

DĀR AS-SUNNAH CLASSIC COLLECTION



PARAGONS OF THE QUR'ĀN

Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751H)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah [d. 751H]

PARAGONS of the QUR'ĀN

being a translation of his work

'Amthāl fi'l Qur'ān al-Karīm'



“And indeed We have set forth for
mankind, in this Qur’ān every kind of
parable...”

[*al-Rūm*: 58]

Paragons of the Qur'ān

by Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah

Translated from the original Arabic by Aymān ibn Khālīd



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IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH

May Allāh have mercy upon him

His Name:

HE IS THE IMĀM, THE ḤĀFIẒ, the exegete, the legal jurist, Shaykh al-Islām: Abū ‘Abdullāh Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Abū Bakr - better known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.

His Birth and Education:

He was born into a noble and knowledgeable family on 7th Safar 691H in the village of Zar’, near Damascus, Syria.

From an early age he set about acquiring knowledge of the Islāmīc sciences from the scholars of his time. Describing his desire for knowledge, al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Rajab, *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt-l-Ḥanābilah* [4/449] said, ‘He had an intense love for knowledge, for books, publications and writings.’

Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-n-Nihāyah* [14/235] said, ‘He acquired from such books what others could not acquire, and he developed

a deep understanding of the books of the Salaf and of the Khalaf.'

His Teachers and Shaykhs:

They include Shihāb an-Nāblusī, Qāḍī Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Sulaymān, from whom he studied ḥadīth; Qāḍī Badr ad-Dīn ibn Jamā'ah; Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Hindī; Ismā'īl ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥarrānī, from whom he studied fiqh and usūl; and also his father, from whom he learnt the laws of inheritance.

However, the most notable of his teachers was Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah, whom he accompanied and studied under for sixteen years. Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr (14/234) said, 'He attained great proficiency in many branches of knowledge; particularly knowledge of tafsīr, ḥadīth, and usūl. When shaykh Taqī ad-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah returned from Egypt in the year 712H, he stayed with the shaykh until he died; learning a great deal of knowledge from him, along with the knowledge that he had already occupied himself in attaining. So he became a unique scholar in many branches of knowledge.'

His Manners and Worship:

Many of his students and contemporaries have borne witness to his excellent character and his manners of worship. Ibn Rajab (4/450) said,

He - may Allāh have mercy on him - was constant in worship and performing the night prayer, reaching the limits in lengthening his prayer and devotion. He was constantly in a state of *dhikr* and had an intense love for Allāh. He also had a deep love for turning to Allāh

in repentance, humbling himself to Him with a deep sense of humility and helplessness. He would throw himself at the doors of Divine obedience and servitude. Indeed, I have not seen the likes of him with regards to such matters.

Ibn Kathīr (14/234) said,

He was constant in humbly entreating and calling upon his Lord. He recited well and had fine manners. He had a great deal of love and did not harbour any envy or malice towards anyone, nor did he seek to harm or find fault with them. I was one of those who most often kept company with him and was one of the most beloved of people to him. I do not know of anyone in the world in this time, who is a greater worshipper than him. His prayer used to be very lengthy, with prolonged bowing and prostrations. His colleagues would criticise him for this, yet he never retorted back, nor did he abandon this practice. May Allāh bestow His mercy upon him.

His Students and Works:

Amongst his most prominent students were: Ibn Kathīr (d.774H), adh-Dhahabī (d.748H), Ibn Rajab (d.751H) and Ibn ‘Abdu-l-Hādī (d.744H), as well as two of his sons, Ibrāhīm and Sharafu-d-Dīn ‘Abdullāh.

Ibnu-l-Qayyim authored over sixty works. His books and writings are characterised by their touching address to the heart and soul, as well as their accuracy, precision, strength of argument and depth of research.

In the field of fiqh and usūl, his writings include: *I'limu-l-Muwaqqibīn*; *Turuqu-l-Hukmiyyah*; *Ighāthatu-l-Lahfān*; *Tuhfatu-l-Mawlūd*; *Aḥkām Ablu-l-Dbimmah*; and *al-Furūsiyyah*.

In the field of ḥadīth and sīrah they include: *Tabdhīb Sunan Abī Dāwūd*; *al-Manāru-l-Munif*; *Fawā'id al-Ḥadīthiyyah*; *Jalā'u-l-Afhām*; and *Zādu-l-Ma'ād*.

In the field of beliefs: *Ijtima' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah*; *as-Sawā'iqu-l-Mursalah*; *Shifā'u-l-'Alīl*; *Ḥādīyu-l-Arwāḥ*; *al-Kāfiyatū-sh-Shāfiyyah*; and *Kitāb ar-Rūḥ*.

In the field of akhlāq (morals) and tazkiyah (purification): *Madāriju-s-Sālikīn*; *ad-Dā' wa-d-Dawā'*; *al-Wābilu-s-Ṣayyib*; *al-Fawā'id*; *Risālatu-t-Tabūkiyyah*; *Miftāḥ Dār as-Sa'ādah*; and *'Uddatu-s-Ṣābirīn*.

In the sciences of the Qur'ān: *at-Tibyān fī Aqsāmi-l-Qur'ān*; and *Ambāl al-Qur'ān*.

In language and miscellaneous issues: *Badā'i al-Fawā'id*.

Two books have also been written collating the exegetical comments of ibn al-Qayyim from his various works: *Tafsīr al-Qayyim* and *Tafsīr al-Munīr*.

A few of his works have also been translated into the English language: the Magnificent Journey; the Invocation of God; Medicine of the Prophet; *Zād al-Ma'ād*.

Statements of the Scholars about him:

Ibn Rajab (4/44) said,

He had deep knowledge concerning tafsīr and the fundamentals of the religion, reaching the highest degree concerning them both. Similar was the case in the field of ḥadīth, with regards to understanding its meanings, subtleties and deducing rulings from them. Likewise was the case in the field of fiqh and its usūl, as well as the Arabic language. He did a great service to these sciences. He was also knowledgeable about rhetoric, grammar, and *sulūk* as well as the subtleties and details that occur in the speech of the people of *tasawwuf*.

Al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, *ad-Duraru-l-Kāminah* (4/21),

He possessed a courageous spirit as well as vast and comprehensive knowledge. He had deep knowledge concerning the differences of opinions of the Scholars and about the ways of the Salaf.

Ibn Ḥajar also said in his commendation to *ar-Raddu-l-Wāfir*,

And if there were no virtues of shaykh Taqī ad-Dīn [Ibn Taymiyyah], except for his famous student, shaykh Shamsu-d-Dīn ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah - the author of many works, which both his opponents and supporters benefited from - this would be a sufficient indication of his [Ibn Taymiyyah's] great position.

al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir ad-Dimishqī, *ar-Raddu-l-Wāfir* [p. 69] said,

He possessed knowledge of the sciences, especially tafsīr and usūl.

He also said:

Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn al-Muhib said, as found in his letter, “I said in front of our Shaykh, al-Mizzī, ‘Is Ibnu-l-Qayyim at the same level as Ibn Khuzaymah?’ He replied, ‘He is in this time, what Ibn Khuzaymah was in his time.’”

As-Suyūṭī, *Bughyatu-l-Wi‘āt* [1/62] said,

His books had no equal and he strove and became one of the great Imāms in [the field of] tafsīr, ḥadīth, the Book, the Sunnah, furū‘, and the Arabic language.

‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Mirqāt* [8/251],

It will be clear to whoever aspires to read the explanation of *Manāzil-u-s-Sā‘irīn* [i.e. *Madārij as-Sālikīn*], that they [Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibnu-l-Qayyim] are from the great ones of *Ablu-s-Sunnah wa-l-Jamā‘ah*, and from the *awliya’* of this Ummah.

Qāḍī Burhān ad-Dīn az-Zur‘ā said as quoted from him in *Dhayl Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābilah*,

There is none under the heavens who has greater knowledge than he.

His Death:

Imām Ibnu-l-Qayyim passed away at the age of sixty, on the 13th night of Rajab, 751H, may Allāh shower His Mercy upon him.

Foreword

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ

“And indeed We have set forth for mankind, in this Qur’ān every kind of parable...”

[*al-Rūm*: 58]

There are a number of *ayāt* (verses) in the Qur’ān by which Allāh, the Most High, brings greater clarity and insight when explaining things to mankind. This is done through the use of deep and meaningful *amthāl* (parables) that are clear for the human intellect to comprehend and ponder over in order to understand the message fully. It is from His infinite Wisdom that Allāh Destined these parables to become rooted in His Final Revelation until the Last Day - through which mankind can increase in knowledge and recognise guidance and embrace the truth.

Within *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (the sciences of the Qur’ān), numerous works have been written by Muslim scholars throughout history; in all fields of Qur’ānic studies. In discussing the unique style and theme and content of the Qur’an, there is little by way of English literature that identifies and explains the invaluable parables found therein. This publication is intended as an introduction to some

of the reasons and wisdoms and beauty of a select few, which Allāh uses for a deliberate and poignant purpose.

'Paragon of the Qur'ān' is a timely translation of one of the finest, yet concise books written on the topic by one of the most distinguished scholars of the last seven centuries. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's inimitable and distinctive understanding of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth was acknowledged by his peers, while his commentaries and interpretations remain unique in accuracy. His cognisance of Islāmic sciences can be witnessed through some of the exceptional work he has produced in various fields.

I invoke Allāh to make this short work beneficial for its readership and that He makes it a catalyst for us all to draw an ever-closer bond with His Noble and Magnificent Book.

And indeed *taufiq* and guidance is from Allāh alone.

THE BOOK

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

All Praise is due to Allāh alone, the Lord of the Worlds, and may peace and blessings be upon the best of Creation, Muḥammad and his Family and Companions altogether.

The Hypocrites described in the Book of Allāh

Our Shaykh (Ibn Taymiyyah), may Allāh have mercy upon him - said: Several parables and examples have been utilised in the Qur'ān, which cannot be comprehended except by those who have knowledge. These examples have been expressed by drawing similarities between one thing and another in relation to the ruling; and by closing the gaps between abstracted mental ideas and tangible objects by mean of an example that can be perceived by the senses, or a sensory example by means of another - so that the first one may be regarded in terms of the second. The example of this is noted in the Qur'ān when Allāh, the Most High, says about the hypocrites:

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ
 ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ
 بُكِّمُوا عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ
 ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْدِعَهُمْ فِيءَ آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ
 حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ
 أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا
 وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ
 شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allāh took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path]. Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allāh is encompassing of the disbelievers... Indeed, Allāh is over all things competent.”¹

In these *ayāt*, Allāh draws two examples of the condition of the hypocrites: An example with fire, and another with water, because of what is present in water and fire in terms of the qualities of illumination, beaming and life-giving, as fire is an element providing light, and water is an element of life. Allāh, the Glorious, has contained within the Revelation (Qur’ān) that descended from

¹ *al-Baqarah* (2): 17-20 - see the appendix for a lengthy discussion on this verse

Heaven, life for the hearts and their illumination; this is why He has called it “*Rūḥ*” (spirit) and “*Nūr*” (light). Whoever accepts it, shall enjoy living in the light and whoever does not take heed of it, are (spiritually) dead in darkness. He, the Most High, has informed of the condition of the hypocrites - concerning their gain from the Revelation; that they are like the one who tries to light a fire so that it may light up his surroundings and that he may benefit from it (due) to their entering into Islām, so they enjoyed and benefited from its illumination and they believed in it and they mixed with the believers, but when their association (with believers) lacked the “*light of Islām*”, which is the essence of their hearts, Allāh took away their light. The reason for using the words “their light” instead of “their fire” in this example is because fire provides burning and illumination, therefore, Allāh took away the feature of illumination from it and left them with the attribute of burning and darkness. This resembles those who were blessed with the sense of seeing then became blind, and those who recognised (the truth) then denied it, and those who embraced Islām and then abandoned it in their heart.

Allāh then mentions their condition in relation to the water parable, as the companions of the *صَيْب* (*Sayyib*), which is the rain that pours down or descends from the sky in darkness, accompanied by thunder and lightning - due to the weakness of their vision and minds, the warnings, admonitions, commandments, prohibitions, the dire consequences of evil and threats expressed in it; and mode of address that resembles lightening bolts - become too intense for them. Thus, their condition is the condition of one who is struck by rain in the darkness with thunder and lightning, and due to his weakness and fearfulness, puts his fingers in his ears out of fear lest a bolt of lightning should strike him. And we and others have observed many times how many confused

immature students of the Jahmīyah and the innovators - if they hear anything from the *ayāt* or Prophetic ḥadīth of the Divine Attributes opposing their belief - turn away from them as if they are frightened asses, fleeing from a lion. Then they say, 'close this door upon us and read us something other than this'. You see their hearts are repelled as they rush away obstinately due to the heaviness and difficulty of knowing the Rabb, Most Glorious and Most High, and His Names and Attributes upon their minds and heart.

Likewise, such are the *mushrikīn* (polytheists) of different types when pure *Tawḥīd* (monotheism) is presented to them and the *ayāt* that completely invalidate their beliefs are recited to them.

The Water by Which One Survives and Lives

Due to their polytheistic associations, their (i.e. the hypocrites) hearts become full of loathing and abhorrence and the call to *Tawḥīd* lies heavy upon them. If they could find a way to block their ears from hearing (the truth) they would do so. This was the situation of the enemies of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) who found the call of *Tawḥīd* very heavy and burdensome, therefore their hearts denied it. In all this, there is an obvious similarity and an established example from their brethren from among the hypocrites in relation to the water example cited by Allāh; this is because when their hearts became alike (in doubt) so did their deeds.

