

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 16: To See or Not to See

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيَتْهَا—وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسى

But whoever disregards My remembrance, his shall be a wretched life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection.' He will say, 'My Lord! Why have You raised me blind, though I used to see?' He will say: 'So it is. Our signs came to you, but you forgot them, and so you will be forgotten today.' (Ṭāhā 20:124-126)

Reflections:

Among the many gifts that God has bestowed upon us are the faculties we use to experience the world of creation: "He made for you hearing, eyesight, and hearts so that you may give thanks."¹ It is through these faculties that we are able to appreciate God's beautiful and majestic signs around us. We lie mesmerized under a starry sky, kneel in awe before a thundering waterfall, and bask in the fragrance of a rose garden. How dark, dismal, and small the world would be without our senses.

But these faculties will not travel with us into the next world. The realities there are different and hence they require other senses to experience them. That is one of our mandates in this world: to develop those faculties we can use in the next world. One of the greatest experiences in the Akhirah will be the bliss at seeing our Lord: "Some faces will be fresh on that day, *looking to their Lord*" (75:22-23). What type of seeing is this? Imam 'Alī (a) explains: "The eyes cannot see Him through physical sight, but the hearts perceive Him through the realities of faith."²

Just as the heart can develop sight, it can also stunt into blindness: "Truly, it is not the eyes that turn blind, but it is the hearts in the breasts that turn blind!"³ When we take a blind or a deaf heart into the Akhirah, then instead of seeing the beauties of *Jannah* and hearing its uplifting melodies, we will only be able to see the torments of the fire and hear the cries of pain.⁴

How does this happen? It happens when our gaze gets stuck at the outward surface of this world. Allah (swt) commands us not to spend time with people who are inflicted with this myopia: "So avoid those who turn away from Our remembrance and desire nothing but the life of the world. That is the ultimate reach of their knowledge..."⁵ The reason is because "they know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter."⁶ If all we see are hotels, beaches, and real estate or the arbitrary notions of ownership and fame, and we turn a blind eye to developing our faith, learning from the prophets, engaging in prayer, frequenting the masjid, reciting the Qur'an ... then we will be visually stunted internally. We will not have the eyes to see the noble and elevating realities of the next world.

If there is an outward aspect to this world, then there must be an inward aspect to it as well, and this is the key to avoiding spiritual blindness. The inward aspect is what connects all things to its Creator. Allah (swt) gives us a formula. When we forget Allah—i.e., when we disregard his signs—then we will be forgotten.⁷ Conversely, when we remember Allah, He will remember us: "Remember Me and I will remember you."⁸ May this month be a month of *dhikr* Allah and spiritual insight.

To ponder: Must we lower our gaze to the outward aspects of this world in order to see the inward?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*

¹ 16:78

⁴ 32:12

⁷ 9:67

² *Nahj al-balāghah*, Sermon 179

⁵ 53:29-30

⁸ 2:152.

³ 22:46

⁶ 30:7