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Section 2: Allah's Unity Testified in Nature

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 10

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً لَكُم مِّنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ

10. "He it is Who sends down water from the sky for you; from it you drink, and by it (grows) trees on which you pasture your cattle."

The Arabic term /tasim□n/ is derived from /'as amah/ and means letting animals graze in the pastureland; and the word /šajar/ in Arabic has a broad meaning which includes every type of plant, whether trees or bushes.

As Surah As-Saffat, No. 37, verse 146, concerning pumpkins, says:

"And caused We to grow (to give shade) over him a plant of pumpkin.",

notwithstanding the fact that pumpkins have bushes and not trees.

At any rate, in this noble verse, the Qur'an again makes allusion to the material blessings so as to provoke men's sense of gratitude, to light the love of Allah in their hearts, and to call them to attain a wider cognition of the One Who has been granting them the blessings.

It says:

"He it is Who sends down water from the sky for you..."

It is the enlivening and freshening, pure, and transparent water which is free from all kinds of pollution and which is the source of drinking.

"…from it you drink…"

And there are plants and trees which grow out of it, and which forms pasturelands where you send your domestic animals for grazing. The verse continues saying:

"…and by it (grows) trees on which you pasture your cattle."

It is certain that the advantages of rainwater are not confined to drinking by man, enabling plants to grow and trees to flourish.

These advantages include the washing of the earth compounds, purification of the air, creating of the required moisture for freshness of man's skin, facilitating of one's breathing process, and the like. However, in view of the fact that the abovementioned two parts were of more importance, they have been emphasized far more than the other domains.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 11

يُنبِتُ لَكُم بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالاَعْنَابَ وَمِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لاَيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

11. "Therewith He causes to grow for you herbage, and the olives, and the palm trees, and the grapes, and of all the fruits. Verily there is a sign in this for a people who reflect."

One must note that to make something grow is the job of Allah and not farming it; and all kinds of fruits are created for man. So we must keep in mind that all products and fruits have a passing effect and they are not to be regarded as ends in themselves; they are proper signs and symbols leading towards the destination and are not to be regarded as destinations themselves.

The verse says:

"Therewith He causes to grow for you herbage, and the olives, and the palm trees, and the grapes, and of all the fruits…"

Certainly, only to see and to know does not suffice; but thinking and taking the appropriate measures are also necessary.

The verse continues saying:

"…Verily there is a sign in this for a people who reflect."

Why Does He only Name Olives, Palm-trees and Grapes?

Perhaps it seems such that if the Qur'an stresses on fruits as olives, dates and grapes, it is because of the fact that their location in the environment of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an has been conducive to the growth of such fruits.

However, considering the fact that the Holy Qur'an has been a universal and an eternal phenomenon and given note to the depth of its interpretation, it becomes obvious that the issue goes beyond such limits.

Nutrition scientists remark that there are few fruits the excellence of which can match nutritionally these three fruits. They also claim that olive oil can produce excellent fuel for bodily activities. Its quantity of calories is enormous for which it is regarded as energizing, and those who always seek to keep healthy, must become interested in this.

Olive oil is friendly towards one's liver; while, at the same time, it is effective in removing the ill conditions of kidneys, biliary stones, lithiasis, nephritic colic and hepatic colic, as well as removing of constipation syndromes.

With the progress of medical sciences and nutrition and food sciences, the pharmaceutical effects of dates have also been adequately proved.

There is calcium in dates which is the prime factor for the strengthening of bones, and there is also phosphorus in dates which is the principal source and element which constitutes brain and inhibits weakness of nerves and fatigue syndromes.

It also increases the power of one's eyesight. Dates also possess potassium, the absence of which in one's body results in stomach ulcer. It is very useful for one's muscles, and human body tissues.

The fact that dates prevent cancer is nowadays widely circulated among nutrition scientists.

As for the grapes, according to nutrition scientists, they are so effective in numerous ways that one can regard them as a naturally established pharmacy or pharmaceutical laboratory.[1] Grapes produce twice as much heat in one's body as meat.

Moreover, they counterattack poison and play a host of other roles as purifying ones blood, removing of rheumatism, goat, and the increase in urea in one's blood stream. Grapes polish one's stomach and intestines and are activating, and they remove one's depression. They reinforce one's nerves and strengthen man because of their various vitamins.