CHAPTER ONE

Fire and Water

Allāh, Exalted is He, Mentioned the two examples - of fire and water - in *Sūrah al-Ra'd* (Thunder), but this time when speaking of the believers; Allāh says,

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَهُ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا
وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حُلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ كَذَلِكَ
يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا
يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their measure, and the torrent carries away the rising foam. And from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, making adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus Allāh shows (the example of) truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes (being) passed away; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allāh set forth

examples.”²

In this *ayah*, Allāh compared the Revelation that was revealed by Him to the (spiritual) life of the hearts, and the hearing and sight faculties to water that brings life to the earth with plants; and compared the hearts to the valleys, since a large heart can accommodate great amount of knowledge just as a large valley can accommodate a lot of water. As for a small heart, it can only accommodate according to its size just like a small valley. Hearts bear guidance and knowledge according to their capacity in a similar manner to the flow of water when it comes in contact with earth and runs over it; it picks up scum and foam. Similarly if knowledge and guidance come in contact with the hearts, they agitate what is present in them of lusts and doubts to uproot them and carry them off similar to how medicine works; when it is consumed it interacts with the body to rid it of harmful elements in order to ensure achieving absolute healing despite the taste of bitterness it causes. This is the way in which Allāh “*shows (the example of) truth and falsehood*”.

Then He mentions the example with the fire, saying “*And from that (ore) which they beat in the fire, making adornments and utensils, is a foam like it*”; it is the filth and dirt that is removed during the process of casting gold, silver, copper and iron - the fire removes it, differentiating it and separating it from the valuable metal that is of benefit, and these impurities are cast and discarded “*it vanishes (being) passed away*”. In the same way, lusts and doubt are tossed by a believer’s heart and discarded, just as the flowing water and the fire discard the foam, scum and impurities, and what remains in the bottom of the valley is pure water which people drink from

² *al-Ra’d* (13): 17

and irrigate with and give to their livestock. And in the same way, pure and unadulterated faith settles in the centre of the heart and takes root, from which the person himself benefits and others also benefit from it. Whoever does not comprehend these two examples and does not reflect over them and try to understand what is intended by them, then he is not from among those people (who have the qualities mentioned in the two examples); and Allāh is the Granter of success.

CHAPTER TWO

Worldly Life and the Hereafter

From these examples, is Allāh's Statement:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ
نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ
زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِرُونَ عَلَيْهَا
أَتَتْهَا أَمْرًا لَيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبْ
بِالْأَمْسِ كَذَلِكَ نَفْصِلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُفَكِّرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

“Verily the example of (this) worldly life is but like water (rain) which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb - (those) from which men and livestock eat - until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people think that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a (clean-mown) harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”³

³ *Yūnus* (10): 24

Allāh the Most Glorious, draws a comparison of the worldly life in that it appears beautified in the eye of the beholder, so he becomes amazed and dazzled with its splendour, so that he becomes inclined to it and desires it and becomes misled by it - until he reaches the stage where he thinks he possesses it and has free reign over it, (then) all of a sudden it is snatched away from him when he needs it the most and a barrier is cast between him and it. Thus, Allāh, Most High, compares this situation with the land on which rain falls causing it to sprout vegetation and its plants attain perfection and its visual beauty attracts the onlooker, deceiving him and making him think that he has power over it and has complete ownership of it. Then all of a sudden, Allāh's Command comes down upon it, and sudden disaster overtakes its vegetation, causing it to become as if previously it had amounted to nothing. He therefore becomes dejected and his hands retain nothing of it. Similar is the condition of the world and the one who puts all his reliance on it.

This form of likening is from the most profound of similitude and analogy, because as this world is subject to these misfortunes, while Paradise is safe from it (as) Allāh, Most High Says: "*And Allāh invites to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a Straight path*" - so here Allāh has called it "*home of peace*" due to it being safe from the worldly disasters. Allāh called to this guidance universally and chooses in particular whoever He wills for accepting this call to guidance - the former is from His Justice and the latter is His Favour.

CHAPTER THREE

Sight and Hearing

From these examples is the *ayāh*,

مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَى
وَالْأَصْمِ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison? Then, will you not remember?”⁴

Wherein Allāh, the Most Glorious and High, mentions the disbelievers and characterises them as being unable to hear or see; and then mentions the believers and describes them with faith (*īmān*) and good deeds and humility to their Lord - thus characterising them with the outward mode of worship. Then in reference to characterising humankind with inward mode of worship, He made one of the two groups like the blind and the deaf in the way that his heart was blind from seeing the truth and his hearing deaf

⁴ *Hūd* (11): 24

from listening to the truth, and these were resembled with the one who is blind in terms of seeing even the most manifest of things, and his hearing is deaf from being able to hear any sound - and the other group as having a seeing and hearing heart, like the one who is able to see with his eyes and hear with his ears. Thus the *ayah* includes two analogies and likenesses, followed by a negation of the equivalence of these two groups by asking "*Are they equal in comparison?*"

CHAPTER FOUR

The Likeness of the Polytheist with the Spider's Home

And from these examples is the *ayāh*,

مَثَلُ الذِّبِّ
أَتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ
أَتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ
لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

“The example of those who take *awliya'* other than Allāh is like the example of a spider who makes a home. If they but knew”⁵

Allāh, the Most Glorious, mentions that they (the polytheists) are weak and those that they take as their allies are even weaker than them; and they (the polytheists) in their weakness and what

⁵ *al-'Ankabūt* (29): 41

they seek through their taking of allies and supporters (other than Allāh) is like a spider taking its home (as a web) which is the flimsiest and weakest of homes. Under this example, those polytheists are as weak as can be when they took allies and supporters other than Allāh and gained nothing from them except more weakness, as Allāh, the Most High, said in the *ayāh*,

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً
لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾ كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ
عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا ﴿٨٢﴾

“And they have taken besides Allāh [false] deities that they would be for them [a source of] honour. No! Those “gods” will deny their worship of them and will be against them opponents [on the Day of Judgement].”⁶

And His saying,

وَاتَّخَذُوا
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً لَعَلَّهُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ
نَصْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُخَضَّرُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

“And they have taken besides Allāh [false] deities, hoping that they would be helped. They are not able to help them, and they will be brought forward as soldiers in attendance (against those who worshipped

⁶ *Maryam* (19): 81-82

them).”⁷

He also said - after mentioning the destruction of (past) polytheistic nations:

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا
 أَنفُسَهُمْ فَمَا أَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ
 اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَمَا زَادُهُمْ عَيْرَ تَنْبِيئٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

“And We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. And they were not availed at all by their gods whom they invoked other than Allāh when there came the Command of your Lord. And they did not increase them in other than ruin.”⁸

So these are four places in the Qur’ān that show that the one who takes a supporter or an ally (i.e. deity) other than Allāh, seeking strength or support from them, receives nothing except the exact opposite of what he seeks. In the Qur’ān, there are more instances of this case, and this one is from amongst the best examples and most manifest and indicative of the utter falsity of associating partners with Allāh (committing *shirk*). The loss of the one who does so, is attaining only what is completely contrary to his aims. If it is argued that they are aware of the fact that the spider’s home is the feeblest of homes, then how is it that the knowledge of this is negated by Allāh’s saying “*if they but knew*”? The answer to that is that He, the Most High, did not negate from the knowledge of the feebleness of the spider’s home, but rather

⁷ *Yāsīn* (36): 74-75

⁸ *Hūd* (11): 101

he negated them having the knowledge that their taking of protectors (supporters) other than Him was like the spider taking his home (as a web); for if they really knew that, they would never had done it. Rather they assumed that their taking of protectors other than Him benefits them in terms of might and power - while the reality of the situation is contrary to what they assume.

CHAPTER FIVE

Example of the One Whose Deeds are Like a Mirage or a Drowning in a Deep Sea

And from these examples is Allāh, the Most High's saying,

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ
بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْثَانُ مَاءً حَاقًّا إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا
وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾
أَوْ كَظُلْمَتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ
فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظَلَمْتُمْ بَعْضَهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَكُدُّهُ لَمْ
يَكْدِرْ بِهَا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

“As for those who disbelieve - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks (it) is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allāh before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allāh is swift in account. Or [the state of

a disbeliever is] like darkness within a vast sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are dark clouds, some of them upon others (in darkness). When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allāh has not granted light - for him there is no light.”⁹

Allāh, the Most High, mentions two examples regarding the disbelievers; one example in which they are compared to a mirage - and the other, to layers of darkness on top of one another. This is because those who turn away from guidance and truth are of two types: one who mistakenly thinks he is actually on some firm basis - and when the truth finally reveals itself to him, it becomes clear to him that it was contrary to what he used to believe. This condition corresponds to the people of ignorance and the people of innovation and vain desires, who think they are on the path of guidance and knowledge and once the reality of matters are made evident, it finally becomes clear to them that they were on no firm ground whatsoever. And that their beliefs and deeds that were founded upon these (i.e. upon misguided beliefs and whims) were like a mirage that appears to the eyes of the distant observers, as water while there is no actual reality to it. Similar are the deeds which are performed for other than the sake of Allāh, Exalted is He, and not according to His Commandments; the doer of these deeds thinks of the them as earning him benefit while they are not at all. And it is regarding such deeds that Allāh, Exalted is He, has said about them,

وَقَدْ مَنَّآ إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنَّ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً
مَّنثُورًا ﴿٢٣﴾

⁹ *al-Nūr* (24): 39-40

“And We will regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dispersed dust.”¹⁰

And reflect over Allāh’s making of the mirage in the desert - a land that is barren and without buildings, trees, plants and people because the location of the mirage is in this desolate land that contains nothing. And the mirage itself has no reality, hence this corresponds to the condition of their (i.e. the ignorant and the innovators) deeds and their hearts which are devoid of faith and guidance.

It is also worthy to ponder the underlying meaning in Allāh’s saying “*a thirsty one thinks (it) is water*” - (the original text in the *ayāh* uses the term *الْظَّمَانُ* ‘*al-Zham’ān*’) as it refers to the one whose thirst has intensified to the point that he imagines seeing the mirage and thinks of it as real water, so he follows and finds nothing upon reaching it; and realised that his dire need for it deceived him. Such are those whose deeds, because they were not in obedience of the Messenger (ﷺ) and not for the sake of Allāh, they were made to be like the mirage that was raised up away from them (when they reached it) despite their dire thirst, so they found nothing (of benefit from their deeds). On the contrary they found only Allāh, Exalted is He, (in wait for them) and He rewarded them the actual worth of their deeds and paid their actual dues (which amounted to nothing). It is authentically narrated in the ḥadīth of Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) from the Prophet (ﷺ) wherein Allāh shows Himself on the Day of Resurrection, that Hellfire shall be brought in the appearance of a mirage, and it shall be said to the Jews “*what did you used to worship?*” to which they will say “*we used to worship ‘Uzayr, the son of Allāh*” so it will be said

¹⁰ *al-Furqān* (25): 23

Example of the One Whose Deeds are Like a Mirage or a Drowning...

to them “*you have lied; Allāh had neither a consort nor a son. So what is it that you want?*” They shall answer “*we want you to give us drink.*” It will be said to them “*Drink*” (from the mirage which will in reality will be Hellfire) and they shall fall into Hellfire. Then it will be said to the Christians “*what did you use to worship?*” to which they will say “*we used to worship the Messiaḥ, the son of Allāh*” so it will be said to them “*you have lied; Allāh had neither a consort nor a son. So what is it that you want?*” They shall answer “*we want you to give us drink.*” It will be said to them “*Drink*” and they too shall fall into Hellfire - to the end of the ḥadīth.¹¹

This is also the condition of every person who ascribes to falsehood, that his falsehood shall deceive him and let him down despite his great need for it (i.e. truth/salvation), since falsehood has no truth or reality to it, and it is like its name indicates; void of benefit. Thus, when a person adopts a belief contrary or variant to the truth, then the resultant deeds become nullified due to the falsity of their aim, just like a person who performs a deed done for other than the sake of Allāh, Exalted is He, or not according to his Command. Furthermore, the doer of such deeds suffers nullification of his deeds as well as receiving the opposite of what he was hoping for.

Consequently, his work and deeds not only went in vain, but he also suffered punishment due to the lack of any benefit from it; and from receiving the opposite of what he expected. This is why Allāh, the Most High, Says “*finds Allāh before Him, and He will pay him in full his due*” - so this is the example of the misguided person who imagines himself to be on the path of guidance.

¹¹ Reported by Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī [#7001].

CHAPTER SIX

Example of the One who Recognised Truth and Guidance but Acted Contrary to It

The second type of people are like layers of darkness accumulated one over the other, and they are those who recognised the truth and guidance but preferred over it, the darkness of falsehood and misguidance. So over them accumulated layers of darkness - the darkness of their natures and the darkness of their souls; the darkness of their ignorance and the darkness of following deviation and vain desires. This was because they did not really comprehend (the truth) despite knowing about it, so they became ignorant. Their condition is like that of the one who is in a deep sea with no shoreline, and he has been overcome by waves upon which are waves upon which are dark clouds, so he is surrounded by the darkness of the sea and the darkness of the waves and the darkness of the clouds, such (darkness) correspond to the state he (the person described in the example) is in, which Allāh has not removed him from - into the light of *īmān* (faith). And these two examples - the mirage that he thought was water, which is the element of life; and the darkness which is the direct

opposite of light - are examples that are in correspondence to the two examples given (earlier) regarding the hypocrites and the believers that are example of water and the example of fire where He made the believers' share of it, life and light - and the hypocrites share the darkness (which is the opposite of light) and death (the opposite of life).

Similarly in the two examples (described in this section), the share of the disbeliever of the water is the mirage that deceives the one looking at it while it actually does not exist; and also in their share is the layers of darkness. It is possible that the intended meaning is the condition of every group of disbelievers and that they have cancelled out the element of life and illumination by their turning away from the Divine Revelation - in which case the two examples give different characterisations for the same group. It is also possible that the two examples refer to the varying conditions of (different types of) disbelievers, and that those upon whom the first examples apply to, are those who performed deeds without knowledge or foresight, and in fact on ignorance and mere good assumption on the actions of some predecessors, thinking that they were doing well. And those upon whom the second example applies are the ones who have preferred misguidance over guidance and falsehood over truth, and have gone blind to it (i.e. the truth and guidance) after they had been able to see, and rejected it after they had known it. This is the condition of the ones who have received (Allāh's) Wrath, and these are the people surrounded by layers of darkness, while the former (example) was the condition of those who have gone astray.

