

٣١٧. وَقَالَ لَهُ بَعْضُ الْيَهُودِ: مَا دَفَنْتُمْ نَبِيَّكُمْ حَتَّى اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ. فَقَالَ (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) لَهُ: إِنَّمَا اخْتَلَفْنَا عَنْهُ لَا فِيهِ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ مَا جَفَّتْ أَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنَ الْبَحْرِ حَتَّى قَلْتُمْ لِنَبِيِّكُمْ ﴿اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١﴾

317. Some Jews said to Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him: You had not buried your Prophet when you picked up differences about him, when Amīr al-mu'minīn replied: We did not differ about him but we differed after him (i.e. about his succession); whereas you had not dried up your feet after coming out of the river (Nile) when you began asking your Prophet: Make you for us a god as they have gods of their own. Said he: 'Verily you are a people behaving ignorantly.' (Qur'ān, 7:138) [1]

Footnote :

[1] The purpose behind this criticism by the Jews was to show that the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad was a controversial matter, but Amīr al-mu'minīn clarified the exact focus of controversy by using the word “after him” as against “about him”, namely that the controversy was not about his prophethood but about his succession and vicegerency. Then, commenting on the position of the Jews he pointed out that those who were today criticising the mutual differences among Muslims after the Prophet were of the same kind as those who had begun to waver about belief in the Unity of Allāh even in the lifetime of Moses. Thus, when, on becoming free of the slavery of the Egyptians they reached the other side of the river and saw the figure of a calf in a temple in Sinā', they asked Moses to get a similar figure for them, whereupon Moses rebuked them for being still as stubborn as they were in Egypt. This meant that a people who were so immersed in desire for idol-worship that even after being initiated into the belief in the Unity of Allāh they became restless on seeing an idol and made the request for a similar idol to be made for themselves had no right to criticise any difference among Muslims.