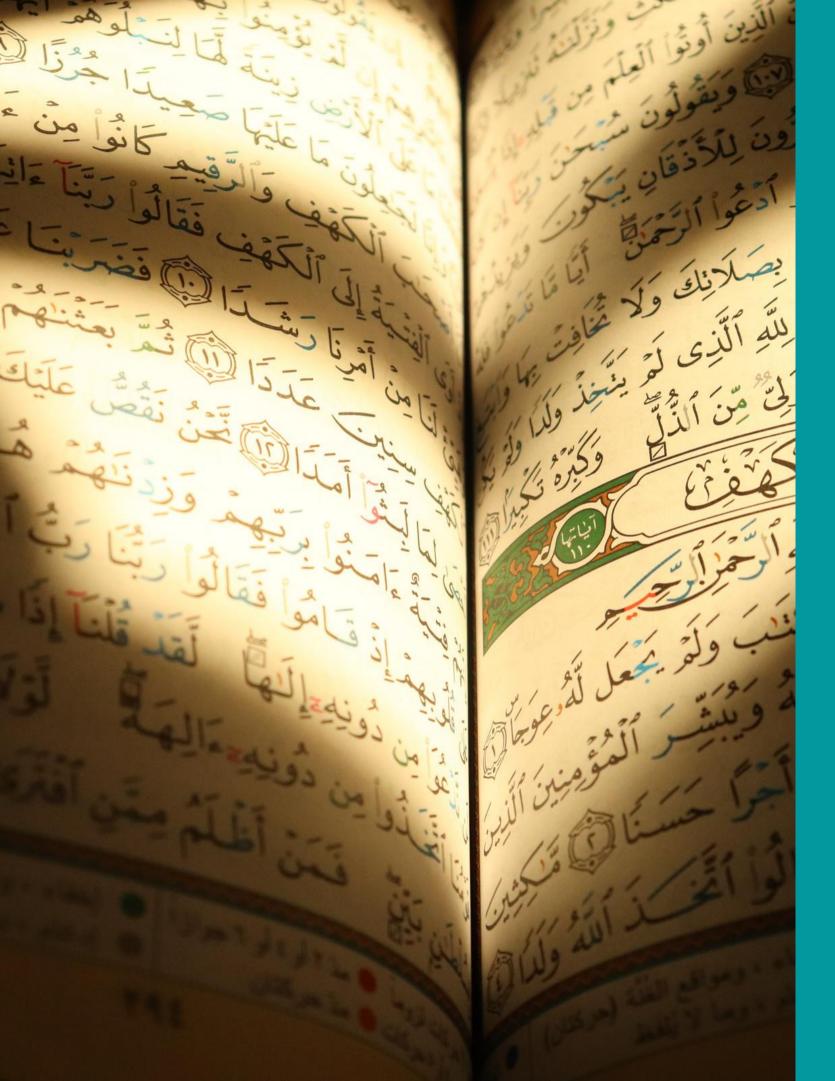


# 1000 Infallibility of Prophets

LESSON 4: THE CASE OF PROPHET IBRAHIM, MUSA AND YUNUS



• There are some verses in the Quran that apparently attribute sins and wrong doings to Prophet Ibrahim. We shall look at the three most important such examples.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرُهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ ءَازَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا ءَالِهَةً إِنِّيَ أَرَنْكَ وَقُوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ

[REMEMBER] WHEN IBRAHIM SAID TO HIS UNCLE, AZAR, "DO YOU TAKE IDOLS FOR GODS? SURELY I SEE YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE IN MANIFEST ERROR."

ُوَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِىۤ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُوقِنِينَ

THUS WE WERE SHOWING IBRAHIM THE KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH SO THAT HE MIGHT BE OF THOSE WHO ARE CERTAIN."

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ ٱلَّيْلُ رَءَا كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّى فَلَمَّاۤ أَفَلَ قَالَ لَاَ أُحِبُّ ٱلْـ افِلِينَ

SO WHEN THE NIGHT OUTSPREAD OVER IBRAHIM, HE SAW A STAR; HE SAID, "THIS IS MY LORD." BUT WHEN THE STAR SET [IN THE MORNING,] HE SAID, "[THIS CANNOT BE MY LORD BECAUSE IT HAS PASSED AWAY,] I DO NOT LIKE THE TRANSITORY [GODS].

ْفَلَمَّا رَءَا ٱلْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّى فَلَمَّآ أَفِلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلضَّآلِينَ

[ON THE NEXT NIGHT,] WHEN HE SAW THE MOON RISING, HE SAID, "THIS IS MY LORD." BUT WHEN THE MOON SET HE SAID, "IF MY LORD HAD NOT GUIDED ME, THEN I SHALL SURELY BE OF THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE GONE ASTRAY."

