

Sūrat al-Qalam Verses 17-20

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَاهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ

Q68:17 - Indeed we have tested them just as We tested the People of the Garden when they vowed they would gather its fruit at dawn,

وَلَا يَسْتثنُونَ

Q68:18 - And they did not make any exception.

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ

Q68:19 - Then, a visitation from your Lord visited it while they were asleep

فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ

Q68:20 - So, by dawn it was like a harvested field.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What could be a test for people?
- 2) What exception should the people have made (they said they would gather fruits at dawn, not if God wills)

Commentary

The verses before the story of the garden talk about wealthy and arrogant people who reject God. They believed they were powerful enough and did not need God. They could take care of themselves and their wealth. Almighty Allah says He can test them the way He tested people in the past. He reveals the story of the people of the garden. The story was known in some details by the people during the time of the Prophet (s).

The story is about an old man who was kind and faithful believer. He owned a lush garden and grew his own food. He had so much produce that he took from it for his own family and gave the rest to the poor and destitute people of his time. He followed this practice every year at harvest time, and the people expected it from him. It became a norm in that community.

When he died, his sons who inherited the garden were less generous. They decided they did not want to share the produce from the garden with the needy. We have our own families, they said, and we need all of it. So, they decided that all those who were given from the garden every year at harvest time by their father, would not be given anything this year.

The first four verses tell us in a summary about the events that happened. The brothers swore (made a firm decision) to harvest early the next morning. They did not consider the fact that it would only happen if Allah wills. So, the exception of Inshallah was not made. Another interpretation of the exception is that they would take all the produce for themselves and make no exception for anyone else, not even those who were needy. This attitude shows greed, lack of faith, and miserliness. Even when you have your own needs, it is always possible to set aside a little for others.

That night thunder and lightning came down on the farm. It ignited a fire that burnt it while the brothers slept. The garden became a leveled field that was burnt to the ground. there were no more trees, or bushes of fruit to be seen anywhere. The word **صَرِيمٌ** refers to a dark spot that is desolate, like a dark night.

Lessons learned

- 1) Everything is in God's control. All wealth and blessing are from Him and can be taken away at any time. They should be used as He wants them to be.
- 2) Giving and sharing with others pleases God and increases blessings rather than take them away.