

Learning lessons

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

One of the major concerns of the Quran is to inculcate in every person the spirit of contemplation. In the chapter entitled Al-Hijr (The Rocky Tract) the Quran says: "There are certainly signs in that for those who can learn a lesson" (15:75).

Natural phenomena as well as historical events have great lessons for those who go deeply into them and learn lessons from them. The Quran, in referring to them, attempts to develop the thinking habit, so that readers may gain from them intellectually. Man cannot afford to live in a state of physical starvation, for physical starvation brings on weakness and disease. Everyone, being aware of how debilitating this can be, makes sure that he has proper sustenance. The same is true of spiritual starvation. Spiritual starvation makes you a weak personality. It erodes the faculty of wisdom. It deprives you of moral values. Spiritual starvation may go to such an extreme that one may face

spiritual death. To keep spirituality alive, spiritual food is at all times a necessity. The source of that spiritual food is thinking or contemplation. Moreover, the habit should be developed of not taking things at face value. The deeper aspect of things must be gone into so that their inner meaning may be discovered. This requires an uninterrupted intellectual process. Men and animals both have experiences of different kinds each day and night, but the difference is that animals take them at face value and are unaware of the need to discover their deeper meaning. But man has the capacity for what is called "conceptual thought." Man can penetrate to the deeper aspect of things, and then learn from them hidden lessons. This difference is very important. Those who fail to take lessons from experience, be they men or women are reducing themselves to the level of animals.

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