

CONCEPTS OF INHERITANCE IN THE QUR'AN

Friday Sermon Presented by

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When we review the expression 'inheritance' in the Book of the Exalted Allah, we find that it presents four types:

- 1- Inheritance of the Book.
- 2- Inheritance of the land.
- 3- Inheritance of the example.
- 4- Inheritance of Paradise.

I have reviewed the verses of the Brilliant Book seeking what avails us so that we rise up to the level of our educational syllabus at a time when we consistently look for a way of reformation, at a time when we are going down the precipice where there are every bad manner and dispraised case.

Probably, we need not present any explanation of the meaning of inheritance, because it is a common familiar word which implies getting something without any effort. When inheritance is distributed among the deceased's children and relatives, they get wealth without any effort on their part.

Our topic today is not related to this kind of inheritance. It is rather concerned with the four abstract types that have connotations associated with the uprising and civilization of the Ummah.

1-Inheritance of the Book:

As the previous nations that have their own Books sent from the Exalted Allah, we, the Ummah of our Master Muhammad (PBUH), have our Book that is the Holy Qur'an .

The inheritance of the Book might be bequeathing its letters and expressions that can be memorized and preserved in the memory of man. Man can also understand its linguistic interpretation. But the Holy Qur'an draws the attention to the fact that inheriting the Book might not be true when man does not adhere to its instructions, or when he does not adopt its good manners or apply the methods of the Holy Qur'an in his behavior.

Inheritors of the Book are of two types:

-One reads the Book, learns by heart its expressions and letters, but he contradicts its instructions in his behavior. Consequently, he inherits only the external aspect of the Book.

-The other reads the Book, reacts with it with his interior, his soul, his heart, his mind, his behavior, his movements, his limbs...until he becomes a practical representation of this Book in his behavior and manners.

Let us have samples of the verses that describe the inheritors of the Book. For example, talking about the people of Israel, the Exalted Allah said:

We broke them up into sections on this earth. There are among them some that are the righteous, and some that are the opposite. We have tried them with both prosperity and adversity: in order that they might turn {to us}.

After them succeeded an {evil} generation; they inherited the book, but they chose {for themselves} the vanities of this world (i.e., they exchanged worldly commodities for religion, and exploited their share of religion to gain worldly profit through it) , saying {for excuse}: {everything} will be forgiven us. {even so}, if similar vanities came their way, they would {again} seize them. Was not the Covenant of the book taken from them, that they would not ascribe to Allah anything but the truth? and they study what is in the book. But best for the righteous in the home in the Hereafter. Will ye not understand? (Al A'raf, vs. 168-169).

They were a type of people who studied the Book and inherited it. In spite of that, they sold their religion and bought, instead, their present life. Thus, they exchanged their religion for the profit and favors of this life.

The Exalted Allah said:

Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are, by Allah's leave, foremost in good deeds; That is the highest Grace (Fater, v. 32).

He also said:

And they became divided only after knowledge reached them, through selfish envy as between themselves. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from thy Lord, {tending} to a Term appointed, the matter would have been settled between them :but truly those who have inherited the Book after them are in suspicious (disquieting) doubt concerning it (Ash Shura, v. 14).

These Qur'anic samples show that the Holy Qur'an talks about the inheritors of the Book and divides them into many classes according to their closeness to the Exalted Allah depending on their behavior and their application of the instructions of this Book.

2-Inheritance of land

This kind of inheritance means the ownership of the land, running and reigning it. It means ruling the land and controlling its affairs and benefitting from its wealth.

In the Holy Qur'an, inheritance of the land does not always mean a reward for good deeds from the Exalted Allah. The land may be ruled by the good or the evil. Inheritance of the land is a test in which man might either succeed or fail.

As an example, read the Exalted Allah's speech:

To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, is it not a guiding (lesson) that, if we so willed, we could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear? (Al A'raf, v. 100).

This verse addresses the politicians, and the officials as well as the rulers saying to them: "Aren't you aware that, because of your sins, the Exalted Allah is able to inflict torture upon you?"

The punishment or torture inflicted upon them by the Exalted Allah might be figurative, such as sealing up their hearts so that they are no more influenced by what is right, nor do they feel awe at remembering the Exalted Allah. They change into materialists whose insights are obliterated, and their sensations are dull. Consequently,

they see their enemy commit massacres, but they bow before him in great respect and veneration because of their dull sensations and their blinded insights:

To those who inherit the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, is it not a guiding (lesson) that, if we so willed, we could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear? (Al A'raf, v. 100).

