

Sūrat al-Qalam
Verses 26-29

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُّونَ

Q68:26 - But when they saw it, they said; Indeed, we are astray

بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ

Q68:27 - Rather, we have been deprived

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ

Q68:28 - The most moderate of them said; Did I not say to you, 'Why do you not glorify Allah?'

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ

Q68:29 - They said; Glory be to our Lord! Indeed, we were unjust

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why did the brothers say they were astray? What were they referring to?
- 2) What was the loss and deprivation here?
- 3) What qualities did the moderate one from the brothers have?
- 4) Do you remember the story of another brother who was more moderate than his brothers and advised them not to do wrong? (Brother of Prophet Yusuf who told his brothers to put him in the well rather than kill him).
- 4) What does glorifying God mean here?

Commentary

When the brothers reached their garden they were completely shocked to see how it had become. Instead of trees and bushes laden with fruit they saw a burned land which was black and barren. Everything had been destroyed. The word 'astray' could have been because they first thought they had lost the way and reached the wrong garden. It could also have a deeper meaning of losing the right way of truth and virtue. They realized how wrong they had been to plot to stop the poor from getting a share of the garden.

They had tried to deprive the poor but now realized they themselves were deprived. They were in a loss in two ways;

- material loss of the fruit
- spiritual loss of the reward and pleasure of Allah by feeding the poor

Among the brothers was one who is described as moderate. That means he had intelligence and a strong conscience. He wanted the share of the fruits but also wanted to share with the poor. He was balanced. He had earlier told them to be God conscious and not be mean to the poor. He had told them to be grateful for what they had and share it with others. But the brothers had not listened to him. Now he spoke up again and reminded them that he had warned them. This was not to rub it in but to show them how dead their conscience had been. They had refused to listen even though the truth had been presented to them. Now that they were feeling remorse, perhaps that memory would make them turn repentant to God. His message seemed so right in hindsight. That is how human beings are. God warns us through different ways. He gives us signs, but we refuse to see them. Then after realizing the truth we look back and wish we had accepted it earlier.

The brothers are quick to realize their mistake. This realization is a sign of a heart that was not completely dead. They glorify God and admit that they have been unjust to their souls as well as to the poor. Glorification has been mentioned in verses 28 and 29 because the root behind all good deeds is the faith in a God who is free of all defects. It is belief in a Creator and in His perfect qualities. That belief makes a human being inclined towards good deeds that are worthy of the greatness and glory of God.

It is interesting that Quran also mentions an admission of injustice preceded by Tasbih elsewhere, in the prayer of Prophet Yunus – 21:87. The glorification is a prerequisite, to show understanding that the result of the injustice is not brought about by Allah. He is free from such acts. It is the human being's own actions that has brought about the result. So the process is accepting the greatness and worthiness of God and then admitting the wrong one has done.

Connecting verses

- 1) Those who are astray – 1:7, Shaytan leads astray – 4:60, people lead you astray if you follow them – 22:4.
- 2) Brother of Prophet Yusuf (moderate one) – 12:10

Connecting Topics

- 1) Why people go astray
<https://www.troid.org/new-and-basics/dangers-to-new-muslims/896-six-things-that-cause-someone-to-go-astray>
- 2) Glorification of God
<https://www.academyofislam.com/reflection-no-546-on-q-1743-glorified-status-of-allah-swt/>
<https://www.academyofislam.com/reflection-no-523-on-q-1744-tasbih-of-the-universe/>
- 3) Balance between world and Hereafter
<https://muslimvillage.com/2014/12/05/60126/the-importance-of-balance/>