *disasters* appear in the land and the sea because of what the people’s hands have wrought *in form of sins*. Allāh allows such *disasters* so that He may make them taste the consequences of some of their doings hopefully that they may *turn away from their sins*.” (40:41)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (5)

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالأَرْضِ
وَلَئِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“If the people of the cities had believed & feared *displeasing Me*,
We would have opened up for them
blessings from the heaven and the earth.
But they rejected *My messengers*, and so We seized them with a
painful chastisement because of what they were earning
of evil deeds.” (7:96)

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Suffering Has Positive Impacts (6)

(4) Uniformity in human life leads to lack of appreciation of the blessings given to them. On the other hand, variety and changes in human life makes us appreciate what we have.

- So opposites have a positive impact on appreciating the good that we have.
- This ties into the discussion of *Sharh Babi 'l-Hadi 'Ashar* that those who have suffered in this world because of the nature or because of tyranny of others, they must be compensated either in this world or in the hereafter.

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