The condition of those who have (His) Grace bestowed upon them is different: i.e. those described in the *ayāt*,

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوفٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ
 الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبْرَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ
 لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ
 نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ
 لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

“Allāh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within a glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allāh guides to His light whom He wills. And Allāh sets forth examples for mankind, and Allāh is All-Knower of all things.”¹²

To the *ayah*,

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ
 مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

“That Allāh may reward them [according to] the best of what they did, and increase them from His bounty. And Allāh gives provision to whom He wills without account.”¹³

¹² *al-Nūr* (24): 35

¹³ *al-Nūr* (24): 38

These *ayāt* contain in them the attributes of the three groups: those who have (Allāh's) Grace bestowed upon them whose example is given by light, those who have gone astray whose example is given by the mirage and those upon whom Allāh's Wrath has descended whose example is given by the layers of darkness, and Allāh knows best. The first example from among the two groups of falsehood is of those people who perform deeds that are void and do not fetch them any benefit - and the other group is that of unbeneficial deeds in addition to false creed and beliefs. Both of these are in direct opposition to the guidance and true religion; and this is why the condition of the second group with the "crashing waves" of doubtful and obscure matters and contaminated knowledge in their hearts is compared with the crashing of waves in the sea. These waves pile up on each other and above them are dark clouds - such are the waves of doubt and ambiguity in their darkened hearts; hearts over which layers of clouds of deviation and vain desires and falsehood have settled.

Let the sensible person then contemplate the condition of the two groups and compare between them and the two examples, and let him realise the greatness of the Qur'an and its splendour; that this Revelation is from One who is Wise and Praiseworthy. He informs that the necessary consequence of this (contemplation) is that; He did not provide them with light, rather left them in the darkness in which they were made and from which He did not remove them and bring to the light (of guidance). For Allāh is the Supporter of those who believe, removing them from darkness into light, and in the *Musnad* (of Imām Aḥmad) on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (*raḍiy>Allāhu 'anhumā*) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Allāh made the creation in darkness and cast upon them from His light, whoever got something from this light

was guided by it, and whomever (the light) missed went astray.”¹⁴

This is why I say, the pens have dried on what is in Allāh’s Knowledge. Allāh, Exalted is He, made the Creation in darkness and for whomsoever He wished guidance, He made for him existent light, which enlivened his heart and his spirit, just like the body has life because of the spirit that is breathed into it. So life is of two types - the life of the body due to the *rūḥ* (spirit) that is breathed into it and the (spiritual) life of the spirit and the heart with light (of guidance), and this is why Allāh has called the Revelation (a *rūḥ*) because of the dependence of real life upon it, as Allāh, Exalted is He, said,

يُنزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ

“He sends down the Angels with the *rūḥ* (Revelation) of His Command unto whom He Wills of His slaves”¹⁵

and,

يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ

“He casts the *rūḥ* (Revelation) of His command upon whom He will of His slaves...”¹⁶

¹⁴ Aḥmad, (#27761-27766); al-Tirmidhī, (#2642) and others - graded as ṣaḥīḥ by Al-Albānī in ‘*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Sagħīr*’, (#1764).

¹⁵ *al-Naḥl* (16): 2

¹⁶ *Ghāfir* (40): 15

and,

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ
وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا

And thus have We inspired to you (O Muḥammad) a *rūḥ* (Revelation) of Our command. You knew not what the Book was nor what Faith is. But We have made it (Qur’ān) a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our Slaves.”¹⁷

He therefore made the Revelation a “*rūḥ*” and a guiding light - and whomsoever He did not give life with this *rūḥ*, he is (in reality) dead, and whomsoever He did not provide light from it (i.e. the Revelation) he is in darkness without light. From among these examples, the *ayāḥ*,

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا
كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

“Or do you deem that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle, nay, but they are further astray from the path (than cattle).”¹⁸

In which Allāh likened the majority of people with cattle, and the common equating factor between the two is in not accepting guidance and not being led by it. He described the majority of

¹⁷ *al-Shūrā* (42): 52

¹⁸ *al-Furqān* (25): 44

these people as actually being more astray than cattle, because beasts can at least be led by their riders so they find their way and follow the path without deviating from it right or left. As for the majority of people, the Messengers called them to the right path but they neither respond nor are guided, and cannot differentiate between what brings them harm and what brings them benefit - while cattle can at least distinguish between the plants or the routes that harm it so they avoid and prefer over it what is beneficial in these. Though Allāh neither created cattle with hearts that comprehend nor with tongues that can speak, while He gave it to those people, but still they did not benefit from what He bestowed upon them of mind, heart, tongue and hearing and sight; which makes them even more astray than animals.

The one who is not guided to the straight path (even) with indicators towards it, is more misguided and worse in condition than the one who is not guided because there are no indications for him.

Another example related to this section is the *āyah*,

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ
 أَنفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي
 مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ
 أَنفُسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

“He strikes a similitude of your own selves. Have you, from among those whom your right hands possess, partners to share as equals in the wealth We have bestowed on you, so that you fear them as you fear each other? Thus We explain the signs for people who have

sense.”¹⁹

And this is an analogical proof that Allāh has brought forth against the polytheists who have put up partners for Him from among His slaves and His dominion. He had established against them a proof whose truthfulness they know deep inside themselves not requiring anything other than it - and from among the clearest and far-reaching of proofs is one that a person takes from his own self and then establishes against him a proof that is universally established and accepted. So, He said to them “*Have you, from among those whom your right hands possess, partners in the wealth and family*” do your slaves have (an equal) share in your wealth and families such that you and they are the same in their share, causing you to fear that they will partake and divide up from your wealth and misappropriate part of it? As the associate or partner fears his associate?

Ibn ‘Abbās commented (about the *ayāh*), “*you fear that they may inherit you such like you do among each other (i.e. within your families)*”, the meaning of his statement is that, would any of you be pleased that his slave be his partner and share-taker in your money and wealth, having equal hand in its use and disposal? Rather he fears that he (the slave) may monopolise his wealth in the process, just as he fears his other associates and those from the free individuals (i.e. non-slaves). So if you are not pleased with such a situation for yourself, why have you made Me (Allāh) equal to objects from my creation who belong to Me totally?

Thus if this situation is instinctively and logically inconceivable to you - even though it is in reality permissible for you and con-

¹⁹ *al-Rūm* (30): 28

ceivable in your right, since your slaves are not in reality possessed by you, rather they are your brothers whom Allāh has given you authority over and both you and they are My Slaves - then how is it that you deem such a situation permissible with Me, even though those whom you have assigned as My "*partners*" are in fact my slaves, My property and My created beings. And this is how the *ayāt* ought to be explained to those of sound minds.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Negation of a Proposition Due to the Negation of its Reason

From among these *ayāt* are His statements,

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا
مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنْ آرِزْقٍ حَسَنًا
فَهُوَ يَنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ
بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

“Allāh strikes a similitude of a (disbelieving) slave (under the possession of another), who has power over nothing, and (on the other hand) one (believer) on whom We have bestowed a good provision from Us, and he spend thereof secretly and openly. Are they equal? All Praise is for Allāh! But most of them know not.”²⁰

²⁰ *al-Nahl* (16): 75

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ
أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكُم لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى
مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ
يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

“And Allāh strikes (another) similitude of two men, one of them dumb (disbeliever), having power over nothing, and he is a burden on his owner; whichever way he directs him, he brings no good. Is he equal with one (believer) who enjoins justice and follows a straight path (of conduct)?”²¹

The two examples (above) contain two analogies that are of the ‘reverse analogy’ type, which is the negation of a proposition due to the negation of its reason and hence its consequence. Analogies are of two kinds: a type of analogy in which a proposition concerning a matter is established due to the existence of reason in its origin - and another type of analogue where the falsity of proposition of a matter is implied because of the falsification of the analogue (itself). An example of the first is the one Allāh has given of Himself vis-a-vis the idols (that) Allāh is the Owner of everything in existence, He expends of it as He Wills on His slaves in secret and open, (during) night and day, His Right Hand is full of Bounty that is not diminished by His non-stop spending all nights and days - while on the other hand, idols are owned and helpless and unable to do anything; so how is it that you assign them as partners to Me (i.e. Allāh) and worship them besides Me despite the huge disparity and obvious difference (between Allāh

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²¹ *al-Nahl* (16): 76

and the so-called partners). This is the statement of Mujāhid and others.

Ibn ‘Abbās (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) said, ‘it is an example that Allāh has put forth comparing the believer and the disbeliever: the example of the believer lies in the good that is with him, then He gives him good sustenance from which he spends on himself and others in secret and open, and the disbeliever is in the position of an owned helpless slave, incapable of anything and without any good in him: do these two men rank equally in the mind of any intelligent person?’ And the first statement (of Mujāhid) bears closer resemblance to the intended meaning and is more apparent in its refutation of associating (partners) with Allāh, and is clear to the addressee and better in establishing proof, and is closer in relation to His statement,

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَلَا تَضُرُّوْا اللَّهَ اَلْاَمْثَالَ
اِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَاَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾

“And they worship beside Allāh that which own no provision whatsoever for them from the heavens or the earth; nor have they (whom they worship) any power. So put not similitudes for Allāh. Verily Allāh knows and you know not.”²²

Following which He says, “*Allāh strikes a similitude of a (disbelieving) slave (under the possession of another), who has power over nothing...*” and from among the necessary consequences of this example is

²² *al-Nahj*: 73-74

that the believer who affirms the unity (i.e. *Tawḥīd*) of Allāh be like the one whom Allāh had provided good sustenance, and the polytheistic disbeliever is like an owned slave incapable of anything. This is what the example draws attention to and points towards. For that reason, Ibn 'Abbās mentioned it and cared to emphasise the ability of humans because the stress in the *ayāh* was on it.

Furthermore, it is worth contemplating upon this point as it is found a lot in the statements of Ibn 'Abbās and other people from the *Salaf*, in which they express their understanding of the Qur'ān, which makes many assume that the meaning of the *ayāh* is limited to this understanding.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Perfection of Servitude

As for the second example, it has been put forth by Allāh regarding Himself in contrast to what is worshipped besides Him - the idols that they worship besides Him are at the station of a dumb mute who neither understands nor speaks - in fact he is “mute” in the heart and the tongue; incapable of manifesting thoughts or expressing words. In addition to this he is helpless and incapable of anything at all; and also wherever you send him he does not bring you any benefit and does not fulfil any need. In contrast, Allāh is the Living, All-Capable Who speaks and Commands justice and to Him leads the Straight Path, and this description for Him is most perfect and full of praise; His Command is just and He is the Truth, implying that He has complete knowledge of him (i.e. man) and is teaching him and is pleased with him, instructing His slaves with it (justice) and loves those who apply justice. He only Commands justice and in fact refrains from anything contrary to it; such as oppression, injustice, impudence and falsehood.

His command and His Law are all just and the people of justice

are His allies and His beloved, and they are those who will be near Him, to His right on pulpits of light. His Command to act justly incorporates both the commandments of the religion that constitute His Law, and His Decrees in the natural world (i.e. existence). Both of these are just without any deviation or injustice whatsoever, as has been narrated in the authentic ḥadīth,

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي عَبْدُكَ، ابْنُ عَبْدِكَ، ابْنُ أُمَّتِكَ، نَاصِيَتِي بِيَدِكَ، مَاضٍ فِي حُكْمِكَ، عَدْلٌ فِي قَضَائِكَ،

“O Allāh, I am Your slave and the son of Your male slave, the son Your female-slave, My forehead is in Your Hand, Your Judgments upon me is assured and Your Decree concerning me is justare just...” Reported by Aḥmad

His Decrees are his Commands in the natural world - His Command is such that if He intends a matter, He only has to say to it “Be!” and it is. Thus, He does not command except what is truthful and just, and His Judgment and Predestination are all truthful and just.

He then informs (us) that He is on the Straight Path, this is like Shu‘ayb’s (*alayhis-Salām*) statement,

إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا
مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“Verily, I have put my trust in Allāh, my Lord and your Lord. There is not a beast (living creature) but He has grasp of it by the forelock! Verily my Lord is on a

Straight Path.”²³

His statement: “...not a beast but He has grasp of it by the forelock!” corresponds to the phrase “*My forelock is in Your Hand*” - and His saying “*my Lord is on a straight path*” corresponds to the phrase “*Your decree is just*”. The first is His dominion and the second is His praise, for Him, Exalted is He, is the dominion and all the praise, and His being on the straight path necessitates that He says nothing except the truth and Command nothing except what is just, and that He does nothing except that has benefit, wisdom and justice. For indeed He is Truthful in His statements and actions, so He does not take a person into account for an action that was decreed upon him but did not take place, and does not hold him accountable for sins he did not commit or did not act as a factor in, and (He) does not do anything at all that is not praiseworthy or commendable even if they lead to praiseworthy ends and desirable objectives, for His being on the straight path negates all this.

Tafsīr of ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī on the Meaning of *Sirāt* (Path)

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī said, “His statement, ‘*My Lord is on the right path*’; he (*Shu‘ayb*) says: *My Lord is on the way of the truth, he recompenses the good doer from His creation with good and the evil doer with evil, He does not do injustice to anyone at all, and does accept from them accept Islām and Imān (true faith).*” He then narrated from Mujāhid by way of Sha’bī from Ibn Abī Nujayh - ‘*My Lord is on the right path*’, meaning the truth, and similarly ibn Jurayj has been narrated from him. Some people (of knowledge) said, this is like His statement “*Lo! Your Lord is constantly observing the deeds of His slaves*

²³ *Hūd* (11): 56

to reward them for what they do.”²⁴ - And this is just a different form of expression since His being in this state is for paying back the good doer for his good action and the evil doer for his evil. Another group said, the statement has a meaning which is implicit (i.e. even though the words have not been explicitly mentioned) that is, my Lord urges you and encourages you to the straight path, and those people, if they intended by their statement that this was the only meaning intended by the *ayah*, then what they claimed is not true and there are no evidences for their appraisal of the implied meaning, particularly when Allāh has distinguished between His Commanding justice and His being on the straight path. If they intended that His urging (His slaves) to the straight path is from the overall meaning of His saying “on the straight path” then they are correct.