فَلَمَّا رَءَا ٱلشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَـٰذَا رَبِّى هَـٰذَآ أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَـقَوْمِ إِنِّى بَرِيْءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ قَالَ يَـقَوْمِ إِنِّى بَرِيْءٌ مِّمًا تُشْرِكُونَ

[IN THE MORNING,] WHEN IBRAHIM SAW THE SUN RISING, HE SAID, "THIS MUST BE MY LORD [BECAUSE] THIS IS GREATER [THAN THE STAR AND THE MOON!]" BUT WHEN THE SUN SET, HE SAID, "O MY PEOPLE, SURELY I AM FREE FROM WHAT YOU ASSOCIATE [WITH GOD.]

إِنِّى وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِىَ لِلَّذِى فَطَرَ ٱلسَّمَـٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَاۤ أَنَاْ مِنَ ٱلْمُشْرِكِينَ

I HAVE SINCERELY TURNED MYSELF TO HIM WHO ORIGINATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, AND I AM NOT ONE OF THE POLYTHEISTS."

 These Quranic verses have been used as a proof of the evolutionary phases of Ibrahim from polytheism to monotheism. This is, obviously, an incorrect reading of the Quran.

 This entire passage quoted above actually shows that Prophet Ibrahim was actively engaged in combating idol - and natureworshipping. Reading the whole passage does not raise any problem about the 'ismah of Prophet Ibrahim. He did not raise the possibility of the star, the moon and the sun being gods as a fact; it was raised only as a part of his method of disproving such a possibility. In debates, it is quite common to initially accept the view of your opponent in order to lead him to your own view.

• If you read the first part of the passage where Ibrahim is disputing with his own uncle1 against idol-worshipping and also Allah's statement that "We were showing...so that he might be of those who are sure [of their faith]," it shows that he was a true believer before he engaged in debate with the idol- and natureworshippers.

• Even the passage where he says, "If my Lord had not guided me, then I shall surely be of the people who have gone astray," is a conditional statement. It says "if" and "then". And since the first part did not take place, therefore the second part is not relevant.

In pursuit of his mission against idolworshipping, Ibrahim one day smashed all the all idols of the temple except the big one. Then the Quran says:

قَالُواْ مَن فَعَلَ هَـٰذَا بِـ الِهَتِنَآ إِنَّهُۥ لَمِنَ ٱلظَّلْمِينَ قَالُواْ سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُۥۤ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ قَالُواْ فَأْتُواْ بِهِ عَلَىٰٓ أَعْيُنِ ٱلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُۥٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ قَالُواْ فَأْتُواْ بِهِ عَلَىٰۤ أَعْيُنِ ٱلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُۥٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمُ قَالُواْ فَأْتُواْ بِهِ عَلَىٰۤ أَعْيُنِ ٱلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذُونَ

[The idol-worshippers] said, "Who has done this to our gods? He surely must be one of the unjust people." [Some of them] said, "We have heard a youth speaking [ill] of them, and he is known as Ibrahim..."



قَالُوۤاْ ءَأَنتَ فَعَلْتَ هَٰذَا بِأَ الِهَتِنَا يَ ۚ إِبْرَهِيمُ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُۥ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَٰذَا فَسْ لُوهُمْ إِن كَانُواْ يَنطِقُونَ

They said, "Have you done this to our gods, O Ibrahim?" He said, "Rather, this - the largest of them - did it, so ask them, if they should [be able to] speak."

Quran 21:62-63



- The objection against 'ismah is that if
  Ibrahim was ma'sum, how could he lie?
  Again, if we look at the entire passage, we
  see that Ibrahim wanted to make his people
  realize that idols are not worth worshipping—
  if they cannot defend themselves or even
  talk, then how can they help you.
- Secondly, Ibrâhím's answer is conditional: "...if they can speak." Ibrahim's answer was rhetorical and intended to force the people to think.



وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَٰهِ ۚ مُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِ ٱلْمَوْتَيٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِن قَالَ وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَٰهِ مَّ لَيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ ٱلطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ بَلَىٰ وَلَـكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ ٱلطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ ٱجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ٱدْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ ٱجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ٱدْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَٱعْلَمْ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And [mention] when Ibrahim said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." [God] said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied." [God] said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that God is Exalted in Might and Wise."



- Some people use this incident as a proof that Ibrahim did not believe in resurrection. This is absolutely incorrect. The question and answer are themselves very obvious that he believed. "Certainly [I believe]."
- Then why did he ask for a demonstration of resurrection?
- Firstly, Ibrahim surely believed in God's power of giving life to dead. However, this was a belief based on the revelation of Allah just as we believe in it based on the information reached to us through the prophets and the Imams.

