

Sura Taha, verses 87

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حَمِلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ
فَقَذَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ

They said: We did not break our promise to you of our own accord, but we were made to bear the burdens of the ornaments of the people, then we cast them away and so Samiri threw them [into the fire].

Reflections

- The people say they did not disobey out of choice. Whose choice is it when a person does something wrong?
- Whose ornaments were these?
- Could Samiri have taken the ornaments without their permission?
- If Samiri threw the ornaments in the fire to melt it and build a calf, what should the people have done in response?

Tafsir

The people realize that Nabi Musa is upset with them and that they have done wrong. They want to excuse themselves and say they didn't worship the calf out of their own choice. It was Samiri who made the calf from their ornaments.

The word 'awzaran' means burdens, something heavy which they had to carry. The people had gold jewellery that had previously belonged to the people of Firaun. It was given to them and they later threw it aside. This could have been because it was heavy for them. Or it could also be that they disliked the jewellery because it had belonged to people who had oppressed them and treated them cruelly.

They explain that they had put aside their jewellery and Samiri had taken them and thrown them in the fire, to melt and make a calf. However two questions arise here?

- Did Samiri take the jewellery without their permission? They must have allowed him to do it. In fact history tells us they gave their jewellery to him.
- Even if Samiri took the jewellery and made the calf, how could he have forced them to worship it? He may have suggested and encouraged, but they made the choice.

The people do not wish to take responsibility for their choice. Samiri had suggested idol worship but it was their choice to accept that suggestion. Although they themselves were inclined towards it they wish to blame everything on him.

To take responsibility for one's actions is an important quality of a believer. To sin is wrong. What makes it worse is the refusal to acknowledge the sin and feel remorse. It is wrong to blame others and make them responsible for one's own choices.

Relevant Verses

Making excuses: 75:14-15

Blaming Shaytan on the Day of Judgement: 14:22

Hadith

Knowledge breaks up the excuse of those who make excuses.

Imam Ali (a)

Nahjul Balagha, hadith no. 284

The miserly person brings forth excuses.

Imam Ali (a)

Ghurarul Hikam, #1275

A Good quote:

As the opposite of responsibility, blame is so popular because it temporarily liberates you. It gives you a short-term emotional fix; you feel better for the time being. However, blaming others is ultimately immobilizing. It holds you back and cuts the legs right out from under your full potential for joy. Blame is like an emotional dirty bomb.

<http://jbmthinks.com/2014/01/accepting-blame.html/>

Important Lessons

- 1) People are quick to blame others for their wrong deeds.
- 2) The ultimate choice of doing an action lies in your own hands. Nobody can force you into something. They can only suggest, encourage . . . etc.

- 3) Shaytan on the Day of Judgement will tell human beings not blame him (14:22). This shows that people on that day will look for others to blame. But it will not save them from the displeasure of Allah.
- 4) Blaming others is negative energy that spreads to all those involved. A lot of mental energy is wasted on finding someone to blame, thinking of excuses, etc. instead of using that energy to accept and move on.

Practical Implementation

Do the students take responsibility for their actions? When something goes wrong, at home, or in school, do they own up and apologize, make amends, or do they blame it on others.

What happens when you blame others instead of taking responsibility?

- you cannot seek forgiveness for your deeds because you haven't accepted it as your fault
- you cannot change and improve

Also check: http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/blaming_others_and_success.asp

Possible Ideas for activities

- Play a game to show the effect of blaming others. One example is the game of hot potato. One child blames another, that child blames another . . . and it goes on, coming back in full circle. Nothing was resolved.
- Ask questions and get students to pick their answers. Samples:
 - 1) You break a bowl at home. Do you
 - a) Blame your brother or sister
 - b) say nothing
 - c) apologize to your mum and say you will be more careful in future
 - 2) You didn't do your homework. Do you
 - a) Blame your teacher for giving too much homework
 - b) say your home life is too busy for doing homework
 - c) apologize and ask your teacher to give you an extra day



- Let children make a drawing, or card, or poster . . . etc with a picture and a sentence on the effects of blaming others.

Check: <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/schoolage-children/blaming-and-tattling/curbing-the-blame-game-and-getting-rid-of-excuses>



Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

Shaykh Rizwan Arastu, *God's Emissaries*