

Al-Isra [17:42]



Say: If there had been (other) gods with Him, as they say,-
behold, they would certainly have sought out a way to the
Lord of the Throne!

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

Say (O Muhammad), if there had been any other gods along with Him as they assert, then they would certainly have sought a way to the Lord of the Throne.

God avoided addressing the pagans, hence he addressed His Messenger and asked him to speak to them about the refutation of their many gods and about the Unity of the One God. These pagans used to believe in gods who had compartmentalized their authority for various work. One of them looks after the affairs of the heavens while the other controls things on earth; the third was the god for wars. The gods of the Quraysh were of the second kind.

Since they considered these gods to be the partners of the Lord God, they believed that each one of them had his own sphere of control despite knowing that these spheres were a part of the total creation, which was the work of the One God. We are therefore forced to say that there were owners other than God (according to them) and so they should be sent to war with the One God. Every ruler covets his kingdom and so they all try to fight against Him and wrest a portion of His kingdom from Him. Each one of them desired to be the sole god and all honor should be His (which should be greater than that of the true God).

“They would have certainly sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne.” Means that they seek a way to overcome the One God and wrest His kingdom from Him. He mentions the Arsh to make us understand that they seek Him because He is the Lord of the Great Throne and they want to attain the Throne and be the rulers of a part of His kingdom.

Some people have opined that this argument about the words in verse 22 of Surah Anbiya is incorrect “Had there been gods besides Allah” because the arguments about both these verses are incorrect and are different from each other though both of them negate polytheism. In this verse it negates polytheism in the sense that had there been other gods they would have tried to take over the control of the creation from Him.

In Surah Anbiya, it negates polytheism, in the sense that thinking of partners for Him is itself a denial of Him as the One True God. And, it takes the whole scheme of things into chaos even if they do not intend to wrest the Godhead from Him. This proves that the argument of this verse is different from the argument in the verse in Surah Anbiya. The verse closest to the verse of Surah Anbiya is verse 91 of Surah Al Muminun that says, “ Nor is there any god along with Him, behold each would have taken away what He had created and some would have tried to overcome the others!”

As we know that this explanation has been taken from some old commentators who say that seeking the way to God is creating a path to be close to Him. This too is incorrect. So, we say that if there had been other gods as the polytheists believe, they would have sought closeness to Him because they know that He is exalted and they are not. Also, He who is dependent on His creation is not God so these created gods could never be the true God.

The verses speak contrary to the above. Firstly, they attribute God as He who sits on the Throne of Supreme Power and they say this to make us understand the idea that the polytheists have formed about Him is totally against truth and against His exalted status.

Secondly, God has said, “ Glory be to Him and exalted is He far above what they say”. This tells us that the polytheists too believe that He is exalted but is dependent and this is against the status of God. His kingdom is such a kingdom that cannot be transferred to others and cannot be confiscated from Him.

In Tafsir Qummi the Imam explained the verse, “ If there had been other gods along with Him as they assert, then would have certainly sought out a way to the Lord of the Throne.” He said,

If these idols are gods as you assert then they will reach the Supreme Throne.

The Compiler's Words

It means that they will take control of the Arsh or they will take control of the entire creation, but the meaning of the word here is that stage of heaven that is surrounded by life or a great body that hovers above the universe. Some people say that there is no proof of this in the Qur'an and even if we prove it there can be no physical explanation for God's supremacy being physically limited.

The Holy Messenger is recorded in Durre Manthur to have said,

When the time of death for Nuh came he told his two sons - I give you the words to chant praises for God because these two words are the prayers for everything and all creations get their sustenance from these two words.

The Compiler's Words

I have explained that all prayers and praises are for God and through it we get our sustenance. The tradition hints that the sustenance of every being is according to its needs and everything prays and praises God according to its need for sustenance.

In Tafsir Ayyashi, Abu Sabah has quoted Imam Sadiq, I asked him about the words,

There is not a thing but glorifies His Praise.

and he said,

Everything Praises God and the gaps we see in the wall are those praises of God.

The Compiler's words

Husain bin Saeed has also narrated this Hadith from the same Imam.

In the same book Jafar bin Muhammad narrates from his father, *the Holy Messenger had ordered us to desist from physically branding animals or hitting them on their faces because these animals too chant their praises of the Lord.*

The Compiler's Words

Kulayni has quoted this Hadith from Muhammad bin Muslim and he in turn from Imam Sadiq that the Messenger said,

No one should scar or brand the faces of the animals.

The same book records Ishaq bin Ammar bin Abi Abdullah quoting from Imam Sadiq,

Every animal on land and in sea falls prey because it has been negligent in praising the Lord.

The compiler's Words

In the books of the Ahle Sunnah Ibn Ziyad, Abu Darda and Abu Huraira have quoted these words from the Holy Messenger.

In the same book Imam Sadiq narrates from his father,

A person came to my father and said,

May my parents be sacrificed upon you, I read in the Qur'an that God says, There is not a thing but glorifies His Praise but you do not understand their glorification. What does this mean?

My father answered, It is correct.

He asked, Do you say that these withered trees chant the praises of God? He answered,

Yes! Have you not heard the sound of the woods in your house? It is the praise from the dry pieces of wood and it means, *Praise is for God for my condition.*

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

There is only one true God. If the minor gods of the polytheists are endowed with any power at all, they would have surely endeavoured to seek out a way to the Lord of the arsh-to contend with Allah and to execute their own will.

AYATULLAH KAMAL FAQIH IMANI AND SEVERAL SCHOLARS

The pagans believed in the Lord and regarded 'Allah' as the creator of the world of existence. Nevertheless, they used to consider the icons as their intercessors or as the Lord's partners. This verse refutes the existence of such a relationship between the Lord and the icons, for the idols can neither grasp the power from the hands of the great Almighty; nor can they find the means for their own reinforcement.

The hierarchy of the system of creation proves best the monotheistic nature of Allah. Were there other gods besides the Almighty, that would certainly require competition, in which case, there would necessarily be disruptions appearing in the entire system.

Therefore, this noble verse alludes to one of the evidences for monotheism, which, in the context of literature of the scientists and the philosophers, has been referred to as 'the mutual hindrance proof'. This means that type of the anarchical world run by 'dualism' the nature of which requires the existence of various gods, centered around all kinds of disruptions. *Refer to Jawami'- ul-Jami', and other 'Books on Theology' for further information.*

It is for this reason that the Qur'an addresses the Prophet (S) to tell them that if there were other gods alongside the Almighty, as they claim, then these gods would certainly try to seek their way through to the great Lord of the heavens and thus dominate Him, for it is natural that every powerful person wishes to add up to his power, extending his sphere of influence further. If there were other gods, truly speaking, such a kind of struggle and incompatibility over the extension of their power would result in anarchy and disruptions in all spheres of life. The verse says:

" Say: 'If there were (other) gods with Him as they (the pagans) claim, then, they would certainly have sought a way unto the Lord of the Arsh. "