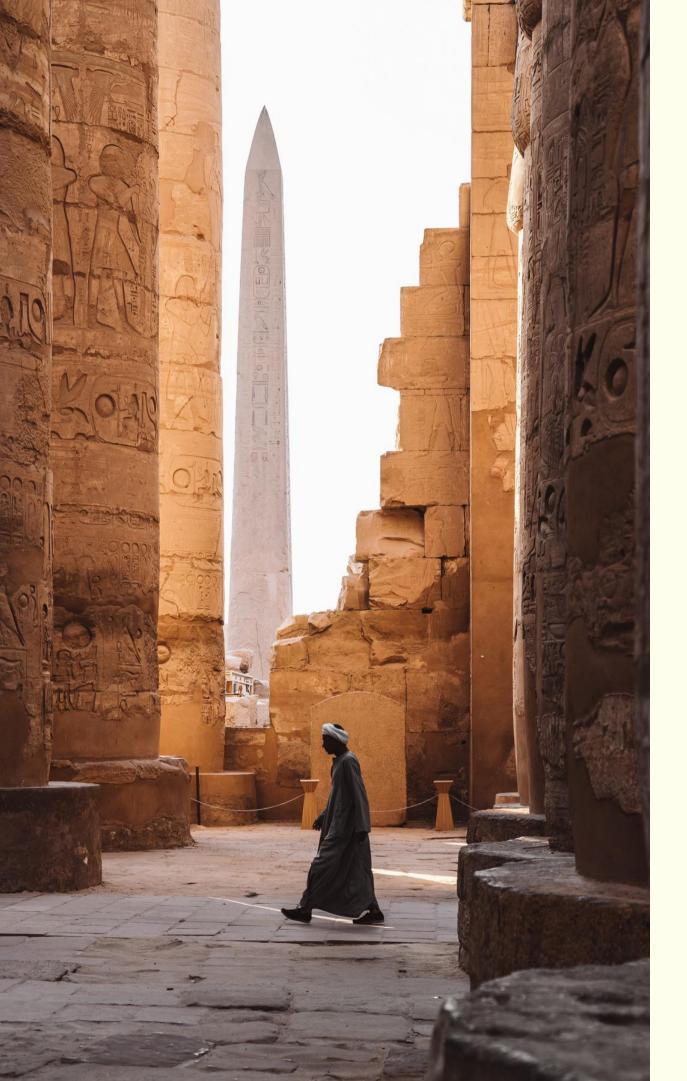


• Secondly, Ibrahim wanted to elevate the level of his belief from "information" to "demonstration". According to traditions, one day Ibrahim saw a dead fish, half in the water, the other half outside the water. He also saw that sea creatures were eating away one half of the fish and land animals were eating away the other half. This incident made Ibrahim wonder about the issue of resurrection. We are using the word "wonder" not "doubt". This is when he had the desire of seeing a demonstration of God's power of resurrection,



• In conclusion, Ibrahim believed in resurrection before as well as after this event. The difference is that his belief prior to this event was based on the information about the future revealed to him by God; whereas after this event, his belief in resurrection was based on visual demonstration done by him with God's permission. This is similar to a Muslim who has been to hajj: before his journey, he believed that the Ka'bah existed; but the basis of his belief changed after his journey—now he has seen the Ka'bah with his own eyes.