Therefore, the stress which the Qur'an lays on these three fruits is not groundless. Probably, some important parts of it have been unknown to the people at that time.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 12

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِاَمْرِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لاَيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

12. "And He (has) made the night and the day, and the sun and the moon subservient for you, and the stars have been made subservient by His command. Verily there are signs in this for a people who understand."

The objective of the conquest of the sun and the moon is man's manipulation of them for his own advantage. Otherwise, man who is not able to create even a fly, how would he be able to conquer the sun. By His grace, Allah, the Almighty, has made them subservient for man.

At any rate, alluding to the blessings offered to man by Allah in man's conquest of the various beings in the world, the Qur'an remarks:

"And He (has) made the night and the day, and the sun and the moon subservient for you, and the stars have been made subservient by His command..."

Most certainly, there are signs and clues of the grandeur of Allah (s.w.t.) and the magnificence of creation for those who contemplate.

The verse continues saying:

"...Verily there are signs in this for a people who understand."

In the meantime, the hierarchical order of the system of existence is solely attracting the attention and are the object of development of those individuals who are thinking as well as reasoning, and not for those with naively-thinking, and those who are simple-minded.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 13

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الاَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفاً أَلْوَانُهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لاَيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

13. "And (also) whatever He has produced for you on the earth of different colours; verily there is a sign in this for a people who take advice."

The varieties of hues in existence are nothing but signs of the Power and Wisdom of Allah. Of course,

He has created them for humankind. Hence, Allah declares in this noble verse, implying that the creatures which He has created for you on the earth have also been made subservient to you as well, various creatures and of different coloring.

The verse says:

"And (also) whatever He has produced for you on the earth of different colours..."

They are from different coverings, foods, clean spouses, and well-fare means to different mines and underground useful sources as well as other over-ground ones plus other blessings.

In these, there are also signs which are evident for those who are reminded in these matters as well.

The verse says:

"...verily there is a sign in this for a people who take advice."

Reflection, Reasoning, Reminding

In the above verses, after calling people to three parts of the Divine blessings, He invites people to the act of reflection.

However, in one case He points out that 'There are signs in these for those who reflect'. In another case He reiterates that there are signs for those who reason, while in the third case He declares that there are signs for those who remember.

Such a wide range of differences in senses does not certainly reflect some technical maneuvering in expression. Conversely, out of what we grasp from the methodology of the Qur'an, each has got a different point of reference.

Maybe, the note on such difference points out to the case of varieties of the existing blessings in the world are so obvious that the mere fact of mentioning may be sufficient.

However, in case of agriculture, olives, palm trees, grapes and the fruits in general, they require reflection so that one gets more acquainted with their nutritional and therapeutic qualities. Therefore, He makes allusion to reflection and points it out.

As for the conquest of the sun and the moon as well as stars along with the secrets of the day and night, there is need for further thinking. Thus, He refers to 'reasoning' which ranks higher in the hierarchy of the ladder of contemplation.

In any case, the Qur'an always addresses the enlightened, meditating, think tank individuals who have got highly sophisticated brains and reasoning despite the fact that the Qur'an has been appeared in an environment where ruled naught but ignorance.

One thus concludes the magnanimity of such meanings. In particular when facing those who negate the truly authentic religions altogether. Crossing them out who, because of some superstitious religions, claim that religions, in general, put one's meditation channels out of work. They claim that having faith in Allah is the product of ignorance.

Such Qur'anic verses are almost found throughout all of the suras.

The Qur'an explicitly states that the truly authentic religion is the product of meditation, reflection, and reasoning, and Islam addresses the intellectuals, the reflecting people and the men of knowledge everywhere, and not those who are ignorant, superstitious or the seemingly enlightened ones who have got no solid logical framework.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 14

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْماً طَرِيّاً وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا
وَتَرَي الْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

14. "And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh meat from it and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships cleaving through it, and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you may be grateful."

The sea has got an important role to play in man's life. The seawater is the source of steam, clouds and rain.

The depth of the sea provides man with the most delicious food, fishes, and its surface provides the cheapest, and the most widespread lines of transportation for cargo and passengers. All of the above advantages have been made possible through the policies and powers of the Almighty, and man has got no role to play in bringing them about.

