Chronicles of the Sahaba in Their Youth

Lecture by: Nouman Ali Khan

Salaamu alaykom wa rahmatullahi wa barakatu.

In shaa Allah, I’d like to share with you a few section of the Qur’an, and instead of sharing with you detailed accounts of a number of sahaba, I’ll share with you the accounts of one particular sahabi that we can draw specific lessons from in shaa Allah.

But before I do, I’d like to share with you another type of sahabi; a different type of companion, not one that’s a role model, but one that you would look down upon. We find in the Qur’an another messenger mentioned, and his companions mentioned in detail.

And the amazing thing is, because these are people that have passed, Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) speaks to the sons of Israel at the time of Mohammad (ﷺ), but He speaks to them in second person: “*wadthkuru*”, and “*na’amat Allahi ‘alaykom*”, “*idth ja’atkom Musa bil bayinaat*” - “*when Musa came upon YOU*”. Now notice, he didn’t come upon ‘them’, who did he come on? He came on their forefathers. But He speaks of them in the second person only to make it highlighted, just as Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) speaks to those who have iman: “*ya ayuhaladhina aamanu*” is also in second person – “*O those of you who believe*”. So all of those ayat you find in second person, particularly in surah Al-Baqarah.

And so I’d like to begin with the negative and move towards the positive, in shaa Allah ta’ala. For all of us, we have not seen Mohammad Rasool Allah (ﷺ), and for the sahaba that were seeing him, they had not seen Allah. They had not seen miracles from the sky, or anything supernatural, save a few of them who saw some particular incidents that we can pinpoint.

But for these specific companions of Musa (‘alayhee salaat wa salaam), imagine this; you’re about to be executed by a tyrant ruler, you’re lost in the desert with this man who promises that he can save you, and you’re crying to him saying, ‘you lied to us – here the army is coming upon us to destroy us and you brought us in the middle of this desert to be slaughtered like sheep!’, and he strikes his staff and a body of water parts, and you walk right through it. If you were an atheist before, or if you were just tagging along for the ride before, thinking, ‘hey, maybe he’s right, maybe he’s wrong, I’ll take my chances. If I stay in Egypt, then for sure I’ll be slaughtered”.

So notice in the Qur’an, Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) doesn’t say “*wallannu’mina bika*” – Bani Israel don’t say ‘we’re not gonna believe you’, they say “*wallannu’mina laka*”, “*nu’minu bee*”, and “*nu’mina la*”. Big difference…“*nu’minu bee*” is “to believe in”, to confirm that he brought the truth. “*Nu’minu la*” in the Arabic terminology refers to “to accept” – “we’ll go along with what you’re saying”.

The same thing Firaun said to Musa (‘alayhee salaam). He said, ‘I’m not gonna let them go’, and he said, “*walannu’mina laka*”. The chiefs of Firaun said, ‘we’re not gonna accept what you’re saying. Your demands are to let these people go, we’re not gonna accept what you’re saying’. Their statement wasn’t, ‘we’re not gonna believe in you’ – they had already given that as a statement before, ‘we’re not gonna believe in you no matter what’.

So the point was now to accept what he’s saying, to follow him. So among the Bani Israel there are those who might have been in doubt: ‘maybe this guy’s crazy, maybe he’s right, maybe he’s wrong, why not take our chances, because for sure we’re gonna die here’. They go, they see a body of water part, they pass right through it, and that Firaun – who they saw people make sajda to, that armies used to crumble before him – they saw him perish before their own eyes. So if nothing else made you believe in Allah before that, and if it didn’t make you take Musa (‘alayhee salaam) seriously before that, I would think this incident would open your eyes, right? This is a pretty big thing to watch, to see a body of water just open up!

Now you’re in the desert. And the first thing that human beings in the desert will suffer from is dehydration. So wherever you’re travelling with Musa, “*walla ‘alaykom al ghammam*”; “*and We shaded upon you a cloud*”. The cloud, this “*al ghammam*” used to follow them wherever they went. Imagine that; you’re in the desert, you’re stranded, you’re going to dehydrate out of the heat, but there’s a cloud following you and offering you shade and offering you water.

“*Wa anzal ‘alaykom al manna wa salwa*”. Now in the desert, first of all, to have plantation that you can get bread out of is next to impossible, but Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) sends “*man*”, then he sends “*salwa*” upon them; and “*man*” came through rain, which is miraculous in and of itself. But “*salwa*”…the natural instinct for any bird if you try to catch it is to do what? Is to fly off. But these “*salwa*”, they used to come (they used to be described in most of the tafaseer as the likeness of quails), they would come in herds, they would come in packs, and they would just sit there at night waiting for themselves to be caught. Free food, literally. “*Walla ‘alaykomal ghammam*” – free shading, free covering, lodging, right? And now “*manna*” and “*salwa*”. And Allah says: “*qulubihom tayabat ma razaqakom*” – “*go eat freely what we have provided you*” – “go ahead, eat, enjoy. Not only did We save you from someone you had no chance of saving yourselves. Not only did We bring you out of the darkness of shirk – whatever misguidance you were in – We brought you a messenger who has guidance with him.”