Another group said the meaning of His being on the ‘*straight path*’ is that the return of the slaves and all matter is to Allāh, nothing passes by him. If this group meant by this saying, that this was the meaning of the *ayāh* then that is not the case, but if they meant that this was from the necessary implications and consequences of His being on the straight path, then that is correct. Another group said the meaning is that everything is under His power and subjugation, and of His dominion and His grasp. And this - even though it is true - it is not the meaning of the *ayāh*; Shu‘ayb (*‘alayhis-Salām*) made a distinction between his saying “*There is not a beast (living creature) but He has grasp of it by the forelock.*” and his saying “*My Lord is on the right path*”, so these two statements have meanings independent of each other, therefore the correct interpretation is that of Mujāhid and that is the statement of the major *Tafsīr* scholars (exegetes of the Qur’ān), and the Arabic lan-

²⁴ *al-Fajr* (89): 14

guage does not support a different meaning without strain.

Ibn Jarīr said (while) praising ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azīz, “The commander of the believer is on a path ...that even if the routes have become crooked - is straight. And Allāh said, “*Allah sends astray whom He wills and He guides on the Straight Path whom He wills.*”²⁵ Thus, since Allāh, the Most High, is the One who has put the Messengers (peace be upon them all) and their followers on the straight path in their speech and actions, then He, Exalted is He, is more befitted to be on the straight path in His Speech and Actions. If the path which is followed by the Messengers and their followers is in accordance with His Command, then the path on which He, Exalted is He, necessitates His praiseworthiness, His perfection and His Majesty and Glory, by means of true speech and action. And with Allāh lies success.

Regarding the *ayāh*, there is a second opinion as in the case of the first *ayāh*; that it is an example drawing a comparison of the believer and the non-believer - the details of this opinion has been previously mentioned, and with Allāh lies success.

²⁵ *al-An‘ām* (6): 39

CHAPTER NINE

The Likeness of the One who Turns Away from Allāh’s Speech and From Reflecting upon It

And from among these examples is Allāh’s statement drawing a likeness of the one who turns away from His Speech and from reflecting upon it,

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكَرَةِ مُعْرِضِينَ
﴿٤٩﴾ كَانَهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُسْتَنْفِرَةٌ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ ﴿٥١﴾

“Why do they turn away from the Admonishment. as if they were (frightened) donkeys fleeing from a lion?”²⁶

He compares them, in their turning away and fleeing from the Qur’ān with donkeys that see a lion or a hunter and flee from it. And this is a marvellous example of an analogical exemplification

²⁶ *al-Muddaththir* (74): 49-51

because those people in their ignorance of what Allāh has sent His Messengers with, are like donkeys that do not comprehend anything. And when they hear the sound of a lion or a hunter, they run away from it most vehemently. And this is (from) the utmost form of censure of these people because they run away from guidance - that contains happiness and life for them - the way in which a donkey runs away from something that was going to kill it or hamstring it. The meaning resulting from the employment of the word مُسْتَفِرَّةٌ (fleeing) is more far-reaching than the word “naafirah” because it indicates the forcefulness of their fleeing is such, that they drive away one another and induces others to run away.

The word-pattern used, contains additional meaning that indicates seeking to perform the action compared to the basic root - as if they were encouraging each other to run or had conspired to do it together. And when the word is with a *fatḥa* on the letter (*fā*), as per one of the ways it is recited, the meaning is that the lion caused it to flee due to its severity and power.

CHAPTER TEN

The Likeness of Those who carried the Book but Did Not Implement It

From these *ayāt* is Allāh's statement,

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ
يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ
الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

“The likeness of those who are entrusted with the Torah (Law of Moses), yet apply it not, is as the likeness of the donkey carrying books (but understands nothing from them). Wretched is the likeness of the people who deny the Revelations of Allāh. And Allāh guides not the wrongdoing people.”²⁷

Allāh makes an analogy of the one who carries His Book and

²⁷ *al-Jumm'āh* (62): 5

believes in it, ponders over it, works according to it and calls to it, but instead he acted contrary to that and did not carry it except in his memory - meaning his recitation was without reflection or understanding or following its commands or using its judgement in all affairs nor did he act according to its requirements. His example is that of a donkey that carries on its back provisions of a journey and is unaware of what is contained in it. Its share of it is only the burden of carrying it upon its back and nothing else; similarly the share of such a person from Allāh's Book is the share of this donkey of the books that are on his back. And this example, even though it was put forth regarding the Jews, in its meaning (it) includes the one who carries the Qur'ān (in his memory) but leaves off acting upon it, neither fulfilling its right nor giving it the due right.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Example of One who Abandons the Signs of Allāh

And from among these *ayāt* is His statement,

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا
فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ وَلَوْ شِئْنَا
لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ
كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ تَرَكَهُ
يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصْ
الْقِصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾

“And recite unto them the tale of him to whom We gave Our Revelations, but he threw them away, so Satan overtook him and he became of those who went astray. And had We willed We could have raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his own desires. Therefore his likeness is as the likeness

of a dog; if you attach him, he pants with his tongue out, and if you leave him he (still) pants with his tongue out. Such is the likeness of the, people who deny Our Revelations. Narrate unto them the stories (of the past), perhaps they may take thought."²⁸

Allāh in this *ayah* likens the one to whom He gave His Book and taught him knowledge that He excluded others from having, but this person gave it up and chose to follow his vain desires - choosing Allāh's Wrath over His Pleasure, and the worldly life over the Hereafter, and the created beings over the Creator - with the dog which is from among the worst of animals, and the lowest in value; meaning in terms of its self - its desire does not surpass its belly - and (is) the most keen in safeguarding its own selfish interests. An example of this is that it does not walk except with its snout on the ground, smelling and sniffing - and keeps on sniffing its rear end from among all the parts of its body. If you toss a stone at it, it runs after it, to bite it, with its teeth due to its extreme voracity; it is from among the most despicable of animals, the most tolerant in bearing degradation, and the most content with low things. It prefers stinking putrid carcass to fresh meat and filth to pleasant food; if it comes in possession of a dead animal that would suffice a hundred dogs, it would still not allow a single dog to partake of it, growling at it, due to its greed and selfishness.

And from amongst its strange behaviour is that if it sees someone of a shabby appearance and clothes and poor condition, it barks at him and attacks him as if perceiving him to be a contender in its power - while if it sees someone with a good appearance and beautiful attire and a commanding presence, it puts its

²⁸ *al-A'raf* (7): 175-176

snout down submissively on the ground to him, not even raising its head.

And in Allāh's likening of the one who prefers the worldly life and its hastened pleasures over the final abode - despite his abundant knowledge - to a dog in the intensity of its yearning (for low things), there is a marvellous subtlety (here): this person, whose condition as Allāh has mentioned in regard to his withdrawing from the signs of Allāh and choosing to follow his vain desires, it is only due to his extreme yearning for worldly desires and due to his heart being cut off from Allāh and the final abode. He resembles in this respect the dog in its constant panting, whether it is provoked or left alone. The words "*lahf*" (yearning) and "*lahth*" (panting) are siblings in word construction and meaning. Ibn Jurayj said: "The dog is insensate (cut off from emotion and feeling) whether you attack it or leave it alone it simply pants, which is the condition of the one who leaves guidance because he lacks a heart."

I say: the meaning of its heart being insensate is that it does not have the soundness of heart and mind to be tranquil and leave off its panting; this is the condition of the one who withdraws himself from Allāh's Signs, he does not have left in him the soundness of heart that lets him be patient to help him resist worldly desires and his yearning for them. He yearns for the world due to his lacking patience, just as the dog pants for water, since the dog is the least patient of animals when it comes to water; if it gets thirsty it even starts eating the soil (in an attempt to quell his thirst) - although he is more patient when it comes to hunger - but nevertheless, of all the animals it is the most intense in its panting, doing it continuously whether standing sitting or walking. This is due to the severity of its yearning and keenness, the feverish in-

tensity in its liver (of this keenness) and yearning necessitates its constant panting and in a corresponding manner, the severe zeal and feverish lusting in his heart (i.e. the person described in the example) causes him to be in a state of constant yearning. If you approach him with exhortation and advice he still continues to yearn and if you leave him and do not admonish him, he still yearns.

Mujahid said, “And this is the likeness of the one who is given the Book but does not act according to it.”

Ibn ‘Abbās said, “If you charge him with wisdom he does not accept it and if you leave him, he is not guided to goodness just as a dog that pants whether sitting on its paws or whether it is driven away.”

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, “It is the hypocrite who does not remain firm on the truth, whether he is called to it or not, admonished or not, like the dog who pants whether it is driven away or left... it barks whether you attack it or not.”

Abū Muḥammad ibn Qutaybah said, “Every creature that pants does it due to weariness or of thirst except for a dog, which does it in all conditions: fatigue, rest, good health, illness and whether thirsty or not. Therefore Allāh has made it an example for the one who belies the signs of Allāh.” He also said, “Even if you advise him, he remains astray, and if you leave him alone he still remains astray, just like a dog. If you drive it away or rebuke it, it pants and if you leave it to its condition it still pants. The complement of this likeness is in Allāh’s statement “*And if you call them to the Guid-*

²⁹ *al-A’rāf* (7): 193

ance, they follow you not. Whether you call them or are silent is all one to them."²⁹

Reflect on what lies in this example of wisdom and meaning, from among these are Allāh's saying, "*to whom We gave Our Revelations*" - Allāh informs us that He was the One who gave and bestowed him with His Revelations as a blessing from Him, therefore Allāh attributed it (i.e. this act of bestowing) to Himself, and then said "*but he cast them off*" i.e. he withdrew himself from them just as a snake draws its body out of its skin (by shedding it). He departs from the Revelations of Allāh just like the skin of a snake is left aside from its flesh. He did not say, "*We caused him to withdraw from them*" because he (i.e. man) himself was responsible in causing his departure from Allāh's *ayat* by his act of pursuing his vain desires.

From among these signs to be reflected are His saying, "*so Shayṭān overtook him*" i.e. he (Shayṭān) pursued him and caught up with him, as Allāh said (using the same word) about the people of Pharaoh when he and his people chased Moses and his followers at the time of sunrise. Thus, he had been preserved and safeguarded by the sign of Allāh, his flanks protected from Shayṭān who could not get anything out of him except in the case of some brief inattentiveness. However as soon he withdrew from the Revelations of Allāh, Shayṭān was able to get an upper hand on him just as the lion corners his prey and he became from among the misled ones, who do deeds contrary to their knowledge - those who know the truth but still act contrarily to it, such as scholars of evil.

And from among these subtleties is His saying, "*And had We Willed We could have raised him by their means*" - Allāh, Exalted is He,

informs that elevation of rank with Allāh is not merely by knowledge - for this man was from amongst those with knowledge; rather it comes with following the truth and preferring it and seeking Allāh's Pleasure. This man was from the most knowledgeable of his generation, but still Allāh did not elevate him due to his knowledge alone, and did not benefit him with it - so we seek Allāh's refuge from knowledge that does not bring benefit. Allāh informs us that it is He who raises the slave, if He so wills, with what He has bestowed upon him of knowledge, and if He does not raise him then he remains abase, no one can raise his head high because the One who lowers and raises is Allāh, Exalted is He (who abased him and did not raise him). And the meaning of this phrase is: 'had We wished we would have preferred him and honoured him and raised his value and position with the signs and Revelations We had granted him'. Ibn 'Abbās said (regarding the meaning), "*Had We wished, we would have raised him due to his knowledge of these signs.*" A group said that the pronoun in His statement: "we would have raised "*him*" points back to disbelief, i.e. had We wished we would have lifted disbelief off of him because of what was with him of Our Revelations." Mujāhid and 'Atā' said the meaning was: "We would have raised away from him disbelief and replaced it with belief and would have safeguarded him." And this meaning is correct; although the first meaning is the true intent of the *ayah*, the latter meaning is from among the consequences of the intent of the *ayah*. And it has previously been discussed that the *Salaf* (pious predecessors) sometimes bring to our attention the consequences of the meanings of the *ayāt*, which some people might conjecture to mean that this consequence is the complete intended meaning of the *ayah*.

And regarding His statement, "*He inclined to the earthly life*",

Sa'īd ibn Jubayr said, "He leaned towards the earthly life."

Mujahid said, "He sought to dwell in the earth."

Muqatil said, "He was content with the earthly life."

Abū Ubaydah said, "He adhered to the earth and desired to linger." And the (Arabic word used in the *ayah*) "*mukblid*" means a person who tarries and lingers in his walk (and) when it is used for animals, it means the riding animals whose medial incisors remain until its lateral incisors emerge.

Al-Zujjāj said the origin of *Khalada* and *akhlada* is from *kbulūd* which means perpetuation and remainder. And the phrase '*akhlada fulānun bilmakān*' indicates the act of staying or establishing oneself in a place. I say: An example of the usage of the word is in the *ayah*, "*There will be boys made immortal to serve them.*"³⁰ - In that they have been created for eternity, neither changing nor growing older, all of the same age. It was also said: they are those wearing (rings) in their ears and bracelets on their hands; the group taking this opinion have interpreted the word by some of the consequences, i.e. according to them, these are manifestations of *takblid* (perpetually) at the age, so there is no contradiction between the two opinions.

And regarding His statement, "*He followed his vain desires*",

al-Kalbī said, "He pursued lowly matters and left aside lofty ones."

³⁰ *al-Wāqī'ah* (56): 17

Abū Rawq said, “He chose this world over the Hereafter.”

‘Atā’ said, “He desired the world and obeyed his devil.”

Ibn Zayd said, “His desire conformed to his people, meaning those who waged war against (Prophet) Mūsā and his nation.”

