

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: And their prophet said unto them: "Behold, it shall be a sign of his [rightful] dominion that you will be granted a heart²³⁹ endowed by your Sustainer with inner peace and with all that is enduring in the angel-borne heritage left behind by the House of Moses and the House of Aaron.²⁴⁰ Herein, behold, there shall indeed be a sign for you if you are [truly] believers."

Malik: Furthermore, their Prophet told them: "The sign of his appointment as a king is that there will come to you the chest in which there is tranquillity from your Rabb and the residue of relics which the family of Musa (Moses) and the family of Haroon (Aaron) left behind, and that chest will be carried by the angels. Surely therein is a sign for you if you are true believers."

Pickthall: And their Prophet said unto them: Lo! the token of his kingdom is that there shall come unto you the ark wherein is peace of reassurance from your Lord, and a remnant of that which the house of Moses and the house of Aaron left behind, the angels bearing it. Lo! herein shall be a token for you if (in truth) ye are believers.

Yusuf Ali: And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the Covenant with (an assurance) therein of security from your Lord and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron carried by angels. In this is a Symbol for you if ye indeed have faith." ^{281 282 283}

Transliteration: Waqala lahum nabiyuhum inna ayata mulkihi an yatiyakumu al^{tt}bootu feehi sakeenaton min rabbikum wabaqiyyatun mimma taraka alu moosa waalu haroona tahmiluhu almalaikatu inna fee thalika laayatan lakum in kuntum mumineena

Khatab:

Their prophet further told them, "The sign of Saul's kingship is that the Ark will come to you—containing reassurance¹ from your Lord and relics of the family of Moses and the family of Aaron,² which will be carried by the angels. Surely in this is a sign for you, if you truly believe."

Author Comments

239 - Lit., "that there will come to you the heart". The word tabut - here rendered as "heart" - has been conventionally interpreted as denoting the Ark of the Covenant mentioned in the Old Testament, which is said to have been a highly-ornamented chest or box. The explanations offered by most of the commentators who adopt the latter meaning are very contradictory, and seem to be based on Talmudic legends woven around that "ark". However, several authorities of the highest standing attribute to tabut the meaning of "bosom" or "heart" as well: thus, Baydawi in one of the alternatives offered in his commentary on this verse, as well as Zamakhshari in his Asas (though not in the Kashshaf), Ibn al-Athir in the Nihayah, Raghib, and Taj al-Arus (the latter four in the article tabata); see also Lane I, 321, and IV, 1394 (art. sakinah). If we take this to be the meaning of tabut in the above context, it would be an allusion to the Israelites' coming change of heart (a change already indicated, in general terms, in verse {243} above). In view of the subsequent mention of the "inner peace" in the tabut, its rendering as "heart" is definitely more appropriate than "ark".

240 - Lit., "and the remainder of that which the House (al) of Moses and the House of Aaron left behind, borne by the angels". The expression "borne by the angels" or "angel-borne" is an allusion to the God-inspired nature of the spiritual heritage left by those two prophets; while the "remainder" (baqiyyah) denotes that which is "lasting" or "enduring" in that heritage.

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Reassurance refers to the Torah.

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i.e., the staff of Moses and fragments of the Tablets.

281 - Ark of the Covenant: Tabut: a chest of acacia wood covered and lined with pure gold, about 6ft x 3ft x 3ft. See Exod xxv. 10-22. It was to contain the "testimony of God", or the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, with relics of Moses and Aaron. Its Gold lid was to be the "Mercy Seat" with two cherubims of beaten gold, with wings outstretched. This was a sacred possession to Israel. It was lost to the enemy in the early part of Samuel's ministry; see n. 278 to ii. 246; when it came back, it remained in a village for twenty years and was apparently taken to the capital when kingship was instituted. It thus became a symbol of unity and authority.

282 - Security: sakina-safety, tranquility, peace. Later Jewish writings use the same word for a symbol of God's Glory in the Tabernacle or tent in which the Ark was kept, or in the Temple when it was built by Solomon.

283 - Carried by angels: these words refer to the Tabut or Ark, the cherubims with outstretched wings on the lid may well be supposed to carry the security or peace which the Ark symbolised.

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