

Surah Ash-Shams

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

When I was a child I used to believe that the sun is revolving around the earth... later on as a young student of science I came to know that in fact it is the earth which is revolving round its axis and so when we come in front of the sun we have daylight and as we go towards the other side, we enter darkness. As I became familiar with this concept, I also learned another very important lesson that if we want to reach the truth then we have to do research because our eyes do not always see the real picture. This is the thought which led me to the Quran and Hadith because I wanted to find out the “real truth” about my religion and could not blindly follow the apparent trends.

So Alhamdulillah, it turned out to be such a pleasure to be taught about the absolute truth in the Quran, a book in which there is no doubt at all... Because who could tell us the truth about life better than the one who created this life? Who could be more knowledgeable than Him, more truthful than Him? And when He, the Almighty, takes oath of something, it sort of scares me... have we become so obstinate in our denial that we need an oath from Him? And even then we don't listen to Him?

This Surah too starts with a lot of oaths as if to awaken us from our heedlessness:

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا {1} وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَاهَا {2}

By the sun and its brightness; and by the moon, as it follows the sun

Who can say that they have never observed the sun or the moon? But how many of us remember Allah through these miraculous signs of His creation? How enormous is this great ball of fire which continues to give us heat and light day after day... can we even imagine any life without it? And the moon so beautiful and mesmerising; reflecting the same light but in an entirely different tone... How great must be the creator of these great objects?

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا {5} وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا {6}

By the heaven and Him Who made it; and by the earth and Him Who spread it

If Allah had wished so, He could have given intellect to all His creatures but He selected only the human beings for this great honour...

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا {7} فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا {8}

By the soul and Him Who perfected it and inspired it with evil and good characteristics

But this honour is also the biggest test for us, because on one hand we have been given a natural tendency towards goodness; but on the other hand there is an evil instinct present in all of us. So if we want to be successful then we have to purify our inner self because we cannot be really good without a good heart...

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا {9} وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا {10}

Indeed successful will be the one who purifies it and indeed destroyed is he who corrupts it!

It makes me feel like Allah has given each one of us a separate garden full of good plants as well as harmful weeds. If we do not pull out these useless weeds then they will eat up the good plants no matter how beautiful or healthy they are. If I want my garden to be the best then I have to be very careful and consistent in keeping it clean of all bad things. Same is the case of my heart. The moment I feel any bad thought coming into it, I have to pull it out before it turns into a parasite which will eat up my good ideas and optimism. On the other hand, the good ideas also cannot be left idle... I have to nourish them by putting them into action. The more I practise my faith, the more it grows. Otherwise it will be wasted. So the battle of good and bad is the test of our life. The unfortunate people are those who have not understood this fact and are blindly running towards destruction. Allah gives the example of one such nation:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا {11}

The people of Thamūd denied the truth because of their arrogant transgression

Allah had sent to them Prophet Salih (a.s) to warn them, so that they would mend their ways but instead of listening to his advice they demanded for a miracle. Thus Allah sent to them a huge she-camel and commanded them that they were not to harm it in any way. But they did not care for any warnings and thought that they could do what they wished... not realizing that Allah's punishment will be swift and powerful:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا {14}

They disbelieved him and hamstrung her. Therefore, for that crime, their Rabb let loose His scourge upon them and levelled them to the ground.

This story of the people of Thamud is a great warning for us. So many times I have observed that we take Allah's commands very lightly. Some people don't even want to listen to any warning or advice. And then there are those who show interest in knowing the truth but when it is told to them they think that it is their own choice whether they want to follow it or not. We have to understand that although we do have a choice but it is a test from Allah. He wants to see which one of us "chooses" to obey Him. So if we look at it with open eyes we can see that there really is **only one choice...** and that is to be the most humble and obedient slaves of Allah... the true embodiment of the word "Muslim"... not just in name but in character and deeds. May Allah help us to make the right choice... ameen.