The verse says:

"And He it is Who has made the sea subservient that you may eat fresh meat from it and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships cleaving through it, and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you may be grateful."

The Arabic term /mawaxir/ is the plural form of /m axirah/ which is derived from /maxr/ and it signifies splitting from all sides, the left side as well as the right side.

Explanations

The sea, with all its magnanimity and despite all its ebbs and flows, is subject and subservient to man and is at his disposal.

"And He it is Who has made the sea subservient..."

The seas provide the most important source of fresh and healthy meat.

"...that you may eat fresh meat from it..."

Allah provides man not only with the means of primary needs, such as water and food, but also He provides him even with ornamental materials as well; in a manner: So as you would be able to exploit the precious gems of the seas with deep-sea diving for the sake of your dressing as well as the dressing of your wives.

"...and bring forth from it ornaments which you wear..."

The seas provide man with the best of natural ornaments.

The general laws with regard to the sea animals are concerned with their categorization as being religiously 'lawful meat' for eating, unless there is a law as not being allowed for a specific reason.

Freshness of meat is a value in itself.

Although man ought to struggle for obtaining food, his sustenance depends on Allah.

"...and that you may seek of His bounty..."

All of one's success must be targeted in order that sense of gratitude may be awakened.

"...and that you may be grateful."

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 15

وَأَلْقي فِي الاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَاراً وَسُبُلاً لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

15. "And He has cast firm mountains in the earth that it does not quake with you, and streams and roads that you may be guided aright,"

Mountains provide sources of equilibrium and comfort for man. The Arabic term /mayd/ means 'movement towards the right and left directions, as well as tension'.

The Qur'anic sentence /'an tamida bikum/ (that it does not quake with you) signifies that mountains are the cause of one's peace of mind as well as preventing of earth quakes. Hadrat Ali (as), with regard to mountains, says:

*"Allah rendered the earth in a sustaining form by fixing in it gigantic stones and firm mountains."*2

The foundations of the mountains have penetrated in all of the ups and downs of the earth and are geared into its holes.

The verse says:

"And He has cast firm mountains in the earth that it does not quake with you, and streams and roads that you may be guided aright,"

As the tension of the earth requires gigantic mountains to keep it sustaining, the tension found among the inhabitants of the earth also requires up-straight and Godly figures so that they can serve as causes of peace of mind in the people of the society.

Some Islamic quotations indicate that Allah (s.w.t.) made the Ahl-ul-Bayt of the Prophet of Islam (as) as the pillars of the earth so as to rescue the inhabitants of the earth from anxiety and tension.3

In the meantime, mountains play an important role in man's life. They store the winter snow amidst their outskirts which serve as the sources of streams and canals in springtime and with their variety of shapes they can serve as the road signs for guiding the travelers. We can grasp this meaning once we suppose that the entire earth were flat and soft.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 16

وَعَلاَمَاتٍ وبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

16. "And landmarks (too), and by the star they find the right way."

We need landmarks for moving in the deserts and finding our way. The natural signs guide us during day-time and the stars lead us by night, to both of which Allah makes allusions in this verse.

It says:

"And landmarks (too), and by the star they find the right way."

We do not only need signs for finding our right way from circumlocution roads which lead us astray, but we also need clear signs for knowing the right from wrong in the midst of our desires, instincts, and of

the despotic methods of dictators.

The Prophet (S) has designated and assigned some symbols to know the truth after him when people need it and when they are wandering aimlessly by looking at them.

In many quotations from the immaculate Im ams (as) we have it that /najm/ (star) is interpreted as the Prophet (S) and /'al am at/ (symbols) is interpreted as the Imams, in which case we have reference made to the spiritual commentary of this verse of the Qur'an.

Imam Sadiq (as) in a tradition has said:

"The 'star' reflects the Messenger of Allah, and 'symbols' alludes to the Imams (as)"

And Imam Sadiq (as) also states:

"We are the symbols".

One of the best examples and cases of those so-called 'symbols' are Hadrat Zahra, and Imam Husayn (as). 4

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 17

أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لاَّ يَخْلُقُ أَفَلاَ تَذَكَّرُونَ

17. "Is He then Who creates as he who does not create? Do you not then consider?"

From the onset of the Surah Nahl as far as here, the Qur'an has recounted the Divine blessings in 15 verses.

