

Sūrat al-Baqarah Verse 248

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ تَحْمِلُهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُمُ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

2:248 - Their Prophet said to them, 'Indeed the sign of his kingship shall be that the casket will come to you, bearing tranquillity from your Lord and the relics left behind by the House of Musa and the House of Harun, borne by the angels. There is indeed a sign in that for you, should you be faithful.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why do believers sometimes need a sign from the Lord? Does that show lack of faith? (It is to strengthen faith and have conviction)
- 2) What different things did the casket that Talut would bring, have? Why would this increase their faith in Talut as the chosen one?
- 3) How can a casket have tranquility? (seeing it and knowing what was inside, who it represented, would increase faith and spirituality)

Commentary

The Banu Israel were not satisfied with the Prophet's answer that Talut had been chosen by Allah. They wanted a sign that would prove that. The Prophet told them he would bring with him an ark that had tranquillity in it, and some mementos from Prophet Musa and Prophet Harun. This ark was a wooden casket, known as 'Tabut in Arabic. The word is used to refer to a coffin these days but was originally meant to be any wooden structure that held something.

According to hadith from the Ahlul Bayt this was the same casket that the mother of Prophet Musa had, in which she put her baby and placed him in the river. After he was taken in by the family of Fir'awn the casket remained in the palace and later came into the hands of the Banu Israel. They respected the casket as a holy and blessed structure. Prophet Musa placed the stone tablet on which he had written the laws that God gave him into it, along with some other objects. He entrusted it to his successor Yusha' bin Nun. Other items from the families of Prophet Musa and Harun were also added to it. The casket increased in reverence over time and the Banu Israel used to carry it with them whenever they went to war with their enemies. It had a spiritual and psychological effect on them, strengthening them for what they had to face. They derived peace of mind when it was with them as it was a reminder of their Prophet and his connection to Allah. It is narrated that so long as the casket remained with them the Banu Israel were strong and respected.

Over time the faith and morale of the people became weaker and the enemies were able to defeat them. They took the casket from them and it was lost to the Banu Israel for a long time. Now Talut would bring it back for them. The casket had a spiritual and historical aspect, but it was also a symbol of the strength and independence of the Banu Israel. Gaining it back was a sign of gaining

back their status and it would motivate them to strive for that. So, it was a huge bearer of good news that Talut would bring for them.

The explanation of what it means for the casket to be borne by angels is as follows; when the idol worshippers took away the casket from the Banu Israel they placed it in their temple. After that they had a lot of misfortune in their lives and some attributed it to the casket in their temple. They decided to remove it from their temple and their city. Nobody was willing to carry it out, so they tied it to two cows and set the cows free. The cows wandered away and angels were sent by Allah to direct them to the place where Prophet Shamul was. This happened at the same time as the appointment of Talut as the leader and was assign that God had chosen Talut and sent him a miracle. The word ‘angels’ refers to the spiritual beings created by Allah, and also the forces that make things happen in this world.

The last words of the verse - 'There is indeed a sign in that for you, should you be faithful – shows that there will always be weak minded believers who will not accept signs from God and will continue to doubt even after seeing clear signs.

Some Lessons

- 1) Sometimes people need a physical reminder of their Divine leaders to inspire them.
- 2) Allah has forces on earth that direct events and happenings according to His decree.
- 3) Signs from Allah are only accepted by those believers who have open and receptive hearts.

Connecting verses

- 1) Tranquility from God – 48:4 9:40
- 2) Asking for signs – 2:260, 5:112, 19:10
- 3) To Allah belong the forces of Heavens and earth – 48:4 and 48:7

Connecting Topics

Importance of Tranquility and Inner Peace

- Inner Peace is known as Sakinah
- Sakinah is sent down on believers as a result of the faith they have.
- Sakinah increases their faith and raises their rank
- Sakinah is the removal of: doubt, fear, grief
- Sakinah is the acquiring of: steadfastness, determination, patience (Sakinah in action)

Signs of Inner Peace

- Calmness, Composure
- Gentleness in tone, voice
- Patience and strength with life, with people
- Slow and measured way of talking, walking, acting . . .
- Not getting upset or frustrated quickly