Now, you get all this free stuff. So, if you weren’t a believer before then you would think, hey, okay, you’ve seen a lot of stuff now – you would really believe. Let’s top it all off. Now Musa leaves you for a little while and you get tricked by somebody – let’s give them the benefit of the doubt – somebody makes a statue of a golden calf, and he makes passages through it so when the wind blows, it makes a sound, so he convinces people that this is god, and they start worshipping it.

So when Musa (‘alayhee salaam) comes back, he gets angry at Haroon (‘alayhee salaam), right? You all know the story. And says, “What did you do in my absence?!” So he says, “I didn’t have authority over them like you do”. And the example my teacher gave me in this regard, and in surah Al-A’raf where this incident is mentioned in some detail, is, you know, you have a teacher in class, the teacher’s keeping everyone in control, everyone’s sitting in her seat, quietly working, he says ‘I’ll be back in five minutes’, and he puts a class monitor, some kid, some nerdy kid from the back of the class - ‘You’re in charge, five minutes, make sure nobody talks’. As soon as he leaves, that nerdy kid is getting paper thrown at his face, people are chewing gum, people are yelling and screaming, some people are pulling his shirt, they’re doing all kinds of things, because he doesn’t have the same authority as the teacher did; even though he was delegated authority by the teacher himself. Haroon (‘alayhee salaam) is also a prophet, but he’s not a messenger, he’s not a rasool, like Musa (‘alayhee salaat wa salaam). He doesn’t have the authority of Musa (‘alayhee salaam).

Another reason he doesn’t have the authority of Musa (‘alayhee salaam) is because Musa was brought up in the family, the lineage of Firaun. So he knew how to control people. He had that legacy. But Haroon (‘alayhee salaam) was brought up with the oppressed people – he was raised among them. So there’s a big difference in the way of leadership between the two.

But in any case, he comes back, says, “What’s going on here?” They referred the matter to Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) and Allah reveals just in hint in Qur’an (we find details in tafseer, but in Qur’an, we find a very brief account, particularly in surah Al-Baqarah) “*wa idth ‘ataynah Musa al kitab wal furqan, la ‘alakom tahtadoon*” – “*We gave Musa the book and the criterion, so that you can be guided*”. And the immediate next ayah is “*wa idth qala Musa liqawmihee yaqawmee innakom dhalamtom anfusakom*” – “*Oh, my ‘qawm’, you have done injustice against yourselves by taking the calf as something to worship. So make tawba to your ‘rab’*” – “*fa tooboo ila barikom faqtaloo anfusakom*” – “*then kill yourselves*”. The ayah doesn’t mean commit suicide. It means, there are 12 tribes of Israel – for every tribe, the people that started worshipping the calf…if you’re a Muslim and you do shirk, you left the state of Islam, so the punishment of ‘murtadh’ is execution…which is not something initiated in the law of Mohammad (ﷺ), but is actually started in the sharia’ of Musa (‘alayhee salaam) and continued in the law of Rasool Allah (ﷺ).

So now this command comes. Notice, this is the same Musa who they saw (with the permission of Allah) parting a body of water, having a cloud follow them, “*manna*” and “*salwa*” – all of that good stuff. And they look at him in his face, and they say “*wa idth qultom ya Musa lannu’mina laka hatta naara Allaha jaharra*”. And they said “*we’re not going to believe in you until we see Allah face to face*”…‘you’re telling us this’, and it’s not ‘believe in you’, I mistranslated this, “*nu’mina laka*”, again, “*we’re not going to accept what you’re saying until we see Allah face to face*”. Then Allah says, “*fa’akhadhatkom as-sa’iqa wa antom tandhurun*” – “*then an explosion, it seized you*” and all of you died immediately “*while you were watching, before your eyes an explosion came*” and took them. “*Thumma ba’athnakom min ba’adi mawtikom*” – “*then We raised you from death*”, “*la’alakom tashkuroom*” – “*so that now you can thank Allah*”. Now you can be like, ‘okay, fine, we’ll do what you say’, but even then there are so many other problems that are mentioned later on.

So if you went through this – you get killed by Allah, and He raised you back to life - you would think, you have no rational excuse to disbelieve or to sway in your belief. You should be the best of believers because you’ve seen miracle after miracle after miracle.

Last one I’ll mention, because there are many more; last one I’ll mention. Allah mentions this three times in surah Al-Baqarah. In these ten rukoo’, Allah mentioned this one particularly three times because it’s the craziest one – like, it baffles your mind. Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) says “*wa idth akhadhna mithaqakom wa rafa’na fawqakom at-toor*” – “*when Allah took a covenant from you*”, and to make you realize how important these commandments are, this covenant, this law is, He “*raised the mountain of Toor*” in the air. So there’s a mountain hovering in the air, where you’re standing below it, and then Allah (subhanahu wa ta’ala) says, “*hold on to what I have given you with all your might*” – “*khudhu ma ‘ataynakom biquwa*”.