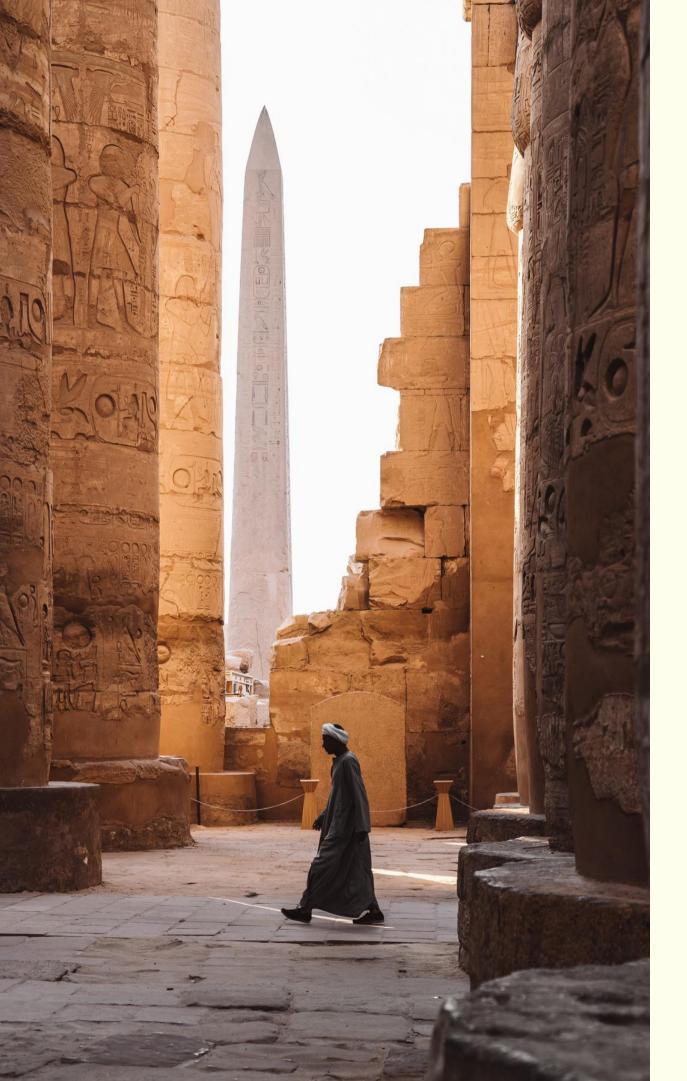




وَدَخَلَ ٱلْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينِ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَٰذَا مِن شِيعَتِهِ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهٍ فَٱسْتَغَٰثَهُ ٱلَّذِي مِن شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَزَهُۥ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ اللَّيْطَٰنِ إِنَّهُۥ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌ مُّبِينٌ

And he entered the city at a time when its people were not watching: and he found there two men fighting,- one of his own religion, and the other, of his foes. Now the man of his own religion appealed to him against his foe, and Musa struck him with his fist and made an end of him. He said: "This is from the work of Satan: for he is an enemy that manifestly misleads!"

Quran 28:15



قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّى ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِى فَٱغْفِرْ لِى فَغَفَرَ لَهُۥۤ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

He said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me," and He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

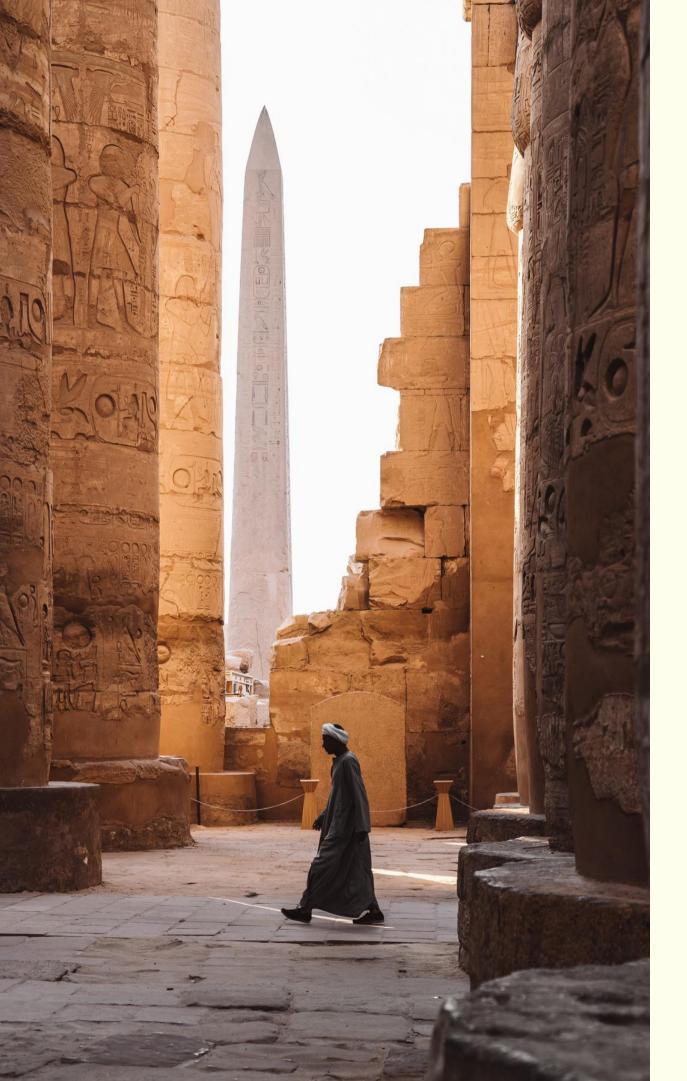
Quran 28:16



- What Musa did was not a crime; he went to help an oppressed person and, in the process, struck a blow with his fist at the oppressor. This ended, unexpectedly, in the death of the oppressor.
   Helping an oppressed person is a praiseworthy act in itself. The death of the oppressor, at most, can be labeled as accidental death that is not a crime or a sin.
- The sentence that "this is the work of Satan" refers to the mischief started by the oppressor himself.

