72516 - Meaning of the verse “So this day We shall deliver your (dead) body (out from the sea)”

the question

What is the meaning of the verse in which Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “So this day We shall deliver your (dead) body (out from the sea)” [Yoonus 10:92]?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This verse in Soorat Yoonus comes in the context of describing the attitude of the tyrant Pharaoh towards the Prophet of Allaah Moosa (peace be upon him) and those of the Children of Israel who believed with him. That was when Moosa (peace be upon him) set out with the believers to migrate to the blessed land, and Pharaoh and his troops pursued them in order to bring them back and punish them. During their lengthy travels, they came to the sea and could not go any further, but Allaah honoured His Prophet Moosa and the believers who were with him by making the sea dry for them so that they could walk across it, so they crossed over in the sight of their enemies, whilst they were looking on. The enemy of Allaah Pharaoh, in his arrogance and foolishness, set out in a ship behind Moosa and the people who were with him, but he and those who were with him drowned in the same sea that Moosa and the believers with him had crossed.

When death was surrounding the tyrant on all sides, and the waves of the sea were tossing him around, and he was sure that drowning was to be his unavoidable fate, he said: “I believe that none has the right to be worshipped but He (Allaah) in Whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am one of the Muslims (those who submit to Allaah’s Will)” [Yoonus 10:90]. But it was too late, the time for repentance had passed and the time for believing ended once death approached, and the evildoer lost all strength and wiles.

Undoubtedly the death of this extreme tyrant in such a manner is one of the greatest signs which

demonstrate the consequences of stubbornness, wrongdoing and arrogance. Hence Allaah wanted to establish and confirm this sign, so as to dispel any doubt or confusion. So He decreed that the body of the Pharaoh should appear motionless and dead on the shore, so that his people and those who used to worship him could see him, and that would be the most eloquent lesson to them. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So this day We shall deliver your (dead) body (out from the sea) that you may be a sign to those who come after you! And verily, many among mankind are heedless of Our Ayaat”

[Yoonus 10:92]

Ibn Katheer (may Allaah have mercy on him) said: Ibn ‘Abbaas and others of the salaf said that some of the Children of Israel doubted the death of Pharaoh, so Allaah commanded the sea to throw out his body, whole but lifeless, wearing his well known armour, onto a raised portion of land, so that they might see that he was indeed dead. Hence Allaah says “So this day We shall deliver your (dead) body” i.e., we will raise you onto a prominent part of the land. “your (dead) body” – Mujaahid said: your body. Al-Hasan said: a body in which there is no soul. ‘Abd-Allaah ibn Shaddaad said: whole and complete, i.e., not decomposed, so that they may recognize him and be certain that it is him. Abu Sakhr said: with your armour. There is no contradiction between any of these opinions, as we shall see below in sha Allaah.

The words “that you may be a sign to those who come after you” means, so that this will be proof of your death for the Children of Israel, and will show that Allaah is the One who is All-Powerful, and the forelock of every living being is in His hand, and nothing can resist His wrath.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (2/565)

And this is what happened. The Children of Israel saw Pharaoh lying dead with their own eyes, so he was a sign for those who saw him then, and he is a sign for all those who come after him and hear the story of his death.

There is nothing in this sign to indicate that his body would be preserved until the Day of

Resurrection, as some people imagine. That is interpreting the Qur'aan in a manner that is farfetched. If the purpose had been to preserve the body of the Pharaoh for all those people who came after him, so that they could see his dead body for themselves, then his body would have remained well known to all those who came after him and those who heard his story, so that the lesson could be learned and the sign made manifest and the promise fulfilled. What happened to his story so that people forgot it and for so many centuries no one remember it, until the archaeologists claimed that they had found the body of the Pharaoh who was drowned?

Shaykh Saalih al-Fawzaan (may Allaah preserve him) said: The meaning of Allaah's words, "that you may be a sign to those who come after you" is: so that there would be evidence for the Children of Israel that you were indeed dead, and that Allaah is the All-Powerful, and the forelock of every living being is in His hand, and no one can escape His punishment, even if he is in a position of authority and power among people. This does not imply that the body of the Pharaoh would remain preserved until our times, as the ignorant think, because the purpose of his body being thrown from the sea was so that it would be known that he had died and to confirm that for those among the Children of Israel who doubted it. This purpose was fulfilled, and the body of Pharaoh is like any other body, it is bound to disintegrate and nothing will be left of it but that which is left of any other body, which is the end of the tailbone, from which each person's body will be created anew on the Day of Resurrection, as it says in the hadeeth. So the body of Pharaoh is no different from the body of anyone else. And Allaah knows best.

Al-Muntaqa min Fataawa al-Fawzaan (1/question no. 132).

But it may be said here that if it were to so happen that the Pharaoh's body appeared again, and the experts in history and archaeology were to confirm that this is the body of the Pharaoh who is mentioned by Allaah in His Book, that would be an indication of the truth of what the Qur'aan says about the body of Pharaoh being delivered (from the sea).

The scholar Taahir ibn 'Ashoor (may Allaah have mercy on him) says: One of the subtleties of the Qur'aan is the words of Allaah (interpretation of the meaning): "So this day We shall deliver your (dead) body (out from the sea) that you may be a sign to those who come after you". This is

something the like of which was not mentioned by anyone who wrote about Pharaoh; it is one of the scientific miracles of the Qur’aan, as the verse is in accordance with historical facts.”

Al-Tahreer wa’l-Tanweer (1/2065)

Conclusion: The body of Pharaoh was delivered from the sea that day and protected from decomposition, but that does not necessarily mean that it will be preserved until the Day of Resurrection. If it is proven by the archaeologists and historians that the body of Pharaoh is still preserved today, and it is what is displayed in some museums, it is not permissible to claim that this preservation is a miracle from Allaah for all people, rather it is just historical confirmation that is in accordance with what is in the Qur’aan, and that is the miracle.

And Allaah knows best.