Yamān said, “He followed his wife, who urged him to do what he did.” If it is said, the word *‘lākin’* (but) is “*remedial*”, i.e. it requires establishing the negation of the clause before it, or conversely the negation of the clause established before it, as in your saying: “if I wished I would have given him but I did not give him” or “if I wished I would have done so but I did not do so.” Here (i.e. in Allāh’s statement), it requires *‘Had We wished We would have raised him with them’*, [but we did not wish it or did not raise him], so how is it that the remedial clause has come as “*He inclined to the earth*”, after His statement, “*Had We wished, we would’ve raised him with them*”?

In response to this, it has been said: This is a statement in which the meaning is observed without abiding by the actual words (as meanings are noted and expressed), and that is because the meaning contained in His statement, “*And had We Willed We could have raised him by their means*” is that he did not partake of the factors that would cause his status to be raised through Allāh’s Revelations, i.e. choosing Allāh’s Pleasure over his own vain desires, instead he preferred the worldly life, inclining towards earthly desires and following his whims.

Al-Zamakhsharī said, “The meaning is that, if he remained steadfast on acting upon Allāh’s Revelation and did not abandon them, We would have raised him due to them - and that is because the

Will of Allāh to raise him was a consequence to his holding fast to them - so the Wish and the Will of Allāh was a consequence of it (i.e. his following of vain desires and abandoning the signs of Allāh), as if it had been said, "*had he held fast to them we would have raised his status by them.*"

He (Zamakhsharī) goes on to say: "Do you not see His saying "*but he inclined to the earth*", so the will of Allāh was modified by the person's desire to remain in the world, which was his own action that necessitates the statement "*had We wished*" in meaning to be equivalent to his action. And if the apparent meaning of the statement had been meant, it would have been said: "Had we wished, we would have raised him, but we did not wish it".

(Ibn al-Qayyim says), and this is just noise made from al-Zamakhsharī, which we know has been said by a Qadarī who denies *qadr* (predestination) and seeks to take words far away from their true meaning, trying to make Allāh's Words fit the Mu'tazili doctrine. Where is the statement of Allāh "*had We wished*" from his (Zamakhsharī's statement) "had he held fast to them", let alone the saying that holding fast to the Revelations of Allāh is dependent on the Will of Allāh, which is the correct truthful view, the origin of his statement will be falsified. Furthermore, Al-Zamakhsharī's statement that Allāh's Will comes after (the man's) holding fast to Allāh's Revelations, is indeed from the worst and most false of statements because the actual truth is that his holding fast to the Revelations, follows the Will of Allāh, as Allāh's Will is followed and does not follow - it is a causing agent not a result of other causes, and a requisite not a consequence. Whatever Allāh Wills is required to exist, and what He does not Will does not.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Backbiting and Tearing of the Flesh

And from among these *āyāt* is His statement,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ
وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن
يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ
رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

“O you who have believed, avoid much assumptions (for) indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite one other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it. And fear Allāh, indeed Allāh is the One Who forgives (and accepts repentance) and Merciful.”³¹

And this is from among the most excellent of exemplifying

³¹ *al-Hujurāt* (49): 12

analogies, wherein Allāh has likened the shredding of the honour of a Muslim brother (through backbiting him) to the ripping of his flesh. And since the backbiter shreds his brother's honour in his absence, he becomes like the one who tears his brother's flesh apart due to the absence of his soul from his body due to death - and just as the person being backbitten is unable to defend himself due to his absence, is likened to the dead person whose flesh is being ripped apart and is unable to defend it. Likewise, considering that brotherhood demands mutual mercy and relation and support whereas the backbiter attaches to it, opposite connotations such as blame and fault-finding and backstabbing, making it is as if he were tearing his brother's flesh apart.

(And) whereas brotherhood demands preserving, protecting and defending his brother's honour, the backbiter takes pleasure in smirching his brother's honour and censuring him, therefore he has been likened to devouring his brother's flesh after tearing it up. And as the backbiter enjoys doing it and thinks good of it, he has been resembled to one who loves to eat the flesh of his brother. And his love and enjoyment in eating his brother's flesh is a degree beyond just eating, just as eating it is a degree beyond ripping it apart.

Therefore reflect over this comparison and exemplification and its excellent arrangement and the complete correspondence between the abstract and the concrete. The description of the characterisation in the later part of the *ayah* preceded by the denial that anyone of them could actually love this (i.e. consuming their brother's flesh). The case (being made) is that just as this act is reprehensible to them in their very nature, how could they love the deed of backbiting which in its nature resembles consuming one's brother's flesh? So Allāh has established an argument against

something they love to do (backbite) by employing an example of something they find reprehensible. He does this by striking a similarity between something they like to do with some which is most hateful and reprehensible to them. This reasoning compels sound mind, nature and wisdom to be strongly repelled by something which is a counterpart and analagons to it. And with Allāh lies success.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Deeds of the Disbelievers and the Blowing of Ashes

And from amongst these examples is Allāh's statement,

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ
أَعْمَاءُ هُمْ كَرَّمًا دَأَسْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ
مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٨﴾

“The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is that their deeds are like ashes on which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they shall not get aught of what they have earned. That is the extreme error (of straying from the right path).”³²

Here, Allāh has likened the deeds of the disbelievers in terms of their invalidity and lack of benefit, to ashes over which a strong

³² *Ibrāhīm* (14): 18

wind blows on a stormy day. Thus, Allāh makes their deeds resemble dust particles that are scattered by a violent wind that may never be retrieved or collected when the disbelievers are most in need of them. This is a result of the deeds not being based upon *īmān* and *ihsān*, they are done for the sake of other than Allāh or they do not conform to His Commands. For this reason, the disbelievers will not benefit at all from their deeds on the Day of Judgement and neither will they receive a speck of reward from Allāh. This is because Allāh, Exalted is He, only accepts deeds that were performed sincerely for His sake (alone) and in conformity with His Laws. Thus deeds are of four types -: one type is accepted whereas the other three types are turned down. The accepted deeds are the correct and sincere deeds and the meaning (of correct) is: To be from the acts legislated by Allāh through His Messenger (ﷺ); and the meaning (of sincere) is: To be performed only for the sake of Allāh. As for the other three types of deeds, they are the deeds that fail to meet the set requirements of an accepted deed.

A marvellous secret lies in the comparison of their deeds to ashes, as they both share some similarity; that is, fire burns both of them, and uproots their origins. All deeds that are performed for the sake of other than Allāh, Most High, and are not in conformity with His laws, will be cast into Hell, and will be used to fuel the fire that will burn the ones who did these deeds, because Allāh replaces their nullified deeds with punishment and fire. He will also replace the good deeds of those who performed them sincerely for His sake, with grace and life (in Paradise). Therefore, note that Allāh will burn the nullified deeds until they become ashes, for whoever worships anything or anyone other than Allāh, will enter Hell, as its fuel, along with his idols.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Good Word and the Good Tree

And from amongst these examples is Allāh's statement,

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً
كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿١٤﴾
تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

“Have you not considered how Allāh presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and it branches (high) in the sky? Producing its fruit all the time by the permission of its Lord. And Allāh presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded.”³³

Here, Allāh has likened the good word to the good tree because the outcome of a good word is a good deed, and a good tree will

³³ *Ibrāhīm* (14): 24-25

also yield beneficial and good fruits. This meaning is obvious and apparent and in conformity with the view adopted by the majority of scholars of *Tafsīr* who say that the good word in this *ayah* means the declaration that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh (i.e. *Shahadah*). For indeed the fruits of this statement are all hidden and manifest good deeds since every good deed pleasing Allāh, Most High, has to be a result of this statement.

In the *Tafsīr* of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib, Ibn ‘Abbas (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhum*) said (regarding this *Ayah*), ‘*whose root is firmly fixed*’ refers to the statement, ‘*There is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh*’ that is established in the heart of believers - “*and its branches (high) in the sky*” refers to the deeds of believers that are elevated to the sky by the means of this statement.”

Al-Rabīʿ ibn Anas said, “The good word (mentioned in the *ayah*) is said in reference to *īmān*, as it resembles the good tree. ‘*whose root is firmly fixed*’ refers to the everlasting sincerity within it, and ‘*its branches (high) in the sky*’ refers to fearing Allāh.” The explanation used in this (latter) interpretation is the most correct and most suitable because Allāh, Exalted is He, likened the tree of *Tawhīd* in the heart, to the good tree whose roots are firmly fixed and its branches reach high in the sky, continually bearing fruit whenever a good deed is raised high.

If one contemplates this comparison, he will realise that it perfectly corresponds to the tree of *Tawhīd* whose roots are fixed in the heart (of a believer), whose branches comprising of good deeds, are raised high in the sky (and) continuing to provide the fruits of good deeds depending on the firmness and well-establishment of *Tawhīd* in the heart - the level of love that a heart has for it, the level of understanding of its reality and truths - and the

level to which a person is appropriately mindful to the rights (of the deed).

He (is successful) who has this good word established firmly in his heart, understands its reality and his heart is engulfed with its characteristics; his tongue testifies its correctness and his limbs act upon (what it necessitates). His heart and tongue affirm and negate that which *Tawhīd* affirms and negates, while his limbs submit willingly and in totality to the Commandments of Allāh similar to how his heart accepts no Lord but its truthful Creator. Undoubtedly, this good word which emanates from the heart and is uttered by the tongue continues to bear its fruit. The good deeds that are raised to the Lord of all Worlds (are those) that yield plenty of good fruits whenever it accompanies a good deed by which it ascends the good word. Allāh said, "*Unto Him ascend (all) good words and the righteous deed elevates them.*"³⁴

Allāh also informs us that the result of a good word is a good deed for the person who utters it at all times. This is because whenever a believer testifies and utters the word of *Tawhīd* while knowing its true meaning and reality - what it confirms and negates and encapsulates his heart, tongue and all his limbs with the characteristics of this testimony - he is rewarded. For indeed, the roots of this word are firmly entrenched in his heart and its branches are connected to the sky, yielding fruit all the time.

The Example of the Palm-Tree and the Believer

Some of the righteous predecessors said that the good tree (in *Surah Ibrāhīm*, 24) is the palm tree. This is supported by the ḥadīth

³⁴ *Fātir* (35): 10

on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhumā*) that is recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥ books. Some of them also said (the good tree) is the believer, as per the report narrated by Muḥammad ibn Sa’d who relayed (through a *sanad* [chain]) that Ibn ‘Abbās (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhumā*) said, ‘In the *ayah*, “See you not how Allāh coins a similitude: A goodly saying, as a goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven’, the goodly tree is the believer and ‘its root set firm, its branches reaching to the heavens’ means that the believer works and talks on earth so his words and deeds reach into heaven while he still lives on earth.”

‘Atīyyah al-‘Ufī said, “See you not how Allāh coins a similitude: A goodly saying, as a goodly tree’ is similar to the believer whose words and good deeds emanate from him and ascend to Allāh.”

Al-Rabī‘ ibn Anas said, “its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven’ is to exemplify the sincerity of the believer to Allāh and his devoted worship to Allāh alone without associating any partner with Him, ‘its root set firm’ means the origin of his (good) deeds are well established on earth and ‘its branches reaching into heaven’ means his name is mentioned in heaven.”

There is no contradiction between these two interpretations because the intended meaning of the example is the believer, who also shares many similarities with the palm tree. Thus, since the palm tree is a goodly tree then it is more befitting to say that the believer is similar to it. And though some of the righteous predecessors said: ‘the goodly tree’ is a tree in paradise; it is also known that the palm-tree is amongst the most honourable of trees in paradise.

Reviving *īmān* (Faith)

Within this example (we find), secrets, knowledge and cognition that conform to the Wisdom and Knowledge of Allāh. For example, since a tree must have roots, a trunk, sapwood, branches, leaves and fruit - the tree of *īmān* and Islām must have similar elements so that the likened is exactly what it is likened to. The sapwood is knowledge, understanding and certainty, its trunk is sincerity, its branches are deeds; and the fruits are guidance, good manners and a good character. Knowing how firm and well-established this goodly tree is in the heart, can be noted through these elements.

When a person's knowledge is sound and based upon the Qur'ān, his belief (creed) matches what Allāh and His Messengers informed us about Him; his heart is sincere and his actions conform to the Commandments of Allāh - his manners and characteristics conform to these fundamentals. It becomes evident that the roots of the tree of *īmān* in his heart are firmly fixed with its branches reaching into the sky. On the other hand, in the case that is opposite to the aforementioned example, one will realise that it is an evil tree that has been planted in the heart. A tree that is without stability, uprooted from the earth, and deprived of water; and such as trees as we know, cannot survive and will eventually dry up and perish.

This is the clear example of the tree of Islām within the heart (of a believer). It must regularly be watered with good and beneficial deeds, and it must be protected and strengthened by accustoming it to the remembrance of Allāh, and contemplation upon His Book; otherwise it may become dry and lifeless. In the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad, on the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radīy Allāhu*

'*anbu*) reported, that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “*Īmān* in the heart is torn as a garment is torn, so revive your *īmān*.”

The Good Plant

Generally speaking, when a plant is not being looked after, it will eventually dry up and die, which explains why the slaves (of Allāh) are in great need of the acts of worship that He Com-manded them to perform in the day and at night. It is from His Mercy, His Benignity and Grace upon His slaves that He Legis-lated such acts of worship, which are the water that irrigates the plants of *Tawhīd* that He placed within our hearts. It is also com-mon for alien and harmful plants to mix within the beneficial crops. Thus, when the one in charge of these crops tends to look after them regularly and purifies them of these intruders, they will grow healthy and yield a large and beneficial harvest. How-ever, when the person in charge of these crops becomes neglect-ful, they will be overtaken by weeds and harmful plants and as a result, the crops will be impaired, and the fruits will be damaged. Those who lack a clear understanding and knowledge of these matters will miss many profitable gains without even realising it. That said, the believer is always pruning and watering this plant so that it is everlasting, and (he) uproots all other harmful plants and weeds from its surroundings to assure its healthy growth. And in Allāh we place our trust.

