

The Ant Prays For Rain

Once there was a big famine in Palestine. It was during the time of the Prophet, Prophet Sulaiman (King Solomon). He came out with his people and proceeded to an open place in the desert to pray for the rains to come. Suddenly, he saw an ant standing on its two legs, raising its hands up towards the sky and saying, “Oh Allah! We are but very small among all Thy creatures. We cannot survive without Thy grace. Please bestow upon us Thy sustenance and do not punish us because of the sins of human beings. Please send down the rains so that trees can grow, farms become green and grains become available and we have our food to eat.”

Prophet Sulaiman knew the language of all animals. He told his people, “Let us go home. The prayer of this ant is enough.” It then rained heavily and all the land became green and productive.

The ant is an intelligent creature. During warm days it collects and stores grain inside the holes. It knows that during wet and cold months, it would not be able to go out to search for food. For fear that grain may start growing because of wetness, it splits it into two or more pieces. At times, during moonlit nights, it brings the split grains out of the stores for drying and preservation against decay.

The holes under the ground are made very carefully and covered with shelter to prevent the rain water from getting inside the holes. The ant, unlike the other animals, can lift a burden twice its own weight. It is not a selfish creature. When an ant finds some store of food grains, it runs up to its group and takes its fellow ants to that place. It shows everyone of them its own find of the store. They always behave in this manner. They work and live in co-operation with each other.

This shows how the ant works for the group and how each of them fulfils the needs and livelihood of its fellow-beings. How shameful it is for a man, who has no regard for another man; who has no concern for his fellow human beings who could be starving because of want of food.

Once, while Prophet Sulaiman was travelling together with hosts of men, jinn and birds, they reached a valley of ants.

When the chief of these ants witnessed the pomp and the glory with which Prophet Sulaiman and his

companions were approaching toward it. He warned all the ants to get into their holes lest they got trampled and crushed unknowingly by the approaching men and Jinn. Prophet Sulaiman smiled at this warning sounded by the ants' chief, and ordered his companions to wait till the ants went inside their holes. "None of us should hurt any ant while passing over their land", he said.

It is said that Prophet Sulaiman addressed the chief of the ants and said: "How could my people hurt you or your fellow ants when they are floating through air! Don't you know that I am a messenger of God and would never act unfairly?" The chief of the ants replied: "O Messenger of God! My cautioning the ants was not for any hurt that they would suffer but to prevent them getting astray and forgetting the glory of God after seeing your pomp and show."

There is a deep meaning in this event. It shows that even the most humble and smallest of creatures has been endowed with the necessary wisdom to live safely and avoid being hurt as far as possible. It also shows, how even a small ant does have the natural understanding of the true position of Allah. It imparts a lesson that one should not forget the true might and glory of Allah when one experiences a great power and dignity of any creature in this world.

Thus an Ant is one of the most wonderful small creatures in this world. Sura "Naml" (the Ant) in the Holy Qur'an is a chapter named after this creature. Over 1300 years ago, Imam Ali (a) was giving a sermon in Kufa, in which he was describing the beauties of creation in various forms of life. He was referring to small creatures and asking man to study how God made them so small yet so sturdy and strong. He described the ant in these words:

'Look at an ant. How tiny is its body and how delicate are its features! It is such a small creature that it often escapes the eye, and few people care to attach any importance to it among the living beings found on this earth. Look at it and study its ways of life; how it crawls, how it attacks its food; how it lifts a grain so many times heavier than its body, carries it to its hole; how it stores grains; and how in summer it gathers and stocks food for winter and rainy days.'

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