

Sūrat al-Anbiya Verses 79 (second half)-80

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُودَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ ۗ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

21:79- We made the mountains and the birds to glorify with Dawood, and We have been the doer [of these things].

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِيُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْ بَأْسِكُمْ ۗ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ

21:80 - We taught him the making of coats of mail for you, to protect you in your wars. Will you then be grateful?

Question for Reflection

- 1) What different blessings are outlined in these verses?
- 2) What is the message in the last part of verse 79 – We have been the doer of these things? (it's not a big thing for Allah to give such exceptional blessings, He has always given outstanding abilities and talents to certain people)

Commentary

These verses talk about a spiritual and a material blessing from Allah. Both are needed for a successful life in this world.

Verse 79 talks about a special spiritual blessing granted to Prophet Dawood (a). The mountains and the birds glorified Allah with him. What does this exactly mean, and how did they join him in glorifying Allah which is usually understood to be verbal? Tafsir has the following understandings of this verse;

- 1) The voice of Prophet Dawood (a) was so beautiful and loud, it would echo in the mountains and the birds would be drawn to it.
- 2) All of creation has an inner sense of awareness and communicate in ways which humans cannot always comprehend. When Prophet Dawood (a) glorified Allah, its appeal was such that the mountains and birds were attracted to it, and glorified Allah along with him in their own way.
- 3) Glorification of Allah is of two types. One is the verbal glorification, where each sound that is created, audible to the human being or inaudible, is a hymn of glorification. The other form of glorification is the existential glorification, where the very existence of a created being and how it is innately guided to play its role on earth, is a proof of the glory of God. The wonders present within each created being are testimony to the greatness and perfection of God. Although this second form of glorification exists at all times not everyone is cognizant of it. Prophet Dawood (a) was given that special blessing of being aware of the existential glorification of the mountains and birds and was in harmony with them.

Although these are three different interpretations it is possible that all three were true in some way. Imam Sadiq (a) says; *Whenever Dawood (a) would recite the Zabur, every mountain, and stone, and bird, would answer him.* (Hadith quoted in Tafsir Namune).

Verse 80 talks about another blessing that Prophet Dawood (a) was given, the skill of building armor out of iron. The first person to make an armor was Dawud. Before him, people used to join iron pieces on their body and were unable to fight due to their weight. Allah made iron soft in his hands and he could make armors with his own hands which were light in weight and could also protect the body from weapons. Prophet Dawood (a) made and sold armor for a living.

Although he was a king, Prophet Dawood lived a humble life. But he was dependent on the public treasury for his living. Once God told him, 'Dawood, you would be a perfect servant to me if only you did not depend on the public treasury instead of earning your own keep by working with your own hands'. The Prophet wept profusely at this. He decided to spend time each day weaving strips of palm leaves into mats with his own hands. He would then sell those. On seeing him make such a noble effort God told him He would teach him something more useful and more profitable. He taught him the art of blacksmithing, how to melt iron until it becomes like warm wax and then shape it and make armor. God told him to make chain mail (a type of armour consisting of small metal rings linked together in a pattern to form a mesh) and to be precise in linking the rings. God told him also to do good things with these gifts, for He was watching. Prophet Dawood(a) eventually developed his skill so that he could make a set of mail each day. These he sold for a thousand silver pieces each. He became independent of the public treasury. The Prophet used his skill to earn enough for himself and to give in charity. He then used the rest of the armor he made for the protection of his people from enemies. He was able to provide them with a much more comfortable and practical form of defense.

The verse ends with a question – will you be grateful? It is a question which believers should answer positively, by affirming their gratitude for all the blessing received by God. Gratitude is felt with the heart, verbalised with words and then put into action by using the blessings correctly and in the way of God. That is a complete and perfect gratitude.

Story

It is narrated that Luqman the wise came to Prophet Dawood (a) when he was making the first chain mail. He saw the Prophet linking chains, a practice that had not been done before. Luqman was fascinated and wondered what the Prophet was doing. He was in deep thought as he looked at the Prophet carrying out his work but did not say anything. He waited until Prophet Dawood (a) finished his work and completed the armor. The Prophet put it on himself and said, 'what a wonderful form of defense'. Luqman, who had been wondering what the Prophet was doing, got his answer. Without speaking and disturbing the Prophet, and by just being patient for a while, Luqman was able to figure out what the Prophet was doing. Luqman said to himself 'Silence is wisdom, but few are its followers'.

Lessons

- 1) Prophet Dawood (a) was blessed with some very unique gifts.
- 2) Both spiritual and material blessings are necessary for life in this world.
- 3) Glorification of God is done by all of creation.
- 4) Talents and gifts given by God should be used wisely.
- 5) We should recognize, appreciate and be grateful for God's gifts to us.

Connecting verses

- 1) Making iron soft for Prophet Dawood (a) – 34:10-11
- 2) Glorifying Allah - 17:44

Connecting Topics

- 1) Glorification of Allah

<https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-523-on-q-1744-tasbih-of-the-universe/>
<https://www.al-islam.org/commentary-prayer-professor-muhsin-qaraati/dhikr-tasbih>

- 2) Gratitude for God's blessings

<https://www.al-islam.org/ahlul-bayt-ethical-role-models-sayyid-mahdi-sadr/gratitude>
<https://academyofislam.com/reflection-no-705-on-q-1434-the-healing-power-of-gratitude/>
<https://en.shafaqna.com/30090/gratitude/>

- 3) Using talents wisely

<https://aboutislam.net/reading-islam/living-islam/gifts-and-talents-are-treasures/>

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<https://chopra.com/articles/self-worth-5-ways-to-identify-your-unique-gifts>