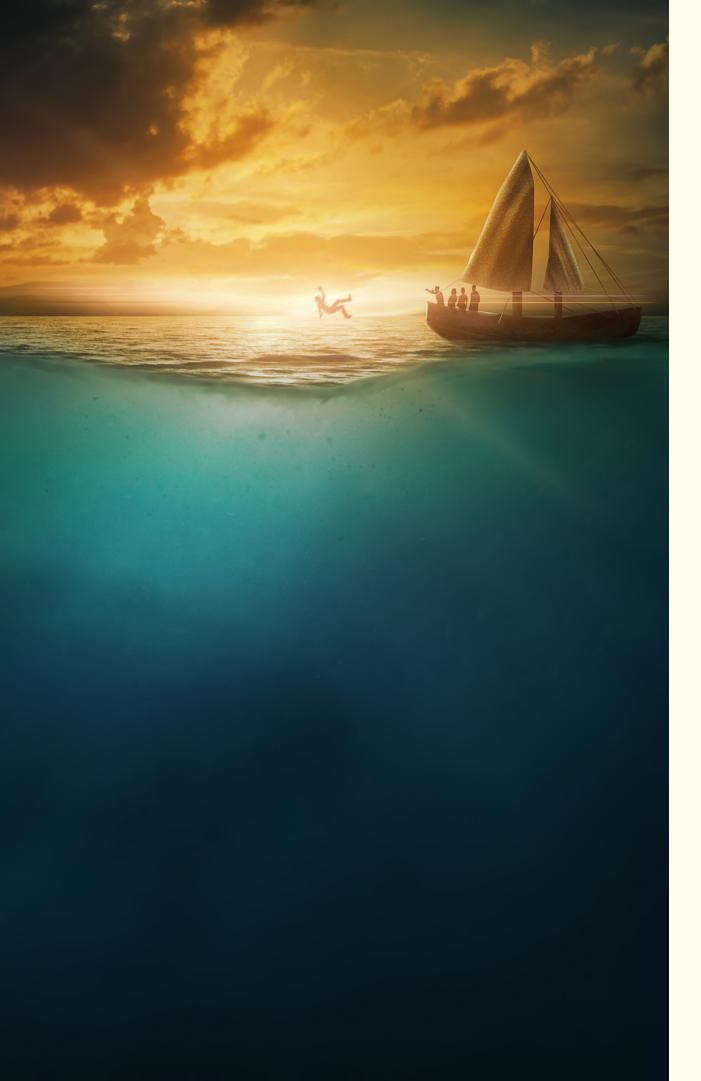


• As for the sentence that "My Lord I have surely been unjust to myself," this must be interpreted in light of the meaning of dhulm explained in the case of Prophet Adam Its correct translation would be: "My Lord I surely have put myself into harm" — after the accidental death of the oppressor, Musa was pursued by the people of Pharoah.



As for the how do you explain the sentence after that which says that "ighfir li" which means "forgive me" and "ghafara" which means that God "forgave him"?

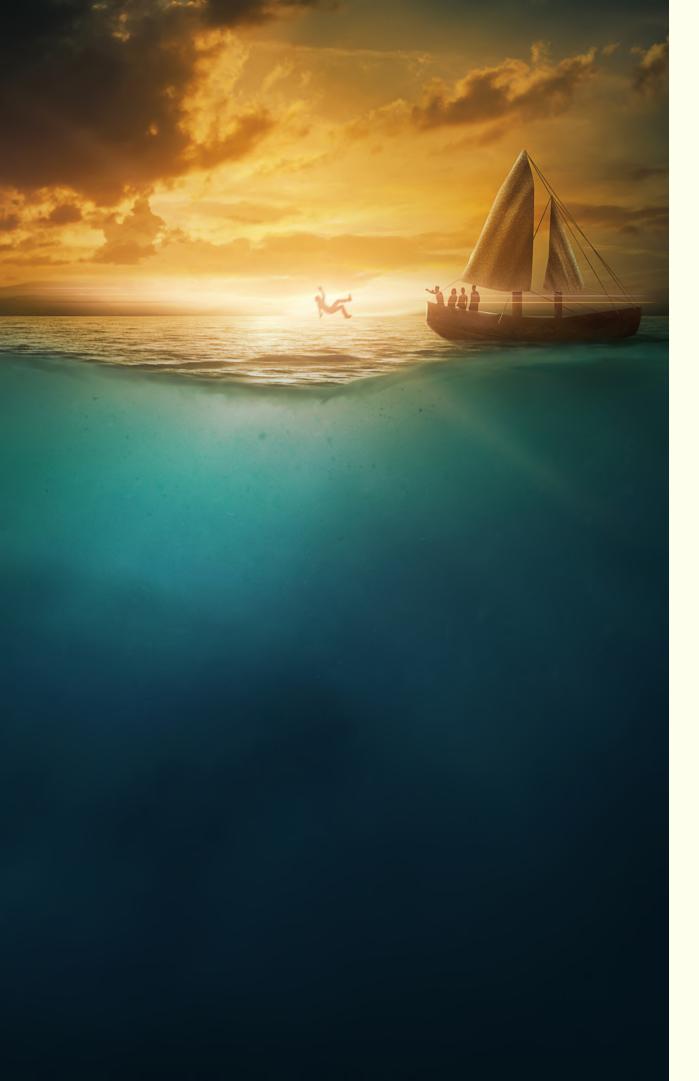
• The common meaning of ghafara (forgiving) is not applicable here. The word "ghafara" also means "to watch over someone" or "to guard someone" or "to cover something [i.e., protect it]". This second meaning does not imply any sin; it just means that by accidentally killing the oppressor, Musa found himself in harm and trouble from the people of Phroah; and, therefore, he prays "...therefore, guard me and God guarded him."