Talking about Pharaoh, the Exalted Allah said:

-So We expelled them from gardens, springs,

-Treasures, and every kind of honourable position,

-Thus it was, but We made the Children of Israel inheritors of such things (Ash Shu'ara', vs. 57-59).

He also said:

-How many were the gardens and springs they left behind,

-And corn fields and noble buildings,

-And wealth (and conveniences of life), wherein they had taken such delight!

-Thus (was their end)! And We made other people inherit (those things! (Ad Dukhan, vs. 25-28).

The Exalted Allah describes the Companions of the Messenger of Allah and their war with the Jews:

-And those of the people of the Book who aided them Allah did take them down from their strongholds and cast terror into their hearts, (so that) some ye slew, and some ye made prisoners.

-And He made you heirs of their lands, their houses, and their goods, and of a land which ye had not

frequented (before). And Allah has Power over all things (Al Ahzab, vs. 26-27).

By reviewing this second type of inheritance, we find that the Holy Qur'an draws our attention to the fact that inheritance of the land is a test. The inheritor might succeed or fail in this test.

Inheritance of the land is like that of wealth. One might be benevolent and generous in exploiting this wealth, or he might misuse it and be miserly and spend it in evil ways.

The Exalted Allah said:

Say: "O Allah! Lord of Power {and Rule}, Thou givest Power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off Power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honor whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all Good .Verily, over all things thou hast power (Al Umran, v. 26).

He also said:

-Saying, Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is Oft-Forgiving

-He will send rain to you in abundance;

-Give you increase in wealth and sons; and bestow on you Gardens and bestow on you rivers (of flowing water (Noh. Vs. 10-12).

All that is mentioned above is referred to in the Holy Qur'an as a reward, but at the same time, it is a trial. Sometimes, the Exalted Allah tests His servants by giving, and at other times by preventing.

3-Inheritance of the example, i.e., good human examples including Prophets, Messengers and virtuous people.

The inheritance of the example is never mentioned in the Book of the Exalted Allah as dispraised. As Zakariya (PBUH) was one of the Messengers of Allah, he asked the Exalted Allah to give him a son, not aiming at inheriting wealth. Relating the invocation of our Master, Zakariyya, the Exalted Allah said: **"so give me an heir as from thyself"** so that this heir be a gift and a favor from the Exalted Allah who would be engrossed only in the Exalted Allah, and consequently, the Exalted Allah would sponsor him, **"One that will {truly} represent me, and represent the posterity of Jacob** (Mariam, vs. 5-6), i.e., he would inherit this example who is Zakariyya (PBUH) and the preceding Prophets and Messengers, the offspring of Jacob. This is one of the human examples mentioned in the Holy Qur'an concerning inheritance.

Another example of the inheritance of the example is when the Exalted Allah said: **"And Solomon was David's heir"** (An Naml, v.16). The Exalted Allah does not mean bequeathing Solomon (PBUH) wealth and kingdom only. He also means bequeathing him the example. Solomon (PBUH) inherited knowledge, high position, status in his closeness to the Exalted Allah, as good understanding from the Exalted Allah.

In brief, the first type, which is inheritance of the Book, is of varied classes according to the practical and actual closeness to the Book, and according to the application of the Book in terms of manner and feelings. Not all that inherits the Book is a real inheritor. How many the readers of the Holy Qur'an are, whose reading does not exceed their throats, and after that they buy and sell their religion for worldly benefit!

The second type is inheritance of the land which is a test. Not all rulers are like Omar Ibn Al Khattab, or Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz, and not all rulers are just. Inheritance of the land mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is of two types. It might be a test that ends in success, or failure and falling in the precipice.

But the third type, i.e., inheritance of the example, can be attained only by good company and by the transmission of good manners from one person into another. According to the Holy Qur'an, this is a distinguished type that is never dispraised, because it deals with moving of good attributes, good manners, and influential spiritual states from one person into another.

4-Inheritance of Paradise. In other words, inheritance of the Hereafter. This type is not included in the types of inheritance within the compass of worldly life. The Holy Qur'an describes inheritance of Paradise in details. Consequently, the types of inheritance become four.

Describing the inheritors of Paradise, the Holy Qur'an said: **"And who (strictly) guard their Prayers. These will be the heirs, who will inherit Paradise: they will dwell therein forever"** (Al Mu'minun, vs. 9-11).