These are just some of the secrets and wisdom contained within this magnificent example, which may be just a drop from the ocean as we comprehend but a little from the secrets of Allāh due to our state of mind, weak hearts, deficient knowledge and deeds that necessitate the seeking of forgiveness. For indeed, if our hearts

were purified, our minds were clear, our souls were in order and our deeds were performed with sincerity and devotion, we would have derived many remarkable meanings and wisdom from the Words of Allāh; wisdom that overshadows all other intellects. This comparison illustrates for us, the elevated and blessed level of knowledge and understanding of the Companions, may Allāh be pleased with them all, because the difference between their knowledge and understanding and that of the people who came after them is as vast as the difference between their virtue and that of the people who came after - and Allāh knows best, the places to which He allocates His Grace and to whom He favours with His Mercy.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Bad Word and the Bad Tree

Allāh then mentioned (the opposite of good word) *'the bad word'* and likened it to the bad tree that has been uprooted from the surface of the earth. It is unstable with a weak trunk and no high branches, bears no fruit nor has any shade - as it is in reality nothing but a low and fruitless tree.

When a person with a sound intellect contemplates upon most of the writing and speech of mankind, he will realise that it is similar to this bad tree. It is a great loss when a person busies himself with this fruitless talk and leaves behind the best and most beneficial Speech (i.e. the Qur'ān).

Al-Daḥḥāk said, "Allāh compared the disbeliever with a tree that has been *'uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability'* to say that a rootless tree without branches or fruit is without benefit (and) is similar to the disbeliever, whose actions and speech are devoid of good and therefore Allāh places no grace or benefit within them. Ibn 'Abbās said: "The phrase *'the example of a bad word'* refers to *shirk* and *'is like a bad tree'* refers to the disbeliever

and '*uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability*' means *shirk* (as) neither has an origin that a disbeliever can hold to nor a proof." And Allāh never accepts the deed of a disbeliever and never raises it to Himself. The intended meaning of '*has no firm roots on earth and no branches in the sky*' is that the disbeliever has no good deed to be raised to Allāh and no good deed in the Hereafter.

Al-Rabī' ibn Anas said, "The example of the bad tree is like the disbeliever whose words and deeds have neither roots nor branches, and his deeds and sayings have no stability on earth nor can they reach high into the sky."

Sa'īd narrated from Qatādah regarding this *ayah*, "A man once asked someone from the people of the knowledge that he met on the road, 'what do you say about the phrase in the *ayah* *'the bad word?'* he replied, 'As far as I know, it neither settles on earth nor ascends to the sky, so it accompanies the one who said it until the Day of Judgment.'" Then Allāh informs of His separation between the two groups; the people of the goodly word and the people of the bad word, and His justice. He informs us that '*He keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word*' which is what they are most in need of in this life and the Hereafter; and that He '*sends astray the wrongdoers (i.e. disbelievers)*' by directing them far from the firm word thus He sends them astray by His Justice; and holds the believers upon the firm word by His Grace and due to their Imān.

Within this *ayah* '*Allāh keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in the worldly life and in the Hereafter*' lies a magnificent treasure. Those who find it, utilise it and spend from it, will be successful, whereas those who are prevented from enjoying this treasure will be from

the losers. Indeed the slave of Allāh cannot survive without Allāh keeping him firm, even for the blinking of an eye because without the Support from Allāh, his world would come crashing down. Allāh said to His most noble and beloved one amongst His creation,

وَلَوْلَا

﴿٧٦﴾ أَنْ تَبْنَتَكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرَكُنْ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا

“And had We not made you stand firm, you would nearly have inclined to them a little...”³⁵

and,

إِذْ يُوحِي رَبُّكَ إِلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَنِّي مَعَكُمْ فَثَبِّتُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

“(Remember) when your Lord revealed to the angels, “Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed...”³⁶

and,

وَكُلَّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نَحْنُ بِهٖ فُؤَادَكَ

“And all that We relate to you of the news of the Messengers is in order that We may make strong and firm your heart...”³⁷

³⁵ *Isrā’* (17): 74

³⁶ *al-Anfāl* (8): 12

³⁷ *Hūd* (11): 120

The Method of Keeping Them Firm

The entire creation is divided into two kinds; those that are blessed with firmness and those who are debased and without firmness. The origin and essence of firmness is generated from the firm Word and adherence to all the Commandments of Allāh by which He keeps His slave firm. The more steadfast and firm the speech is and the better the deeds, the more Allāh keeps His slave firm. Allāh. As He said,

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ
فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَبِيئًا ﴿٦٦﴾

“But if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them, and would have strengthened their (Faith).”³⁸

Those with the most firm hearts are the ones with the most firm words and the firm word is the truthful and honest word, which is the opposite of the false and dishonest word. There are two kinds of words; a firm word that is real, and a false word that is not real.

The most firm word is the word of *Tawhīd*, and what it necessitates - for it is indeed the greatest means by which Allāh keep His slaves firm in this life and the Hereafter. For this reason, a truthful person is noted as the most firm and brave by others, whereas a dishonest man is seen as the most cowardly and least firm of people. People of intuition are able to recognise the truthfulness

³⁸ *al-Nisā'* (4): 66

of an honest person by the firmness of his heart and bravery during trials; and the dishonesty of a dishonest person by his weak heart and cowardice. Such observations only go unnoticed by those who are weak in *imān*.

Some people asked about the words that they heard from a person; so the answerer said, “By Allāh I have not understood a word from what he said except that without a doubt, his words have an effect that cannot be an effect of a falsifier.” Indeed, Allāh has not given his slave anything better and more beneficial than the firm word; as such people reap the fruits of their speech when they are most in need of it; in their graves and on the Day of Judgement. Al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) narrated: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “This *ayah* was revealed regarding the punishment of the grave.”

This has been further explained in other authentic ahadeeth, including one narrated in the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad, from the ḥadīth of Dāwūd ibn Abī Hind, who narrated from Abū Nudrah, who narrated from Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) who said, “We were walking in a funeral with the Prophet (ﷺ) so he said, “O people, this nation is tested in their graves so that when the deceased is buried and the people have departed, an angel with a hammer in his hand comes to the deceased and asks him, ‘what do you say about this man (i.e. the Prophet)?’ If the deceased was a believer he will testify that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh, and He has no partner, and that Muḥammad is His Slave and Messenger. The angel will then say, ‘You said the truth,’ and opens for him a door showing Hell and says to him, ‘This would have been your position in the fire had you disbelieved, but as you have believed, for you Allāh has replaced it with this.’ He then opens for him a door showing his place in Jannah,

so the deceased tries to get up to enter but the angel says, 'Remain in your place,' then he expands his grave. As for the disbeliever and the hypocrite, when they are asked, 'What do you say of this man (i.e. the Prophet)?' They reply, 'I do not know,' so the angel says, 'You neither knew nor were guided,' then he opens for him a door to Jannah and says to him, 'This would have been your place had you believed in your Lord, but as you have disbelieved, for you Allāh has replaced it with this.' Then he opens for him a door showing him hell, and then the angel strikes him with his hammer so that the entire creation can hear except mankind and Jinn." Some of his companions said, "O Messenger of Allāh, every one of us will be too frightened and speechless when we see an angel with a hammer in his hand, standing next to our heads." The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Allāh keeps the believing ones firm with the firm word in this worldly life and the Hereafter, and He sends astray the wrongdoers (i.e. disbelievers) and does what He Wills."

In the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad, al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib also narrated: The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said (mentioning how the soul of the believers are taken by the Angel of death), "An Angel comes to him in his grave so he asks him, 'Who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your Prophet?' So he says, 'My Lord is Allāh, my religion is Islām and my Prophet is Muḥammad.' The angel repeats the three questions angrily, and that would be the last test that a believer goes through and at that moment applies the Ayah: "*He keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word in the worldly life and Hereafter.*" So the believer replies, 'My Lord is Allāh, my religion is Islām and my Prophet is Muḥammad.' The angel replies, 'You spoke the truth.'"

And this is an authentic ḥadīth. Hammād ibn Salāmah narrated from Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr and Abū Salāmah that Abū Hurayrah (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) said, that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, ”He keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word in the worldly life and Hereafter.” When the deceased is asked in his grave, ‘Who is your Lord? What is your religion?’ He answers, ‘My Lord is Allāh, my religion is Islām and my Prophet is Muḥammad. He was sent with proofs from Allāh so I believed in him.’ The angel replies, ‘You said the truth; upon this you lived and upon this you died and upon this you shall be resurrected.’”

Al-‘Amash narrated from al-Minḥal ibn ‘Amr that Zaḥan narrated from al-Barā’ ibn ‘Āzib (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said (after mentioning how the soul of the believers are taken by angel of death); “The soul of the believer returns into his body (in the grave) then two violent angels are sent to him, so they make him sit down (in his grave) and aggressively ask him, ‘Who is your lord?’ He answers, ‘Allāh.’ They ask him, ‘What is your religion?’ He answers, ‘Islām.’ They ask him, ‘Who is this man who was sent to you?’ He answers, ‘Muḥammad, the Messenger of Allāh.’ They say, ‘How do you know so?’ He answers ‘I read the book of Allāh so I believed in him.’ And this is what is meant with the *ayah*, “*He keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word in the worldly life and Hereafter.*”

This was reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Ḥibbān and the *Musnad* of Imām Aḥmad. Ibn Ḥibbān also reported upon the authority of Abū Hurayrah (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The deceased can hear the steps of people leaving him in his grave; so if he was a believer he will find that the *Ṣalāh* stands next to his head, the *Zakāh* stands on his right side, fasting stands on his left side, and good deeds such as charity, joining kinship, being

kind to others and similar good deeds stand next to his feet. When punishment attempts to reach him from the side of his head, the *Ṣalāh* stops it, so it attempts to reach him from his right side but the *Zakāh* stops it, so it tries from his left side but the fasting stops it. So it tries to reach him from his feet but the good deeds (i.e. charity, joining kinship, and showing kindness to people) stops it. Then he is told to sit down so he sits down while sun is shown to him near sunset time so the angels ask him, 'Tell us the answers to what we will ask you about.' He says, 'What is it that you want to ask? Leave me alone so that I may pray.' They reply 'You will pray but tell us about what we will ask of you.' They ask 'What do you say about the man who was sent to you? And what do you testify to regarding him?' He says, 'Muḥammad.' They say, 'Yes that is him.' He says, 'I testify that he is the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and he was sent with clear proofs from Allāh so we believed in him.' They say to him 'Upon that you lived, and upon that you died and upon that you will be resurrected, with the permission of Allāh.' Then his grave is expanded to the width of seventy arms-lengths and his grave becomes illuminated. Then a door from the doors of the Jannah opens for him and then it is said to him, 'Look at what Allāh has prepared for you in it.' So he looks and becomes happy and delighted. Then Allāh sends his soul into green birds from the birds of Jannah that land on trees of Jannah. Then the body returns to dust and that is the statement of Allāh: "*Allāh keeps the believing ones firm with the firm word in this worldly life and the Hereafter.*"

No Muslim should become tired of hearing about the firm word and its benefits, as every scholar, martyr, ruler, and all Muslims are more in need of understanding this, than their need for air, food and water. And with Allāh lies all success.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Example of Those Who Associate Anything with Allāh

From among these *āyāt* is His statement,

فَاجْتَنِبُوا
الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ﴿٣٠﴾
حُفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ

“So shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech. Turning unto Allāh (only), not ascribing partners unto Him; for whosoever ascribes partners unto Allāh, it is as if he had fallen from the sky and the birds had snatched him or the wind had blown him to a far off place.”³⁹

One should contemplate this example and its similarity to the

³⁹ *al-Hajj* (22): 30-31

condition of those who associate and equate anything or anyone with Allāh. This parable offers two beneficial comparisons; firstly, it may be taken as a complex similitude in which Allāh likens the one who commits *shirk*, to the one who brought upon himself an inescapable disaster. Allāh thus compares this person to one who falls from the sky (while) being snatched at by birds and ending up within their stomachs; or being blown to a far off place by the wind. According to this comparison, the parable is taken as a whole - The second aspect is to take this parable as a divided comparison, where each part is taken and analysed separately. Therefore the highness, honour and endlessness of *īmān* and *Tawḥīd* are likened to the sky to which they ascend and from which they descend. And He likened the one who abandons *īmān* and *Tawḥīd* to a person falling down from sky in respect to severe pain. Birds snatching him and tearing him apart are the devils that Allāh sends to annoy him and disturb him, leading him to doom, as every devil has snatched away a piece of his heart and religion similar to how every bird has a piece of his flesh and limbs. The wind blowing him to a far off place is his desires that he follows, which blow him down and far from the sky.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Polytheists and the Fly

From among these *ayāt* is His statement,

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَأَسْتَمِعُوا لِلَّهِ إِنَّكَ الَّذِينَ
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ
وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ
الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ ﴿٧٢﴾ مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٧٦﴾

“O mankind! A similitude is coined, so pay you heed to it: Verily those on whom you call beside Allāh can never create (even) a fly though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly took something from them, they could not take it back from it. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought! They have not measured Allāh His rightful measure. Verily Allāh is All-

Strong, All-Almighty.⁴⁰

Every slave (of Allāh) ought to take heed of this example and contemplate upon it, for it completely removes all sources of shirk from the heart. This is because the least of which the worshipped can do is to create that which benefits his worshippers and remove harm from them. In contrast, the idols which the idolaters worship cannot create a fly, even if they gathered together to do this task.