وَذَا ٱلنُّونِ إِذ ذَّهَبَ مُغَلِٰضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَن لَّنِ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِى النُّونِ إِذ ذَّهَبَ مُغَلِٰضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَن لَّنِ نَّقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِى الظَّلْمَٰتِ أَن لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنتَ سُبْحَلْنَكَ إِنِّى كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّلْمِينَ الظَّلْمِينَ

And (remember) Yunus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never have power over him (naqdira). Then he called in the darkness [of night, sea, and fish]: "There is no god but You, glory be to Thee; surely I am one of the unjust

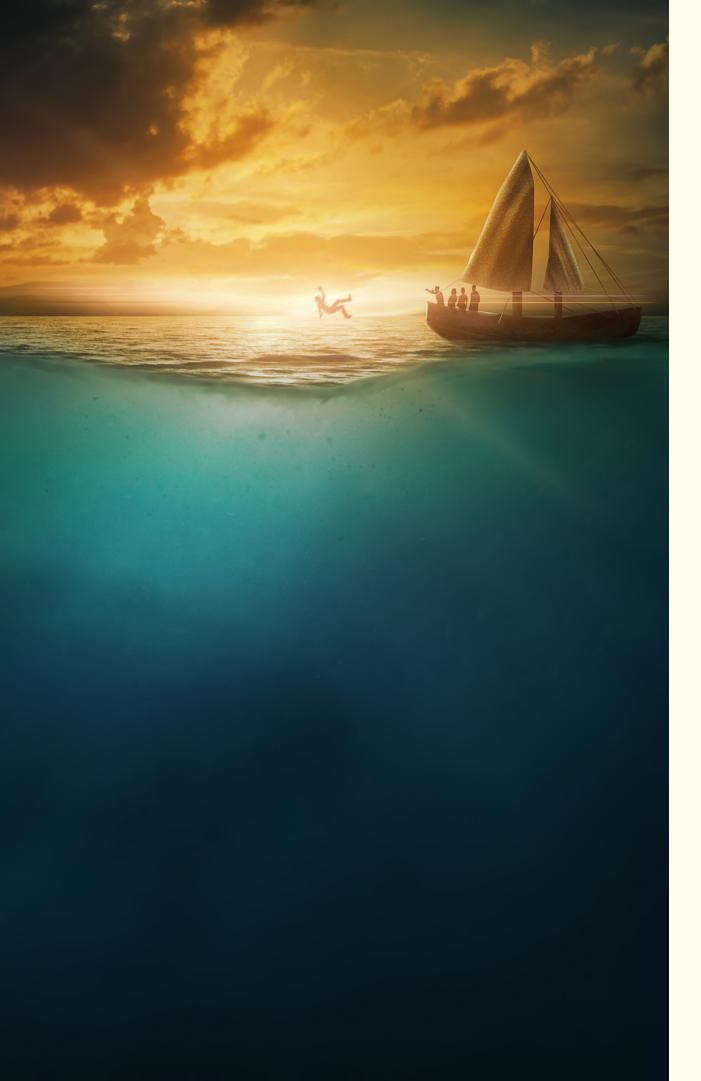
**Quran 21:87** 



فَٱسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُۥ وَنَجَّيْنَا هُ مِنَ ٱلْغَمِّ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُجِى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

