

Sura Taha, verses 95-97

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ

He said: What was then your object, O Samiri?

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ
فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

He said: I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful of the dust from the footsteps of the messenger, then I threw it into the calf; thus did my soul suggest to me

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ
مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ وَانظُرْ إِلَى إِلٰهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَنْحَرِقْنَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

He said: Be gone, throughout your life you will say 'do not touch me'. And there is another thing waiting for you which you cannot escape. Look at your god which you worshipped for so long, we will burn it then we will scatter it into the sea

Reflections

- What did Samiri see which the others did not see?
- What punishment was Samiri given?
- Do Samiri's words show regret?

Tafsir

After talking to his brother, Nabi Musa now turns to question Samiri. He asks him about what he had done and the reason behind it. Samiri tells him that he saw what the people did not see and he took something from the footsteps of the Messenger and threw it, and this was what his soul told him to do.

The above has been interpreted to mean one of two things:

- 1) That Samiri saw Jibrael on a horse behind the people as they crossed the sea. He took some dust from the footsteps of the horse. He saved it for later use. When he built the golden calf he threw the dust into it so it would become blessed. The sound of the calf was the effect of that dust.
- 2) That Samiri first believed in the teachings of Nabi Musa and followed him (footsteps of Nabi Musa). Later he doubted them and threw them aside, going back to idol worshipping. His soul inclined him towards that.

The second meaning seems more likely, according to Tafsir Namune. The author relates a story from the life of Imam Ali (a) which seems to verify that Samiri was a hypocrite who did not believe and set out to lead the people astray. Imam Ali (a) was once talking to the people and saw Hasan Basri sitting in the audience with a tablet (used at that time for writing). He asked him what he was doing. Hasan Basri replied that he was writing down what the Imam said to pass it on to future generations. Imam then said; 'Every nation has a Samiri and he is the Samiri of this nation. The only difference is that Samiri said do not connect with me while he says do not wage war.' This was a reference to the policy of no war - even with those who plotted against the Muslims - which Hasan Basri promoted at the time of the battle of Jamal. (note for teachers: You may or may not share this with students, according to their level of understanding)

Samiri's plea was not accepted in the court of Nabi Musa (a) and he was sentenced to three punishments:

- 1) He would be exiled and would distance himself from the people. It was a self imposed exile. Samiri was afflicted with a mental disease which made him avoid any contact with other people. He told people who came to him to go away and not be close to him. This is how he lived the remainder of his life.
- 2) He was warned of the punishment of the Hereafter, something he could not escape.
- 3) The golden calf would be burnt and scattered into the sea. It is possible that the calf was made of wood and gold so parts of it would burn. Or perhaps the burning would just melt it and make it lose its shape and it would then be disposed.

This punishment and destruction of the golden calf would send a strong message to the people. Even though the gold was valuable he did not want any traces of it to remain with the people due to the pollution of idol worship that it had become associated with.

Important Lessons

- 1) When people do something really wrong, find out the reasons behind it. Nabi Musa asks Samiri and does not judge him without listening to him. Every person has the right to defend himself.
- 2) Even when society changes and is good, there will always be some who have evil within them who are waiting for an opportunity. Samiri was one such example.
- 3) Smartness and an evil nafs are dangerous combinations. they can be used to lead people astray.
- 4) Evil must be identified and isolated. A society that lets evil stay within it and does not condemn it is actually letting the evil spread within it.

Practical Implementation

Stay away from people who may lead you astray.

Possible Ideas for activities

- act out the conversation between Nabi Musa and Samiri.
- Explore the character of Samiri and his impact on the people, before and after Nabi Musa's return. Draw a poster, play an adjective game, write a descriptive paragraph . . . anything that will help students see the qualities of evil and the its consequences.

Sources:

Āytaullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzī (ed), *Tafsīr-e Namūneh*;
Aghae Muhsin Qaraati, *Tafsire Nur*