

Sura Taha, verse 89

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا

Could they not see that it did not reply to them, it did not control any harm or benefit for them?

Reflections

- What are the three things mentioned in this verse that the calf cannot do?
- What should be the qualities of a God who creates?
- Does God reply when you speak to Him? How?
- Why did the people not use their intelligence and think for themselves?

Tafsir

God asks how the people can worship the calf when it cannot reply to them. It has no ability to speak or communicate. The only sound that comes out is a mooing sound which is made involuntarily. It also has no ability to benefit or harm them in any way. It is just a statue which they themselves have created.

Islam is very clear that God who is worshipped is Powerful and Perfect. An idol or created image cannot be compared in anyway to Him. God has 99 beautiful names and is far beyond what the human being can understand. A weak or inferior being cannot be God. He is the Creator and Master of all things created.

All those who reflect intelligently can understand that an idol cannot be a god. The people of Nabi Musa were led astray by Samiri and did not use their own minds to think about it. They did not ask the right questions and did not stand up for what they knew instinctively was right. Instead they followed Samiri and the group that crowded around him.

Many people find it hard to maintain their identity when surrounded by those who go against it. In our world today we know that decency and virtue are important principles of life. We submit to God who created us and follow His rules. But around us there may be many people who propagate other ideas. They encourage us, or pressure us indirectly, to follow the crowd. We need to stand firm and think for ourselves. We should ask questions and see things correctly. We would then be able to see the wrong in their arguments. That is what Allah asks the people in this verse,

why do they not see the wrong behind what Samiri asked them to do? Asking questions and reflecting gives a foresight and understanding. That is the whole point of having intellect and being a unique person rather than just part of a crowd.

Relevant Verses

A comprehensive description of God by Nabi Ibrahim - 26:78-82

Following the majority leads you astray- 6:116

Hadith

Surely Allah has not created human beings except to recognize Him and worship Him. And when they worship Him they would not need to worship any being other than Him.

Imam Husayn (a)

Truth and falsehood are not recognized by the number of followers. Know Truth and you will know its people. Know falsehood and you will know its people.

Imam Ali (a)

Story

He was lame in one foot and like others around him he worshipped idols. He had also once been the custodian of one of the idol temples of the city of Medina. With the spread of Islam, people gave up idolatry and came to believe in the Oneness of God. However, he continued to believe in idols. With complete sincerity, he worshipped the idol he himself had made. He prayed to it for his needs.

The young children of his city stole his idol many times and threw it among the rubbish so that he would stop worshipping idols. However he continued to worship the idols. He would take a great deal of trouble finding it and then he would take it home, clean and scent it and start worshipping the idol again.

He used to say to the idol: "If I only knew who takes you, I would make him pay for it. But believe me, I do not know who he is!"

He continued in this way worshipping idols until one day he was faced with a strange scene - he saw that someone had tied his idol to the corpse of an animal and had thrown it in the middle of a pit! Upon seeing this, he was taken aback. In fact, he could not believe such an insult had been made to his idol. He decided to take the idol to his home again and apologize when suddenly an idea occurred to him. He asked himself, "Really, what sort of a god is this idol? Why is it so helpless and miserable? Why is it unable to defend itself? How can such a weak thing be my protector?" ..and thus he came to realize the truth and to hate such a weak god who was unable to do

anything. He then reproached himself for having been an idolater. It was then that the spark of faith lit up his heart so that while shedding tears of remorse, he started repenting. In this way he came to believe in the unique God and he became one of the most devoted Muslim.

The man was Amr bin Jamuh, who became a sincere believer and was martyred in the battle of Uhud.

From: <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/anecdotes3.asp>

Important Lessons

- 1) A God who is worshipped must have the most superior qualities. It cannot be weaker than the human being himself.
- 2) Before doing something that may be wrong, ask questions and think for yourself. You will be able to see the flaws in what you want to do.
- 3) Don't give in to pressure from others. Peer pressure can lead you to wrong things. If majority of people are doing something, that does not make it right. Know the Truth and then follow it.

Practical Implementation

Students should know that the God they worship has amazing and beautiful qualities.

Reflecting and asking questions helps prevent a person from getting into wrong.

Possible Ideas for activities

- Practise the habit of asking questions before doing something that may be wrong. Telling a lie, not praying, wearing improper hijab . . . what are some questions you could ask yourself about it?
- Check the following for ideas on activities that encourage children not to give in to pressure from others.

https://classroom.kidshealth.org/classroom/9to12/personal/growing/peer_pressure.pdf

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/BCBC/Values.html>

<http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/beverlywoodsES/Documents/Marchcourage.pdf>

Sources:

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

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

<http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/anecdotes3.asp>