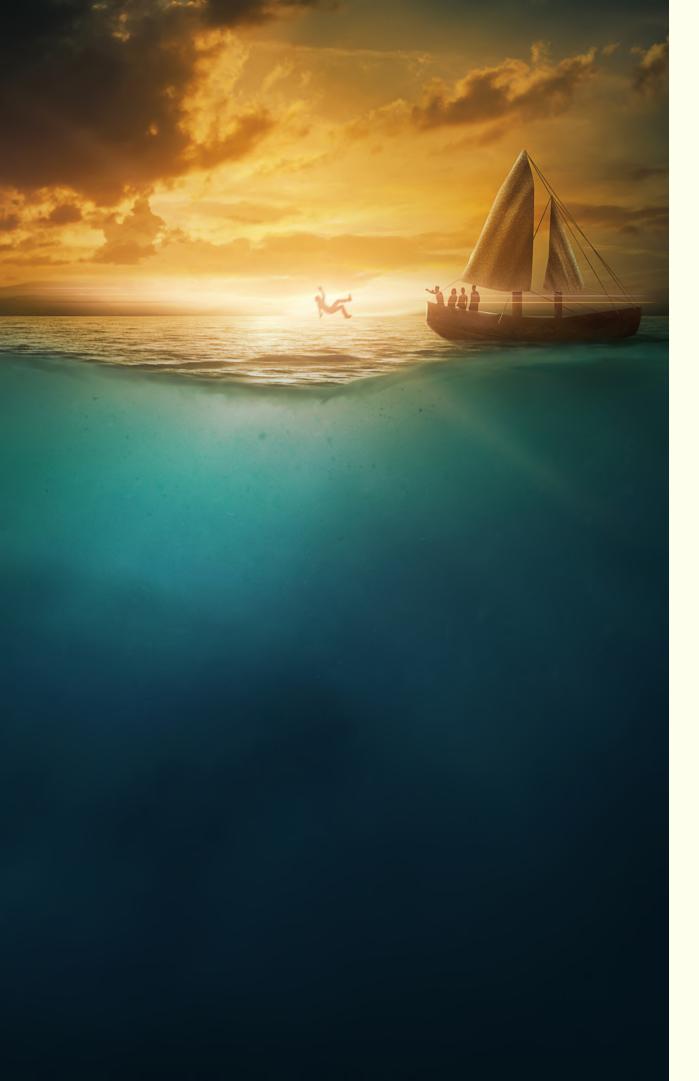
So We responded to him and saved him from the distress. And thus do We save the believers.

Quran 21:88



#### 1. Was Yúnus angry at Allah?

The most that this verse says is that Yúnus went away in anger; it does not say that he was angry with God. So we have no choice but to interpret this verse by saying that Yúnus left the people while he was angry with them for not believing him.



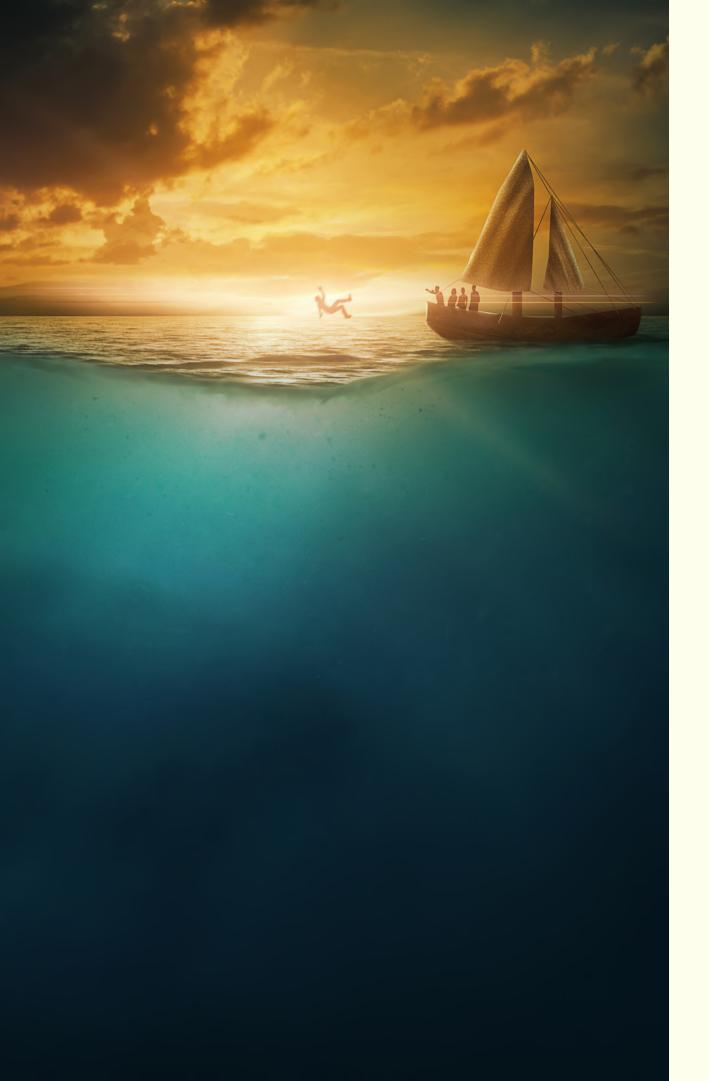
 Some people have taken the word naqdira in the meaning of "having power," thus imply that Yúnus went away in anger thinking that God "would never have power over him". Firstly, if this meaning is to be taken seriously, then Yúnus would become a kafir, an unbeliever!