If this is the case with creating a fly, then it is obvious that they are unable to do that which is greater - the inability to even restore what a fly may take from them. Thus, it is evident that there is nothing weaker or more worthless than idols, who can neither create a fly nor restore what it takes from them, even though it is the weakest of creatures. So, how does a sound mind allow the worship of idols!? The similitude employed in this *ayah* is amongst the most eloquent Revelations in which Allāh nullified idolatry, condemned idolaters and their reasoning and shows that they are manipulated by the devils like the manner in which a child plays with a ball. For these devils ascribe some attributes of Allāh (such as total power, complete knowledge, answering prayers, aiding those in need and being self-sustained) to images and sculptures that have no control over even the tiniest portion of creation, even if they all gathered together to do so. And the fact that this tiny, weak and helpless fly may take something from them - and they are unable to restore it, even if they all gathered together - is enough of an evidence to negate their claims of Lordship. He thus placed the worshipper (idolater) and the worshipped (idols) at the same level in respect of weakness and helplessness when

⁴⁰ *al-Hajj* (22): 73-74

He said: "*So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought!*"

It was said that the seeker is the worshipper and the sought is the worshipped (idol) to exemplify how a weak thing attaches itself to something weak. It was also said that it is to equate the worshipped idol with the fly in terms of weakness and helplessness and based upon this, the seeker is the worshipped idol and the sought is the fly, i.e. the idolaters seeking the aid of the idol (seeker) to restore what the fly (sought) has taken. It was also said that the seeker is the fly and the sought is the worshipped idol so the fly asks the idol for what it took away. The correct statement is that all these meanings are possible as the words are applicable to the worshipped idol, the worshipper, the seeker and the sought are all weak and helpless - therefore he who worshipped these idols besides Allāh, Most High, has neither given Allāh His rightful measure nor understood Him in the rightful manner nor glorified Him in a manner befitting His Greatness.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Caller and the Called

From among these *āyāt* is His statement,

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ
بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً صُمُّ بِكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“And the example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries (cattle or sheep). (They are) deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.”⁴¹

Wherein Allāh mentions a caller and the called; the former is a person addressing the idol, and the latter is the idol. It was said that the caller of cattle exemplifies the idol worshipper and the one called exemplifies the idol since the condition of the disbeliever when invoking (his idols) is similar to the condition of the one calling to something that cannot hear. This understanding

⁴¹ *al-Baqarah* (2): 171

has been adopted by a group of scholars such as ‘Abdul-Rahmān ibn Zayd. This view has been deemed problematic by the author of *‘al-Kashshaf* and some others who said: the phrase ‘what hears nothing but calls and cries’ negates their view because idols cannot hear a call or a shout. This objection has been replied to with three answers.

The first answer: It is a linguistic application in which “*illa*” (translated as ‘but’) is deemed additional and hence has no meaning. However, this answer is invalid because “*illa*” cannot be used as an addition in language.

The second answer: The form of similitude used in this *ayah* is particular to all types of calling and not related to the characteristics of the called or invoked.

The third answer: The meaning of this similitude is that those who invoke their idols that cannot comprehend their prayers are like a person calling for and shouting at his sheep; he does not benefit with his calling and shouting. Similarly, idolaters who invoke their idols gain nothing out of their invocations and calls but the effort they exerted.

It was also said: ‘The example of disbelievers is like cattle that do not understand what their shepherd shouts except that they only hear his sound, therefore the shepherd is the caller of disbelievers and the cattle are the disbelievers.’

Sibawayh said that the meaning (of this *ayah*) is, ‘O Muḥammad, the example of you and disbelievers is like the caller and the one called.’

Based on this, the meaning is, 'The example of those who disbelieved and the one who calls them, is like the sheep and the one who shouts at them.'

If we consider this similitude as a complex one, then it likens the inability of disbelievers to understand and comprehend, to sheep that do not understand the calls of their shepherd, except for hearing of noise. On the other hand, if we consider the similitude in this *ayah* as a multiple parable, then the *ayah* likens disbelievers to cattle, the voice of the caller to the one calling disbelievers to the right path and guidance and the inability of disbelievers to understand this call for guidance, to the inability of cattle to understand the calls of their shepherd. And Allāh knows best.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Spending For the Sake of Allāh and Planting Grains

From amongst these *ayāt* is His statement,

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ
أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ
لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

“The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allāh is as the likeness of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear (has) a hundred grains. Allāh gives manifold increase to whom He wills. Allāh is All Embracing, All Knowing.”⁴²

Allāh likens spending for His sake, be it for *Jihad* or any other means of goodness, to a person planting grains. Every grain grew seven ears and in every ear there were one hundred grains, and Allāh multiplies the reward depending upon many factors: the

⁴² *al-Baqarab* (2): 261

sincerity, (the level of) *imān* of the spender, the extended benefit resulting from such spending, the amount of money that was spent and spending the money in the right place. This is because the reward varies according to the sincerity and *imān* in the spender's heart and the firmness at the time of spending the money i.e. spending the money with a firm heart, happily and willingly without any attachment to it, so that the hand gives it away unshaken and without hesitation. It also varies depending upon the level of benefit achieved and whether the money is spent appropriately. From this example, we may understand that Allāh has likened spending, to the growth of grains, because the person who spends his lawful wealth for the sake of Allāh is like the one who plants his grain into fertile land.

The harvest depends upon the quality of the grain, the fertility of the land, irrigation, and the removal of harmful plants and pests. When all these acts are performed and no fire has incinerated the grains, the harvest will come in the size of mountains and will be like a grain that has been planted on a hill that is exposed to sun and wind, which provides the best conditions for the growth of plants. Then heavy rain falls down continuously causing the plant to give double the harvest of other plants and even if the rain was little, it will suffice it to grow a little, and its growth will double with more water. The use of heavy and light rain was in similitude of those who spend a little and those who spend a lot and Allāh never overlooks even an atom's worth of good deeds.

Thus, when someone spends for the sake of Allāh and then does something that nullifies his good deeds, he is like a person who has a garden of palms and vines with rivers flowing underneath, with many fruits therein; and he is very old and has feeble

off-spring - then a fiery windstorm strikes it, consuming it all with fire so that upon the day in which deeds are judged and rewards are given, what happened to the owner of the garden will happen to him, though his grief and regret will surpass the suffering of the owner of the garden. This example has been set by Allāh to illustrate the grief and regret that occurs when a blessing that is very beneficial and great is taken away at the time when it is most needed, similar to the man who is old and weak and has feeble off-spring who cannot look after him and are under his care, yet cannot benefit from the grace and blessings he possessed. If this is the case of a person who owns a garden of all kinds of fruit, including the best fruit; palms and vines that suffice him and his off-spring, then all of a sudden his garden is consumed by fire, what sorrow and grief is greater than this!

Ibn ‘Abbās (*radīy>Allāhu ‘anhumā*) said, “This is the example of a person whose last deeds at the end of his life are corrupted.”

Mujāhid said, “This is the example of a person who remains unmindful of obedience to Allāh until his death.”

Al-Sarī said, “This is the example of a show-off whose spending is not for the sake of Allāh; therefore he is prevented from its reward when he is most in need of it.”

Once, ‘Umar ibn al-Khāṭṭab (*radīy>Allāhu ‘anhu*) asked the companions about this *ayah* so they said, “Allāh knows best.” So ‘Umar got upset and said, “Either you say we know or we do not know.” Ibn ‘Abbās (*radīy>Allāhu ‘anhumā*) said, “O chief of the Believers, I may know what it means.” ‘Umar said, “O my nephew, say it and do not keep it to yourself.” Ibn ‘Abbās said, “It is an example of a deed.” ‘Umar asked, “What deed?” Ibn ‘Abbās said, “A rich

man who does good deeds then Allāh sends him the Shayṭān, so he starts to commit wrongdoings until these wrongdoings destroyed all his good deeds.”

Al-Ḥasan said, “This is the example that only few can comprehend, it is the example of an old, weak man with many children who is in need of his garden and by Allāh, all of you are in more need of the (reward of) good deeds after death. So, when his charitable deeds are affected by his showing off or reproaching (the ones receiving his charity), the rewards of his charity are nullified.” Therefore the likeness of this person and the nullification of his good deeds are like a rock upon which lies dust of earth that is struck by a rain storm, leaving it smooth and bare. When one contemplates the results of the acts mentioned in this example, and the depth of the parables, the greatness of the Qur’ān will be realised.

A rock is likened to the heart of a show-off who reproaches or mocks the ones who receive his charity, therefore his heart in terms of *imān*, sincerity and *ihsān* is like a rock - and insincere deeds are likened to the dust of earth upon a rock. Yet, the hard surface of the rock prevents dust from sticking to it, and prevents plants growing from it when there is a rainstorm. This is also the condition of a show off, who is stubborn in the face of Commandments, thus the small amount of dust covering him is removed, revealing a bare rock underneath. This is a good example of the good deeds and spending of a show-off who will not attain their reward on the Day of Judgement, when they are most in need of it. And with Allāh is all success.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Misspending and the Windstorm

From amongst these *ayāt* is His statement,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ
مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾
مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا
صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتْهُ وَمَا
ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَٰكِن أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

“Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allāh at all, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally. The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves and destroys it. And Allāh has not

wronged them, but they wrong themselves.”⁴³

Here, Allāh has set an example of those who spend their wealth in matters displeasing to Allāh. He likened the wealth that they spend to showing off and gaining the praise of people - so they lead them away from the way of Allāh and His Messengers - to seeds that one planted in the hope of achieving benefit, but then a windstorm containing frost strikes the harvest, leaving it withered and destroyed. Scholars offered three meanings of the (Arabic) word “*Sirr*” that has been used in this *ayah* to describe the wind. Some said it is extreme coldness, others such as Ibn ‘Abbās said it is fire.

Al-Anbarī said the reason why fire is described as “*Sirr*” is due to its sound when it burns. Some others said “*Sirr*” is the sound accompanying the windstorm as a result of its extreme power and speed. The three statements are all correct and related because it is extreme cold that burns the harvest, leaving it dry, similar to how fire burns and it also blows with a powerful noise.

The phrase ‘*strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves*’ is to notify us of their wrongdoings for which the windstorm struck their harvest (in the first place). The wrongdoing of the people was the windstorm that destroyed their good deeds and spending.

⁴³ *Āl-‘Imrān* (3): 116-117

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

The Idolater and the Believer

From among these *āyat* is His statement,

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ
شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَكِّسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

“Allāh puts forth an example: a man (slave) belonging to (many) disputing partners and another man (slave) belonging exclusively to one master - are they equal in comparison? All Praise be to Allāh! But most of them do not know.”⁴⁴

Wherein Allāh gives the examples of an idolater and a believer
- The idolater is likened to a slave owned by a group whom he
must serve, yet he is unable to please them all, whereas a believer
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⁴⁴ *al-Zumar* (39): 29

who worships and believes in One God, is likened to a slave owned by one person, and he knows of the means by which he can please him. He knows what his master wants of him and so he is safe from the quarrelling of partners, had he been owned by a group. Therefore, he is focused on serving his master and his master is merciful and compassionate when he deals with him. So, Allāh asks us how these slaves can be equal in any manner. Indeed, when a person is devoted to serving one owner, he will receive much kindness, generosity and aid, compared to the one who is owned by disputing partners. All Praise is due to Allāh alone for most of them fail to comprehend.

Those who Disbelieve and Those who Believe

From amongst these *āyāt* is His statement,

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَمْرَاتَ نُوحٍ وَأَمْرَاتَ لُوطٍ كَأَنَّهِنَّ
عَبْدَانٍ مِّنْ عِبَادٍ فَاصْلَحْنَ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا
مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّٰخِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾
وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَمْرَاتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ
قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَبِخْنِي مِن فِرْعَوْنَ
وَعَمَلِيهِ وَبِخْنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ
عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِنَا
وَصَدَقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا مِن الْقَنِينِ ﴿١٢﴾

“Allāh puts forth an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Nūh and the wife of Lūṭ. They were under

two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so those Prophets did not avail them from Allāh at all, and it was said, 'Enter the Fire with those who enter.' And Allāh puts forth an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me a home near You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.' And (the example of) Mary, the daughter of 'Imrān, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into (her garment) through Our angel, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient."⁴⁵

In these *ayāt*, three examples were mentioned; one example of a disbeliever and two examples of believers. The example of the disbeliever explains how a disbeliever is blamed for his disbelief and enmity to Allāh, His Messenger and His supporters - and that neither his blood-relationship nor any relationship whatsoever he has with believers will benefit him due to his disbelief. Indeed, all connections and relations are nullified on the Day of Judgment, except the relationships established with Allāh alone, through His Messengers. For indeed, if blood-relationships or affinity would benefit anyone who disbelieved, then it would have helped and benefited the wives of (the two Prophets) Nūḥ and Lūṭ - Thus, when their relationship could not avail them from Allāh at all, it was said to them, "*Enter the Fire with those who enter.*" Consequently, this *ayah* stopped those who disobey Allāh from hoping to benefit from their relationship with pious people regardless of how close this relationship was in this life. There is no stronger and closer bond than Prophethood, parenthood and spousal relationships, yet neither could Nūḥ avail his son from Allāh nor could Ibrāhīm

⁴⁵ *al-Tabrīm* (66): 10-12

avail his father from Allāh and nor could Nūḥ and Lūṭ avail their wives from Allāh.

Allāh says,

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٤٦﴾

“Neither your relatives nor your children will benefit you on the Day of Resurrection (against Allah). He will judge between you. And Allah is the All-Seer of what you do.”⁴⁶

and,

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ ﴿١٨٩﴾

“(It will be) the Day when no person shall have power (to do) anything for another, and the Decision, that Day, will be (wholly) with Allah.”⁴⁷

and,

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا

“And fear a Day (of Judgement) when a person shall not avail another...”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *al-Mumtabinah* (60): 3

⁴⁷ *al-Infitār* (82): 19

⁴⁸ *al-Baqarah* (2): 48

and,

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ أَتْفُؤَارِ بَيْتِكُمْ وَأَحْشَوْا يَوْمًا لَا يَنْجِي وَالِدٌ
عَنْ وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَارٍ عَنِ وَالِدِهِ شَيْئًا

“O mankind, fear your Lord and fear a Day when no father will avail his son, nor will a son avail his father at all.”⁴⁹

In these *ayāt*, Allāh clearly nullifies the false hopes of disbelievers who left Allāh and clutched on to others, be it a relative or a companion, hoping that such a relationship will benefit them on the Day of Judgment or provide them with refuge from the punishment of Allāh; or even intercede for them. This false hope is actually the main reason behind the misguidance and idol worshipping of the sons of Adam, which is the form of idolatry that Allāh does not forgive. He revealed His Books to nullify it and sent Messengers to show enmity towards the idolaters and to fight them.

