

Sura Sad, Verses 21-22

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ نَبَأُ الْخَصْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ

Has there come to you the story of the disputers, when they climbed over the wall into the private chamber?

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى دَاوُدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ ^{صَلِّ} قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ ^{صَلِّ} خَصْمَانِ بَغِي بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ

When they came to Dawood and he was afraid of them. They said, Fear not. We are two disputants, one of whom has wronged the other. So judge between us with the Truth and do not be unjust and show us the right path.

Reflections

- Why did the two men climb over the wall rather than enter the house normally?
- Why was Nabi Dawood afraid?
- How does fear affect the words/actions of a person?
- The two men really wanted justice. How do they reiterate this request? (in three different ways)

Tafsir

These verses begin the story of the two people who had a conflict and wanted Nabi Dawood to judge between them.

Words that need to be understood:

- a) Khasm - one who disputes another, who has a difference with another person
- b) Tasawwaru - a high wall outside the home or the town. Originally means climbing or going up.
- c) Mihrab - an elevated place in the house, or a room at the top of the house. That would be the room of worship and so mihrab was the word for the place of worship.

This passage starts with a question, to draw attention and give importance to the story that follows. This is often the case in the Quran. Other stories have also started with a similar question. Then Allah narrates the story of the two people who had a dispute and who came to Nabi Dawood to ask him to judge between them.

The two men came in a very unexpected way. They had no appointment and did not inform anyone of their coming. Although Nabi Dawood had guards around his home the two men managed to evade them and climbed the wall, jumping directly into Nabi Dawood's room. He was startled and felt afraid of what they intended. Fear is a natural emotion and does not signify lack of trust in God. It is an immediate response to a perceived threat and can be overcome. Other Prophets have also been mentioned as experiencing fear - Nabi Musa when he saw the sticks of the magicians turn into snakes (20:67), Nabi Ibrahim when he saw the men who were actually angels not eating the food he brought for them (11:70).

The men saw that Nabi Dawood was startled and they reassured him. They told him not to be afraid and that they had a dispute which they wanted him to judge. They reveal their expectations of him, that he would be fair and would not be unjust to either of them. From the beginning the two show their trust and high regard for Nabi Dawood.

Fairness is most important in judging between two people. Hence the repetition of the expectations of fairness in the verse - judge between the two of us with fairness, and do not be unjust, and guide us to the right way.

Note to the Teacher - You may explain the entire story to the students, before exploring each verse of the story in more detail. The story is that two men climbed over the wall into Nabi Dawood's place of worship. He was startled. They reassured him and asked him to judge fairly between them. One of them had 99 ewes. His brother had 1 ewe but he still wanted that one and asked him to give it to him. He overcame his brother with smart arguing. Nabi Dawood said it was wrong for the brother to have done that. He gave judgement but realized immediately that it was wrong of him to have jumped to conclusion without listening to the other brother. That was not correct for fair judgement. He regretted and sought forgiveness.

Note that some commentators believe that the two men were angels in the form of human beings, to teach Nabi Dawood a lesson - he was not the best of judges and could make a mistake. He needed to be cautious and alert to make sure he did not wrong anyone when making judgement. You may or may not tell this to the students opening on their level of maturity. Not all commentators agree with that view.

Relevant Verses

Fairness - 4:135, 5:8, 16:90

Hadith

I advise you to be fair, both in contentment and in anger.

Imam Ali (a)

In a letter to Imam Hasan (a), Imam Ali (a) writes: “O my son, make yourself the measure for dealings between yourself and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself. Do not oppress, as you do not like to be oppressed. Do good to others as you like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard as bad for others. Accept that treatment from others which you like others to accept from you. Do not talk about what you do not know, even though what you know be very little. Do not say to others what you do not like to be said to you

Important Lessons

- 1) Begin a story with something that attracts attention
- 2) Reassure someone who is afraid of you.
- 3) Fear may make you act in a manner that is not normal for you.
- 4) Fairness is extremely important when judging between people.
- 5) Listen to both sides of an argument before making a judgment.

Story

Once Nabi Dawood was in the mihrab when a red worm crawled to the spot of his Sajdah. Seeing it he thought, why did Allah created this tiny worm? Allah gave that insect the power of speaking and it, by the order of the Lord, said, “O Dawood! Could you hear my noise or see the signs of my steps on the hard rock?” No, replied Nabi Dawood. The insect said, “Surely the Creator of the worlds hears the sound of my footsteps, my voice and even my breathing and He sees the marks of my footsteps on hard rocks.

Moral - Small tiny creatures of God have a role to play in this world. God is aware of the movement of each one of them. A relevant verse would be 6:59.

Possible Ideas for activities

- 1) Explore the emotion of fear and how it paralyses the mind. Discuss ways of countering fear (remembrance of Allah, trust in Him, inspiration from great leaders . . .). Play a game of different scenarios that can create fear and how to replace the fearful thought with another thought.

Some good books on overcoming fear can be found at: <http://childrenbooklists.com/category/fear/>

2) Draw, paint, or construct an image of Nabi Dawood in the mihrab with two men coming down the wall. Illustrate the sanctity of fair judging, such that it can take place in the mihrab. The Mosque in earlier days was a place where cases were judged.

Sources:

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

Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*

Shaykh Rizwan Arastu, *God's Emissaries: Adam to Jesus*