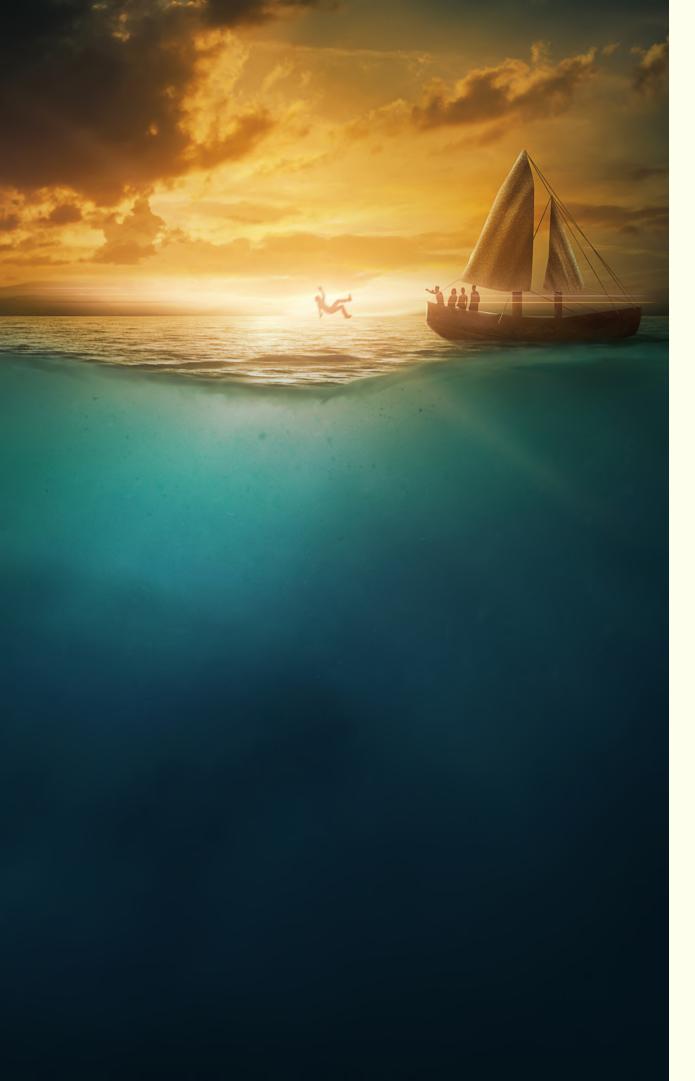
Secondly, the word naqdira (which is from qadr)
has been used many times in the Qur'an for
"restricting of the provision" by Allah. For
example, in chapter 13, verse 26, God says,

ٱللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ ٱلرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ وَيَقْدٍرُ وَفَرِحُواْ بِٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَمَا ٱللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ ٱلرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ وَيَقْدٍرُ وَفَرِحُواْ بِٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا فِي ٱلْـ اخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَـٰعٌ ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا فِي ٱلْـ اخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَتَـٰعٌ

God expands provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. And they rejoice in the worldly life, while the worldly life is not, compared to the Hereafter, except [brief] enjoyment.



• In conclusion, we can say that the first sentence of the passage under discussion means: And (remember) Yunus, when he went away in anger; and he thought that We would never straiten [the provision] over him." This, at most, means that Yunus thought that because he was God's prophet, his Lord would never straiten his provision for him; he had taken God's provision for granted. It has nothing to do with issue of God having no power over him.



If Yunus had committed no sin by leaving his people, then why did he say that, "surely I am one of the the unjust"?

• The word ظلم does not necessarily imply "injustice" and "sin". It also means "to make haste" and "to come to harm". Any of these two meanings are compatible with the concept of 'ismah and also correct in the case of Prophet Yunus