

Pondering on the Signs of God

H A R U N Y A H Y A

In the Qur'an, it is stated that the unbeliever is one who neither recognizes nor appreciates the signs of God. The distinguishing mark of a believer is his ability to see those signs and proofs. He knows that these are not created in vain, and can realize the power and great art of God everywhere and find ways to revere Him. He is one of those men of sense, who **"celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (and say): 'Our Lord! not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory be to You! Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire.'"** (Surat Al'Imran 3:191)

At various points in the Qur'an, expressions like, "will you not take heed?", "...there is a sign for thinking men," lay stress on the importance of pondering upon the signs of God. God has created an endless list of subjects for reflection. Everything we see and sense in the heavens and on the earth and in between is indeed a manifestation of God's creativity and, as such should be food for thought. One of the verses gives the example of these divine blessing of God:

"With it He produces for you corn, olives, date palms, grapes and every kind of fruit: verily, in this is a sign for those who give thought." (Surat an-Nahl, 16:11)

Let us think for a moment of one of the above mentioned items: the date palm. The tree, as is well known, grows up from a seed out of the earth. From this tiny seed (a seed is not even 1 cubic centimetre in size), arises an enormous wooden mass of 4-5 metres long and hundreds of kilograms in weight. The only thing that the seed can use while constituting this great mass is the earth in which it is buried.

How can a seed know how to form a tree? How can it "reason" to decompose the necessary substances in the soil to create wood? How can it predict the required shape and structure? This last question is especially important, because it is not an ordinary wooden piece that emerges from the seed. It is a complex living organism with roots for assimilating substances from the earth, with veins and with branches that are perfectly organized. A human being has difficulty in drawing even a picture of a tree, while on the contrary a simple seed can produce such an extremely complex object by merely using the substances in the soil.

This observation concludes that a seed is extremely intelligent and wise, even more so than we are. Or to be more precise, there is an amazing intelligence in what a seed does. But what is the source of that intelligence? How can it be possible for a seed to have such intelligence and memory?

No doubt, this question has a single answer: the seed is created by being endowed with the ability to form a tree, that is, it is programmed so in advance. Every seed on earth is encompassed by God and grows within His knowledge. In one of the verses it is stated:

"With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. He knows whatever there is on the earth and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but with His knowledge: there is not a grain in the darkness (or depths) of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry (green or withered), but is (inscribed) in a record clear." (Surat al-An'am, 6:59)

It is God who creates the seed and causes it to spring forth as a new plant. In another verse it is said:

"It is God Who causes the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He causes the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living. That is God: then how are you deluded away from the truth?" (Surat al-An'am, 6:95)

The seed is merely one of the numerous signs that God has created in the universe. If men begin to think not only with their minds but also with their hearts, and ask of themselves, the questions "why" and "how", they will be able to understand that entire universe is the proof of the existence and power of God.