

Sacred Texts of Islam

Qur'an (sura 21, verses 51-67)

[51] Before that, we granted Abraham his guidance and understanding, for we were fully aware of him.

[52] He said to his father and his people, "What are these statues to which you are devoting yourselves?"

[53] They said, "We found our parents worshipping them."

[54] He said, "Indeed, you and your parents have gone totally astray."

[55] They said, "Are you telling us the truth, or are you playing?"

[56] He said, "Your only Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, who created them. This is the testimony to which I bear witness.

[57] "I swear by GOD, I have a plan to deal with your statues, as soon as you leave."

[58] He broke them into pieces, except for a big one, that they may refer to it.

[59] They said, "Whoever did this to our gods is really a transgressor."

[60] They said, "We heard a youth threaten them; he is called Abraham."

[61] They said, "Bring him before the eyes of all the people, that they may bear witness."

[62] They said, "Did you do this to our gods, O Abraham?"

[63] He said, "It is that big one who did it. Go ask them, if they can speak."

[64] They were taken aback, and said to themselves, "Indeed, you are the ones who have transgressed."

[65] Yet, they reverted to their old ideas: "You know full well that these cannot speak."

[66] He said, "Do you then worship beside GOD what possesses no power to benefit you or harm you?"

[67] "You have incurred shame by worshipping idols beside GOD. Do you not understand?"

Hadith (collected eighth-ninth centuries)

I bought a cushion with pictures on it. When Allah's Apostle saw it, he kept standing at the door and did not enter the house. I noticed the sign of disgust on his face, so I said, "O Apostle! I repent to Allah. (Please let me know) what sin I have done." Allah's Apostle said, "What about this cushion?" I replied, "I bought it for you to recline on." Allah's Apostle said, "The painters of these pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. It will be said to them, 'Put life in what you have created (i.e. painted). The angels do not enter a house where there are pictures.'"

[Volume 3, Book 34, Number 318; Narrated: Aisha]

Allah's Apostle returned from a journey when I had placed a curtain having pictures over (the door of) a chamber of mine. When Allah's Apostle saw it, he tore it and said, "The people who will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be those who try to make the like of Allah's creations."

[Volume 7, Book 72, Number 838]

[A painter] said: I am the person who paints pictures; give me a religious verdict about them. He (Ibn 'Abbas) said to him: I am going to narrate to you what I heard from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him). All the painters who make pictures would be in the fire of Hell. The soul will be breathed in every picture prepared by him and it shall punish him in the Hell, and he (Ibn 'Abbas) said: If you have to do it at all, then paint the pictures of trees and lifeless things; and Nasr b. 'Ali confirmed it.

[Book 024, Number 5272; narrated: Muslim b. Subaih]

While I was with Ibn 'Abbas, a man came and said, "O father of 'Abbas! My sustenance is from my manual profession and I make these pictures." Ibn 'Abbas said, "I will tell you only what I heard from Allah's Apostle: 'Whoever makes a picture will be punished by Allah till he puts life in it, and he will never be able to put life in it.' Hearing this, that man heaved a sigh and his face turned pale. Ibn 'Abbas said to him, "What a pity! If you insist on making pictures I advise you to make pictures of trees and any other inanimate objects."

[Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 3, book 34, no. 428; narrated: Said bin Abu Al-Hasan]