

Sūrat Saba Verse 15

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ آيَةٌ ۖ جَنَّاتٍ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ ۚ
كُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۚ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

Q34:15 Certainly, there was a sign for Saba in their abode; two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him: a good land and a Forgiving Lord!

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What was the sign for Saba in their abodes?
- 2) What are the two important blessings outlines in this verse? How do we show appreciation for them?

Commentary

After discussing the story of Prophet Dāwūd and Prophet Sulaymān (a) and their gratitude to Allah, the Quran now moves on to the story of a people who were an opposite example. Instead of being grateful for all their blessings they were heedless and ungrateful. The people of Saba lived at the same time as these Prophets or a little after them. Due to their ingratitude and the consequences they suffered, they became a lesson in history for people to read and learn from.

The story of the people of Saba is told over five verses which give important details about them. Verse 15 talks about the sign of Allah in the place where they lived. The sign refer to the right geographical settings, the means available, and the intelligence to channel all these into providing abundant sustenance for them. The place was surrounded by mountains and water and they were able to control the flow of water which could otherwise destroy their fields, to provide just the right amount needed to irrigate their lands. This was done through a cooperation and harmony with nature, understanding the resources available and using it to the best of their ability. What a great sign of Allah that a force that has the potential to destroy be used for nurturing and enrichment!

According to a tradition narrated from the Prophet (s) there was a man named Saba who lived in Yemen. He had ten sons from whom came ten tribes who settled in that area. It is also known to be the name of a land, as seen in the story of Hudhud and Prophet Sulaymān(a).

The people of Saba were able to cultivate vast lands from the water that was channeled through the dam they built. Note that the two gardens mentioned in this verse are not just small gardens, but rather land stretching on both sides of the river that were cultivated and blossomed with different types of fruit. So abundant was the growth that it has been narrated that during the right season when a person would walk in those gardens with a basket on the head, fruit would fall into the basket and fill it up very soon. There was also a tranquil sense of safety and security in the land.

When they ate of the provision given to them, a natural responsibility would be to thank the One who provided for them. When enjoying any blessing in this world, there is always a responsibility that must be carried out. Eating and drinking have responsibilities – eating appropriately, not wasting, thanking the Provider, sharing with others, etc.

The last phrase of the verse outlines the material and spiritual blessings of the people of Saba. A land that provided for them and a Lord who was merciful enough to forgive them if they did wrong. A good land refers to a place which was sufficient for their needs, they did not fear any oppression or evil in it, or any afflictions or disasters. The combination of these two blessings makes life in this world and in the Hereafter a pleasant one. It satisfies the needs of the body and the soul.

Connecting verses

- 1) Eating and responsibilities;
 - a) Eat and share with others – 6:141
 - b) Eat and drink and do not spread corruption – 2:60
 - c) Eat and drink and do not be extravagant – 7:31

- 2) The beautiful and bountiful earth, 50:7-8, 16:11, 6:99

Connecting Topics

Looking after the Earth

<https://www.al-islam.org/environmental-protection-islamic-shariah/6-how-protect-human-environment>

<http://www.shiavault.com/books/environmental-protection-in-islamic-shari-a/chapters/3-the-planet-environment>

<http://www.khaleafa.com/khaleafacom/islam-and-earth-day> (not a Shia site)