

Sūrat al-Baqarah Verse 249 (part II)

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ ۗ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهِ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

2:249 (ii) - So when he crossed it along with the faithful who were with him, they said, ‘We have no strength today against Jalut and his troops.’ Those who were certain that they would encounter Allah said, ‘How many a small party has overcome a larger party, by Allah’s will! And Allah is with the patient’.

Questions for Reflection

- 1) The group that went with Talut were divided into two after being tested with the command on drinking water. How were they now further divided? (Through the trust they had in Allah - some were apprehensive of meeting Jalut while others had faith Allah would help them).
- 2) What are other examples from history where this phrase could be applied; ‘How many a small party has overcome a larger party by Allah’s will?’ Memorize this phrase.
- 3) Why do numbers not really matter?

Commentary

After the group with Talut went through the test of not drinking the water, the remaining army realized their small numbers and some of them were worried about facing Jalut’s large army. This was actually the third time the people were divided into different groups. The first was when some people gave the excuse that they could not join the army due to their work. The second was when some could not stop themselves from drinking the water. Now this was the third division, people with strong faith and trust in God on one side, and those who were worried about what would happen, on the other. Each of these tests sifted out more people, until only the best and purest remained. This shows how faith has stages and ranks.

The people who had trust in God and were not worried about numbers are described as those who were certain of meeting their Lord. They knew with conviction that death and hereafter were realities, that life on earth was temporary and that everything was in the hands of God. This conviction gave them a completely different perspective from others. It gave them strength, determination, tranquility . . . and made them unafraid of what they would have to face. It is a spirit that can be seen even today in believers who rise up to face challenges of difficulties and opposition.

This group explained their conviction to the others, reassuring them that numbers didn’t matter. Many times, small groups have overcome large ones, they reminded them. This was because Allah’s help was with the patient ones. It was not the quantity that mattered, but the quality of the people. A small group of determined people could be much more successful than a large group of weak people. Note how they include the phrase ‘bi idhnillah’ with Allah’s permission, or by Allah’s will. They know that true victory can only come with Allah’s blessing.

This group refers to the hereafter as the time when they will meet Allah. Encountering or meeting Allah does not mean a physical meeting. It refers to seeing such realities that it is like encountering Allah. The realities of the hereafter are very different from this world and witnessing them removes every doubt that a person might have had. At that time Allah will be witnessed by every inner fiber of the human being, and the inner eye will clearly 'see' Allah. In this world those who are pure and pious are able to see Allah with their inner eyes. Someone once told Imam Ali (A.S), "Have you seen your Lord that you worship Him?" Imam Ali (a) answered, 'I do not worship the Lord who I have not seen.' The questioner asked, 'How have you seen Him?' Imam Ali (a) replied, 'Human eye cannot see Allah, rather his heart can perceive Allah by real belief.' [Biharul Anwar, Vol 41, p. 16]

The Shia believe that not only is Allah imperceptible by the eyes, but also that His Essence (Dhat) cannot be imagined, thought, or described. Any imagination or perception of the Essence of Allah is a creation of our mind, and the Creator is far removed from such a perception. (quoted from <http://www.shiavault.com/books/a-shi-ite-encyclopedia-chapter-9/chapters/5-seeing-allah>)

Some Lessons

- 1) There are always higher stages of faith to aspire towards.
- 2) Those who believe they will return to Allah have a very different perspective on life from those who don't.
- 3) Patience is the key to victory. It does not mean a passive acceptance, rather a strong countering of challenges.

Connecting verses

- 1) The strength of the minority, being on the Truth: 8:65
- 2) Patience – 2:45, 2:153, 16:127

Connecting Topics

- 1) Patience and steadfastness

<http://www.shiavault.com/books/discourses-on-patience/chapters/7-chapter-6-the-advantages-and-effects-of-patience>

<https://www.al-islam.org/articles/merits-soul-patience-sabr>

- 2) Intimidation

A good topic to discuss would be how/why we get intimidated by others. The following articles are not Islamic but have some good points. Of course, for believers, faith in Allah is paramount in acquiring the strength to not become a victim of intimidation.

<https://www.inc.com/wanda-thibodeaux/7-steps-to-dealing-with-highly-intimidating-people.html>

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/introverts-advice-deal-with-intimidating-people>