

An-Naml (The Ants) [27:24]

وَجَدْتُّهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ
الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides Allah. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing in their eyes, and has kept them away from the Path, so they receive no guidance.

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allah, and Satan has made their deeds fair seeming to them and has barred them from (Allah's) way, so they have no guidance.

The words “has made their deeds fair seeming to them” results in, “And has barred them from (Allah's) way” for he obstructs their moving to the straight path. Satan makes idolatry beautiful for them and since they accept it, “They can have no guidance.”

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

Verse 20

These verses narrate the story of Saba or the queen of Sheba of the Bible (refer to chapters 10 and 11 of I Kings) whose Arabic name was Bilqis. Hudhud (hoopoe) is a light, graceful bird, with a yellow crest on its head. This bird served Sulayman as an efficient scout, and also used to discover water beneath the surface of the earth, as if a X-ray device was fixed in its eyes.

Tafaqqad literally means to find out a defect, but in verse 20 it is used for making an enquiry.

When Sulayman took a muster of the birds, he did not find the hoopoe, because he had a good reason for his absence. At that time he was surveying the vast realm of Saba, the queen of Sheba, where he went along with another hoopoe who met him while he was flying to report to Sulayman and (the other hoopoe) gave him an explicit description of the grandeur of her dominion, after hearing the might and glory of Sulayman's kingdom. Sulayman's hoopoe came back and told him what he saw, particularly about their religion that she and her people were the worshippers of the sun.

It is desirable (mustahab) to prostrate one's self in adoration before Allah after reciting verse 26.

To test the hoopoe's report Sulayman wrote a letter to Saba; and asked the hoopoe to go and deliver his letter to her and bring her reply.

Sulayman expressly began his letter with *bismillahir rahmanir rahim*, on which is based the true religion of unity of Allah, and invited her and her people to the true faith, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the light (guidance and wisdom) of Allah.

The queen, after consultation with her courtiers, decided to send a few gifts to Sulayman in order to find out that Sulayman was not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. When her embassy came to Sulayman with the gifts, he refused to accept them because firstly Allah had given him better than that which He had given her, and secondly he was expecting her submission to the true religion. He told the embassy that soon his army would drive them forth from there, disgraced and humbled.

After the embassy had departed he asked his chiefs: "Who can bring me her with her throne, before they come to me in submission." A large, powerful jinn offered his services and assured Sulayman that he would do it before he would rise from his council. However strong and big a creature might be, it was not possible for him to go to a distant land and bring her and her throne in a few moments, unless the jinn had supernatural powers to do it.

Although the jinn had boasted of his strength and supernatural power, yet when a man who had knowledge of the book said that he would bring them to him within the twinkling of an eye, Sulayman gave him permission. Soon the Queen, with her throne, was before him. See commentary of Rad: 43 to know about him who had the knowledge of the book. It is reported by Abu Ishaq Thalabi that Abdullah bin Salam asked the Holy Prophet to give the name of the man who had knowledge of the book and brought the queen of Sheba with her throne within the twinkling of an eye. The Holy Prophet said: "It was Ali."

It is stated in *Minhaj al Sadiqin* and *Umdat al Bayan* that then the Holy Prophet said to Ali:

O Ali, you helped all the prophets of Allah incognito
(concealed from view), and you help me in propria persona
(in person) manifestly.

Ali ibn abi Talib is known as *mazhar al aja-ib* and *mazhar al ghara-ib* because, as willed by Allah, he used to appear in different forms to carry out divine plans under very special circumstances. These two epithets are exclusively reserved for Ali. Even today the true believers invoke Allah to send him for help. The famous dua, known as *Nadi Ali*, which the Holy Prophet recited, as commanded by Allah, at Khaybar refers to Ali as *mazhar al aja-ib*. Ali ibn abi Talib is also known as *mushkil kusha*, the remover of hardships.

In every age, to many persons he comes personally to remove hardships. Through his name great spiritual achievements are attained. The Holy Prophet, and after him, Ali are acknowledged as the most superior possessors of the spiritual powers.

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

The last sentence of verse 40 asserts that man's submission and devotion to Allah is in his own interest. Allah is supreme in glory. He is self sufficient. He is free of all needs.

The queen was lodged in another building of the palace. To make the queen see the fallacy of outward appearance the floor of the palace was made of slabs of smooth glass that glistened like water. When she was brought into the palace she thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. Sulayman told her the real fact. She then realised that she had been wrongly worshipping the creation of God, the sun, deceived by outward appearance, instead of worshipping the creator. At once she submitted herself to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, whom Sulayman worshipped.