

Prophet Sulayman (a) An Introduction

Prophet Sulayman (a) was the youngest son of Prophet Dawood (a) and was born in Jerusalem. He was God's gift to Prophet Dawood (a). The name Sulayman was given to him because it means having a good heart. It is connected to the word salim, meaning sound or good. Prophet Sulayman also died in Jerusalem and is buried there.

He was one of the important Prophets of the Banu Israel. He asked Allah for a kingdom no one would deserve after him. Allah fulfilled his request and in addition to humans, jinns, the wind and birds under his control. He could speak the language of animals. Due to these special blessings his kingdom was very powerful, and many countries were under his rule. When the army of Prophet Sulayman (a) marched on a mission it was an awe-inspiring sight. But he always remained humble and was cognizant that it was all a blessing from Allah, to be used rightly in His obedience. He would say; *All praise belongs to Allah, who granted us an advantage over many of His faithful servants (27:15).*

The 'Books of Proverbs' and 'Song of Songs', both from the Torah, are attributed to him. Based on the text of the Torah, Allah gave Prophet Dawood (a) the good news of building the largest and most significant temple for Jews, 'For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong. He is the one who will build a house--a temple--for my name. And I will secure his royal throne forever.' (quote from 2 Samuel 7:12-13). This place was later called the al-Aqsa mosque. Prophet Sulayman (a) restored the building during his rule over Palestine.

The name of Sulayman (a) is mentioned seventeen times in the Qur'an. The Qur'an has mentioned different stories about him, the most famous one of which is the story of the Queen of Sheba. He is mentioned as a good servant who always remembered Allah (38:30) and as one whom Allah granted knowledge (27:15).

Short Stories

The worth of a good intention

Once Prophet Sulayman (a) heard a bird tell its partner, 'Let us hope that God will provide us with a child who will glorify Him, for we are old and may not live long on this earth'. The Prophet was amazed at the bird's sense of purpose and said, 'The intention of this bird is worth more than my entire kingdom'.

A different type of King

Prophet Sulayman (a) decided to use his wealth and power to spread God's word, not to live in luxury. In the capacity of a king he carried himself with dignity. But beneath his regal garments he wore coarse clothing made of goat hair and fiber made from palm fronds which he wove himself. He would serve his guests with meat and fine bread. But he himself would eat simple barley bread when alone. Whenever possible he would eat with the poor and say, 'I am a poor man among many poor people'. While other kings as well as many of his own subjects slept soundly at night, he would spend the night in worship, weeping until dawn.

Most people thought he had luxury to be envied. One day a farmer saw his entourage and muttered some words of amazement and envy to himself. The wind carried the words to Prophet Sulayman. The Prophet walked over to him and said 'I have walked over to you to warn you not to wish for what you do not have the strength to bear. A single word of praise of God, uttered with sincerity, is better than all the wealth and power that lies in the hands of the house of Dawood because the reward of that praise will last an eternity while the kingdom of Sulayman will inevitably perish'.

The Prophet then continued, 'We have been given what people have been given in addition to things they have not been given. We know what people know in addition to what they do not know. Considering this, we have found nothing to be better than the following; having awe of God though He is unseen just as if He were seen, to be cautious and economical in wealth and poverty, to speak the truth whether you are happy or angry, and to be meek before God in all circumstances'.

A fine fabric for the Ka'bah

Once Prophet Sulayman and his troops passed by the city of Bakkah. The Prophet told his people, 'This is the land in which Allah will raise an Arab Prophet. He will be just with his family and others alike. He will follow the path of Ibrahim. Glad tidings to all who live to meet him, believe in him, and stand by him. Let those of you who are present tell the absent, for he will be the foremost of all Prophets, the Seal of the Messengers and his name is recorded in all the scriptures of old'.

He then asked his men to wash and put on clean clothes. They performed the rites around the Kabah according to the ancient custom of Ibrahim (a) and Adam (a). He ordered that fine fabric which was from Egypt be draped over the K'bah. He was the first person to drape the Ka'bah with a kiswah.

His advice to his son

Prophet Sulayman once advised his son; 'O my son, beware of being argumentative for there is no benefit in it. It only serves to spread enmity between people'.