And: **"And they shall hear the cry: "Behold the Garden before you! ye have been made its inheritors, for your deeds (of righteousness)"** (AL a'raf, v. 43).

And: **"Such is the Garden which we give as an inheritance to those of our servants who guard against evil"** (Mariam, v. 63).

In the supplication of Ibrahim (PBUH)) in the Holy Qur'an, he said: **"Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of**

truth among the latest generations. Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss" (Ash Shu'ara', vs. 84-85).

So is the case in the following verse: **"They will say: Praise be to Allah, Who has truly fulfilled His promise to us"** (i.e., we see what our Lord has really promised), **and has given us this land in heritage"** (i.e., the land of Paradise), **"we can dwell in the Garden where we will So bounteous is the wage of workers"** (Az Zumur, v. 74).

In Imam Ahmad' Musnad, and Al Termudhi's Sunan (GBTH), it is related from Abi Huraira, from the Prophet (PBUH) that he said:

The building of Paradise has its bricks, one of silver and another of gold. Its mud is fragrant musk, its pebbles are pearls and emerald, and its soil is saffron. He who would get into Paradise would be made to enjoy such an everlasting bliss that he would neither become destitute, nor would his clothes wear out, nor his youth would decline.

In the sound Hadith related by Abu Ya'la in his Musnad, from the Prophet (PBUH) that he said:

When I entered Paradise, I found in it domes of pearl, and its soil is musk. I asked Gabriel: 'Oh Gabriel, whose is this? He said: 'Oh Muhammad, it is to the callers for prayer and imams of your Ummah.

Thus 'the land' here refers to Paradise to draw man's attention to the fact that when he thinks of inheriting the worldly land and finds that there is no way of owning it but by selling his conscience, his religion, his morality, his obligation and everything virtuous, then afterwards, he is

thrown before the Exalted Allah in the Hereafter, he will realize that he should have abstained from that filthy way if he desires to attain the land of Paradise.

What a difference there is between the one who seeks the ownership of worldly land following a filthy way, and that who seeks the ownership of the land of Paradise. What a great difference between the possession of Paradise, and the possession that is not worth a fly's wing to the Exalted Allah, or part of the fly's wing!

The lessons of the Holy Qur'an guide us to what man has to seek. Thus, when we read about these four types of inheritance:

What do we conclude?

What limits should we stop at?

What should we do concerning our behavior?

1-Inheritance of the Book: We should not be pleased when we read the Holy Qur'an while we get away from application, from verifying and from acquiring good manners. We cannot get real inheritance until the Holy Qur'an mixes with our blood and with our souls, and until we become aspects of the Holy Qur'an in behavior and practice.

2- Inheritance of the land: This is a case that we are indifferent to and careless about. When the Exalted Allah makes us inherit the land, we take it from His hand, for He, only, tests His servants by giving and forbidding. Thus, one of the Exalted Allah's gifts is: "**Before this we wrote in the Psalms, after the Message (given to Moses): my servants the righteous, shall inherit the earth**" (Al

Anbiya', v. 105). Inheriting the land is one of the immediate reward when man and societies become good and righteous. But this does not mean that when man inherits the land he is good, for the Exalted Allah may give the land to good, or to bad people, as He said: **"To those who inherit the earth in succession to its previous possessors, is it not a guiding lesson that, if we so willed, we could punish them (too) for their sins, and seal up their hearts so that they could not hear?"**

3-Inheritance of the example: It is a case that we should seek, especially that the Exalted Allah favors us with the greatest Example on the earth, our Master, Muhammad (PBUH). The greatest human Example that the Exalted Allah favors man with is our Master Muhammad (PBUH). Thus our seeking should be inheriting this Example, and also be closer to the one who is close to this Example, and be influenced by the one who is influenced by this Example.

4-Inheritance of Paradise: If we see the purpose for which we are created: **"But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter"** (Al Qasas, v. 77), we find that the Exalted Allah recommends us to seek the inheritance of Paradise because it is the place of His satisfaction, the place of His entertainment and His honor as our Master Ibrahim (PBUH) said: **" Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of truth among the latest generations. Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss".**

Allahum..., make us all the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss, and guide us to You favorably by Your Favor and

Your Generosity, Oh You, the Most Generous of all the generous.

I say my words and ask Allah's forgiveness