It draws a general conclusion in this verse and explains the issue in an interrogative form implying whether He then Who creates is on a par with or equal to those idols and despots who are lacking in power to create. Why is it that you search for them instead of turning to the Almighty?

The verse says:

"Is He then Who creates as he who does not create?..."

After the discussion of all those great blessings and the hidden graces of Allah, the Qur'an addresses the conscience of the human beings and states:

"Is He then Who creates as he who does not create? Do you not then consider?"

Should one prostrate before the Creator of all such blessings or should one prostrate before those beings which are only tiny creatures themselves and who have never created anything and are not creating anything at the present?

This is an effective educational method which the Qur'an has employed in various circumstances. It raises the issues in an interrogative form and leaves their answers to the awakened consciences while appealing to the sense of spontaneity of he people.

In conclusion, theology and the worship of the Almighty is embedded in the nature of all human beings; what is needed is reminding them of it.

"…Do you not then consider?"

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 18

وَإِن تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لاَ تُحْصُوهَآ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

18. "And if you count Allah's blessings, you are unable to number them. Verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Finally, in order to let no one think that the favors of Allah are confined to those things only, the Qur'an states:

"And if you count Allah's blessings, you are unable to number them…"

Now, this question arises as to how can we express our gratitude to Him which we owe Him? In this case, are we not among those who are ungrateful?

The Qur'an provides the answer to this question in the last sentence of this verse, saying:

"…Verily Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

Certainly, Allah is more compassionate and more lenient than you may think of Him to take actions in questioning or in punishing you for your inability to express your thanks for His blessings.

You would better know this much that you are head over heel intermingled in His Graces and you are unable to express due recognition for His favors, and you should pay Him the apology that you always owe Him for your shortcoming in order to fulfill your duty in thanking Him. It is in this case that you have performed your utmost thankfulness to Him.

Who is he the one who affords to express his gratitude adequately to Him. That servant does best who

offers his apology to Him for the sins he has committed. Otherwise, what can best suit Him is utterly impossible to be performed by anyone.

However, all these obstacles cannot obstruct us or stand in our way to keep account of His bounties and graces as far as we can, and thus be grateful to Him.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 19

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ

19. "And Allah knows that which you conceal and that which you reveal."

Allah's knowledge as to all affairs, whether open or covert, is identical, and if we know that Allah is fully aware of whatever we do, we seek to lead a virtuous life. Definitely, Allah knows as to what our intentions and objectives might be.

The verse says:

"And Allah knows that which you conceal and that which you reveal."

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 20

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لاَ يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئاً وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ

20. "And those they call on besides Allah do not create anything and they are themselves created."

The Holy Qur'an stresses the issue of creativity once again, implying: Those whom they worship other than Allah, not only they do not create anything but also they themselves are created ones.

The verse says:

"And those they call on besides Allah do not create anything and they are themselves created."

The issue in question has so far been that these are not the creators and for this reason they are not worth worshipping. Now the Qur'an declares that they are themselves created and needy as well.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 21

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَآءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ

21. "(They are) dead, not alive, and they do not know when they will be raised."

As the worshippers of the idols used to manufacture idols in the shape of man, and they used to treat them as if they were conscious beings, therefore, Allah in this verse calls the idols as dead ones which are used for the conscious living beings.

All beings except Allah are regarded as dead, whether be it inanimate ones or human beings from the point of being worshipped.

The verse says:

"(They are) dead, not alive, and they do not know when they will be raised."

This is the fifth characteristic which the worshipped one must possess, and which the idols are lacking.

Idols and idolatry have got a wide range of meanings in the logic of the Qur'an. Whomever and whatever is juxtaposed as against Allah in respect to its leaning and supporting power and we imagine in whose hands our destiny is laid, that will be regarded as an idol for us.

It is for this reason that whatever is mentioned in the above verses are in connection with those who claim apparently seem to be worshippers of Allah, but they have lost the independence of a faithful and truthful believer, leaning on the support of some weak subjects on whom they count for their livelihood, they are the target of them.

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1. The book entitled: 'The First Court and the Last Prophet', Chapter: Grapes and Dates.
2. Nahjul-Bal aqah, Sermon 91
3. N r-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 44
4. Tafsir-ul-Burhan

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