

## Sūrat al-Saba'

### Verse 13

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَاسِيَاتٍ ۗ اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُودَ  
شُكْرًا ۗ وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُ

34:13 - They built for him as many temples as he wished, and figures, basins like cisterns, and caldrons fixed [in the ground]. 'O House of Dāwūd, act thankfully, and few of My servants are grateful.'

#### Questions for Reflection

- 1) Why are these specific items mentioned? (spiritual as well as physical/practical aspects of life)
- 2) What does acting thankfully mean? (using what God gives you in His way)
- 3) Why are few people grateful?

#### Commentary

This verse talks about the work that the Jinn did for Prophet Sulaymān and the products they made. They built beautiful temples of worship, made large figures, massive bowls for cooking and eating, etc. These were products necessary for the spiritual and physical well-being of people in Prophet Sulaymān's kingdom. It was also necessary for the upkeep of the large army that the Prophet had.

The word *Maharib* is plural of *Mibrab*. and can mean a place of worship. According to *Vocabulary of the Holy Quran* it means a sanctuary, an apartment inside the place of worship. It is used for Bibi Maryam (a) where Prophet Zakariya (a) used to visit her. *Maharib* also refers to huge buildings like mansions that are built for the sake of worship. People gather in these places to worship God and that remains the exclusive function of these buildings. These buildings with their space, light, and beauty, attract people to come and worship Allah in peace.

The word *Mibrab* for the place of the Imam of congregational prayer in the mosque is a term that has been derived from the same word. Interestingly the root of the word is *harb* which means war. During worship the believer has to fight the nafs and shaytan which distract the mind and lead the worshipper away from Allah, *'azza wajall*.

It is not clear what type of figures the Jinn made for Prophet Sulaymān. History has not told us exactly what these figures were. It is possible that it was sculptures, which may not have been forbidden in the Shariah at that time. Due to an increase in the inclination to worship idols, making statues became forbidden in later Shariahs. It could also have been drawings and painting on the wall. Or it could be that these were figures of natural things like trees and celestial bodies etc. A hadith of Imam al- Ṣādiq (a) mentions this last understanding of the word figures in this verse. The Jinns made figures of natural beings other than the human being.

The Jinn also built huge basins and pots for food and drink. These were used for group meals. In the past people did not have their own plates to eat from. Everyone ate together from a large pot. When people eat together, Allah sends His blessings on them. As a family it is always good to eat together instead eating separately. The Jinn also made vessels so large that they could not be moved. These were used to boil water or cook food.

The last part of the verse tells the family of Dāwūd to be grateful for all the blessings of Allah, *subhanau wata'ala*. Unfortunately, only a few people recognize that what they have is from the grace of Allah. Most people are ungrateful and do not use what they have been given in the right way. Gratitude is not just with the tongue. It starts from the heart – knowing that the blessing is from Allah. This understanding is expressed through the tongue as a verbal gratitude to Allah. Then it is shown in action, using the blessing in the way it was supposed to be used, for growth towards Allah.

*Shakur* is one who is very thankful. Very few people are like that. Amazingly, that is one of the names of Allah. The Quran says, *If you lend Allah a good loan, He shall multiply it for you and forgive you, and Allah is all-appreciative, all-forgiving* (64:17). When a servant of Allah takes steps to go closer to Him, Allah grants Him mercy and help from Himself. This is an appreciation of Allah for the struggles of the human being. He gives the human being much more than he deserves and boosts those who take even small steps in the struggle. Thus, Allah is Shakur, appreciating the efforts of people.

### Lessons

- 1) The Jinn made items that were necessary for the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of the people. Islam is balanced and wants us to look after all aspects of life.
- 2) Only some of Allah's servants are grateful. We should strive to be part of that group.
- 3) Allah is Shakur and appreciates the efforts of his servants.

### Connecting verses

- 1) Verses on gratitude – 14:7, 7:17, 31:12, 16:53.

### Connecting Topics

- 1) Gratitude

<https://www.al-islam.org/ahlul-bayt-ethical-role-models-sayyid-mahdi-sadr/gratitude>

<https://shiastudies.com/en/6699/Gratitude/>

[https://en.wikishia.net/view/Thankfulness\\_Prayer](https://en.wikishia.net/view/Thankfulness_Prayer)

- 2) Balance in Life

<http://www.shiafrica.com/archive/507/-The-importance-of-moderation-in-Islam->