As for the two examples of believers; one of them is the example of the wife of Fir'awn (Pharaoh), wherein Allāh established that the relations of a believer with a disbeliever in this life does not harm him so long he disavows himself from the disbelief and sins of the disbeliever - this is because the sins of a disobedient people never harm obedient ones in the Hereafter, and when he is harmed due to it in this worldly life, it is only because the punishment imposed upon the people of Earth is general when they disobey Allāh. The wife of Fir'awn was not harmed despite her

⁴⁹ *Luqman* (31): 33

relationship with him though he was the worst of disbelievers. And the wives of Nūḥ and Lūṭ did not benefit from their spousal relationship though they were married to Messengers of Allāh.

The second example is that of Maryam who had no believing or disbelieving husband. And from these examples we have three kinds of women; a disbelieving woman who has a spousal relationship with believing man, a believing woman who has a spousal relationship with a disbelieving man, and a believing woman who has no spousal relationship at all. The first kind does not benefit from her spousal relationship, the second kind is not harmed due to her spousal relationship and the third kind is not harmed as a result of her not having any spousal relationship at all.

These examples contain marvellous secrets that match the context of the *Surah*, for they were revealed addressing the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) and warning them from cooperating with each other against him. For if they did not obey Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ) and seek the reward of the Hereafter, then (they need to know) their marriage to the Prophet (ﷺ) would not bring them any benefit, just like the wives of Nūḥ and Lūṭ did not benefit from their marriages to them. This is why in this *Surah*, the example was limited to spousal relationships without mentioning the blood-relations.

Yahya ibn Sallām said: Allāh mentioned the first example warning ‘Ā’ishah and Ḥafsah, then He mentioned the second example encouraging them to hold fast to the obedience (of Allāh and His Messenger). The example of Maryam was to show that though she was the noble, chosen and pure woman, she was exposed to false accusations from enemies of Allāh (the Jews) towards herself and her son (Jesus) and attributing to them what Allāh de-

clared them innocent from, yet all these accusations did not defame them in the sight of Allāh. Thus, when a pious man does good deeds, all the false accusations of sinners and disbelievers against him are harmless. (In) this example was a solace for 'Ā'ishah, the mother of believers, as this *Surah* was revealed after the incident of *al-'Ifk*. (The great lie that was attributed to her, which Allāh freed her from.)

The examples in these *ayāt* addressing the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) contain warnings, admonitions, encouragement (to do good deeds) and consolation (for those who have been hurt by the words of others). Nonetheless, the secrets of Revelation are more supreme and honourable than all that we have mentioned, particularly the examples that only those with a sound intellect can comprehend.

May the peace and blessings be upon Muḥammad
and his Family and his Companions.

APPENDIX ONE

The Parable of the Hypocrites

Imām ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
may Allāh have mercy upon him.

APPENDIX ONE*

The Parable of the Hypocrites
Ibn al-Qayyim on *al-Baqarah* (2): 17-20

Allāh, Exalted is He, says in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* concerning the hypocrites:

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ
 ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ صُمُّ
 بِكُمْ عُمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ
 ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبَعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ
 حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ
 أَبْصَارَهُمْ ۗ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشْرَافِيهِ إِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا
 وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيُّ كُلِّ
 شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

17. Their likeness is that of one who kindled a fire, and

*Taken from 'Characteristic of the Hypocrites', Published by Dār as-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK.

then when it had lit up all around them, Allāh removed their light and left them in darknesses, unable to see.

18. Deaf, dumb and blind, they will not return.
19. Or that of a storm-cloud in the sky, full of darkness, thunder and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, fearful of death. Allāh encompasses the disbelievers.
20. The lightning all but snatches away their sight. Whenever they have light, they walk therein but whenever darkness covers them, they halt. If Allāh wished, He could take away their hearing and their sight; for Allāh has power over all things.

Allāh, Glorious is He, has propounded a parable for His enemies, the hypocrites, with a people who ignited a fire in order to acquire light and benefit - for they were a people on a journey who had lost their way. When this fire had alighted and lit up their surroundings, they were able to see the right path, they were able to see what would benefit them and what would harm them; but then, suddenly, the light was extinguished and they were left in darkness: all three routes to guidance were barred them. *'Deaf, dumb and blind,'* guidance comes to a servant from three doors: what he hears with his ears; what he sees with his eyes; and what he understands with his heart; these people's hearts are unable to comprehend, they cannot see, and neither can they hear.¹ It is

¹ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār as-Sa'ādah* [1/245-256] said, 'Allāh, Glorious is He, has described the denizens of the Fire as being people of ignorance, and He informed us that the routes to knowledge have been barred to them. He said, "They will say, 'If only we had listened and used our intellect, we not have been denizens of the Blaze.'" [al-Mulk (67): 10-11] Hearing and intellect are the foundations of knowledge and by them does one acquire it, "We have created many of the jinn and

also said that because they gained no benefit from their ears, sight, and hearts; they were as good as those who had no faculty of hearing, seeing, and comprehension; and hence were described as such. Both these opinions are of the same meaning and go hand-in-hand. 'They will not return,' in the light they had seen the path of guidance, but when the light left them, they did not return to that guidance.

Allāh, Glorious and Exalted is He said, 'Allāh removed their light,' placing the particle 'ba' before the word 'light,'² and there is a notable reason for this. That is that this usage serves to show that Allāh has removed from them His special closeness that is reserved for the believers only. Therefore, after His removing their light, He neither stays 'close' to them or 'with' them. They have no place in His sayings,

لَا تَحْزَنُوا إِنَّا اللَّهُ مَعَنَا

Do not be despondent, Allāh is with us.

[at-Tawbah (9): 40]

=

men for Hell. They have hearts they do not understand with. They have ears they do not bear with. They have eyes they do not see with. Such people are like cattle, rather they are even further astray! They are the unaware." [al-A'rāf (7): 179] Here, He informs us that they have not acquired knowledge from any of its three doors: intellect, hearing, and seeing... "Deaf - dumb - blind. They do no use their intellect." [al-Baqarab (2): 171] Allāh, Exalted is He says, "Have they not travelled about the earth and do they not have hearts to understand with or ears to hear with? It is not their eyes which are blind but the hearts in their breasts which are blind." [al-Hajj (22): 46], "We gave them hearing, sight, and hearts. But their hearing, sight, and hearts were of no use to them at all when they renounced Allāh's signs and what they mocked at engulfed them." [al-Ahqāf (46): 26]

² Saying, 'bi nūrihim,' as opposed to 'nūrahum.'

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾

He said, 'Never! My Lord is with me and He will guide me.'

[*ash-Shu'arā'* (26): 62]

Ponder carefully His saying, '*then when it had lit up all around them,*' how this light is clearly shown to be distinct and separate from them, for had it been a light that was intrinsic to them, it would not have left them. Therefore it was a light that surrounded them but did not enter them, it was something fleeting whereas the darkness was something permanent and intrinsic to them. Hence the light returned to its source and the darkness remained in its source, all of this was done as a proof from Allāh and for an all-encompassing wisdom that none but those endowed with understanding can see.

Ponder carefully His saying, '*Allāh removed their light,*' how He did not say, 'Allāh removed their fire,' such that the wording would conform to that found at the beginning of this verse. Why is this? Fire has both the property to give light and the property to burn, so its property of light was removed leaving only the property to burn and harm.³

³ Ibn al-Qayyim explains this further in his *Wābil as-Sayyib*, 'Such is the state of the hypocrites. The light of their faith has been removed by hypocrisy, leaving to smoulder in their hearts the heat of disbelief, doubts, and questionable practices. And as heat and flames singe their hearts in this world, so, too, on the Day of Judgment will God place them in a *'kindled Fire that reaches up to the hearts.'* Such is the similitude of one who no longer goes through this world by the light of faith, who abandons it and removes himself from it after it had lit his way.

Ponder carefully His saying 'their light' how He did not say 'their glow (*ḍaw'*),' despite the fact that He said, 'then when it had lit up all around them,' employing the words *ḍaw'*. The word *ḍaw'* refers, essentially, to that light which is extraneous to basic light. So if Allāh had said that He had taken away their *ḍaw'* it would have suggested that only the extraneous light had been taken away and not the basic light. Now because light, *nūr*, is the basis upon which *ḍaw'* is built, to say that the *nūr* has been taken away automatically presupposes that the *ḍaw'* has also been taken away. This then stresses the fact that they are people of darkness and have no light in any of its forms: the Book which Allāh has called light; the Messenger (ﷺ) which Allāh has called light; His religion which Allāh has called light; His guidance which Allāh has called light; one of His Names is 'the Light'; and the prayer which is light. Allāh's taking away their light means that He took all this away from them.

Ponder carefully how this parable completely corresponds to the previously given parable,

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ
بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَاحَتِ يَمَانُهُمْ وَكَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

Those are the people who have sold guidance for misguidance. Their trade has brought them no profit and they are not guided.

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 16]

how they acquired this misguidance at the expense of guidance,

giving it away happily;⁴ and here how they happily acquired darkness - misguidance - at the expense of light - guidance. Hence they have sold light and guidance and bought darkness and misguidance... what a wretched transaction!

Ponder carefully how Allāh says, '*Allāh removed their light,*' but says, '*and left them in darknesses,*' mentioning light in the singular and darkness in the plural. The truth is one, and that is Allāh's Straight Path: the only path that leads to Him: worshipping Allāh Alone in accordance to what has been legislated upon the tongue of His Messenger (ﷺ); not with one's own desires and innovations. However the ways of falsehood are many and this is why Allāh mentions the truth in its singular form but falsehood in its plural,

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَآءُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ
النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ

Allāh is the protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darknesses into the light. But the disbelievers have false gods as protectors, they take them from the light into the darknesses...

[*al-Baqarab (2): 257*]

⁴ A person enters a transaction of his own free will and is free to buy, or not buy, the commodity. The fact that these people, without coercion, bought misguidance shows that they were happy with it. This is why the author makes a point of mentioning the fact that they happily bought it. Allāh knows best.

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ
فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

This is My Path and it is straight, so follow it. Do not follow other ways or you will become cut off from His Way. That is what He instructs you to do so that hopefully you will have taqwā.

[*al-An'ām* (6): 153]

This does not contradict His saying,

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ
السَّلَامِ

By it, Allāh guides those who follow what pleases Him to the ways of Peace.

[*al-Mā'idah* (5): 16]

for this verse makes reference to the ways and routes that can be taken to please Him, all of which are contained within His one path, the Straight Path. It is authentically reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) drew a straight line on the ground and said, 'This is the path of Allāh,' then he drew lines to the left and right of this line and said, 'These are the other paths, at the head of every path is a devil calling to it,' then he recited the verse,

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ
فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

This is My Path and it is straight, so follow it. Do not follow other ways or you will become cut off from His Way. That is what He instructs you to do so that hopefully you will have taqwā.

[*al-An'ām* (6): 153]⁵

It is also said in explanation to this first parable that it is a similitude for what the hypocrites kindle of the fire of trial and tribulation that they seek to covertly spread amongst the Muslims, as such it would be in the same vein as His saying,

كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ

Each time they kindle the fire of war, Allāh extinguishes it.

[*al-Mā'idah* (5): 64]

So, '*Allāh removed their light*' would have the same meaning as, '*Allāh extinguishes it*'; the foiling of their efforts and the falsification of their claims would have the same meaning as leaving them in darkness and confusion: deaf, dumb, and blind.

It is problematic that this latter explanation be the correct exegesis to this verse, even though it, in and of itself is true. The context does not lend itself to this explanation. The one who kindles the fire of war does not have light that surrounds him, and the one who kindles the fire of war has no light that could be taken from him. The fact that they have been left in darkness, unable to see, means that they moved from a state in which they could see knowledge and guidance to a state of doubt and disbelief, not that they kindled the fire of war.

⁵ Aḥmad on the authority of ibn Mas'ūd.

Al-Ḥasan said, 'It refers to the hypocrite: he saw, then became blind; he knew, then rejected.' This is why He says, '*they will not return,*' i.e. they will not return to the light that they left. Allāh says with regards the disbelievers,

صُمُّكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

Deaf - dumb - blind. They do not use their intellect.

[*al-Baqarab* (2): 171]

and thereby negated comprehension from them as they are not people of faith and insight, not having entered Islām. But with regards the hypocrites, He negated the fact that they would return because they had believed, then disbelieved, and would not return to faith.

Then after propounding this parable of fire, Allāh propounds another parable for the hypocrites, this time of water. *Sayyib* mentioned in the verse refers to driving rain which pours down from the sky. Here the guidance with which He guided His servants has been likened to water because guidance gives life to the hearts as water gives life to the earth. The portion that the hypocrite gets from this guidance is the same as one who is caught in this storm-cloud but gets nothing from it save darkness, thunder, and lightning; having no notion of its many benefits such as life for the earth - its animals and vegetation - springs forth after rain. The darkness, thunder, and lightning in a storm-cloud are not matters that are desired in and of themselves, rather they are matters that lead to the accomplishment of what is desired from this cloud. The ignoramus suffices with merely seeing the outward effects of this cloud: the darkness, the thunder, the lightning, the cold, and the fact that he is prevented from travelling; but has no inkling of

the huge benefit that comes as a result of this rain. This is true of every short-sighted, dull witted person; his perception does not go deeper than seeing the outward form of things and he does not what is behind them. This is the state of the majority of creation except for a few amongst them. When the short-sighted sees the hardship and toil that is to be found in Jihād, when he sees the fact that he could be wounded, censured by certain people, and excite the enmity of others; he does not go forth for Jihād. He is unable to probe deeper and realise the great benefits, the praiseworthy goals, and great rewards it contains. When one of them desires to perform the pilgrimage and sees the hardships entailed in the journey, the leaving of the comfort of his home and town, and the difficulties to be faced, he cannot see beyond this to what lies at the end of this journey and as such falters and does not undertake it.

This is the state of those who lack spiritual insight and are weak of faith: those who see the threats, promises, commands, and prohibitions that are to be found in the Qur’ān as ordinances that are too heavy for their egos which desire only to follow their lusts. These ordinances wean the soul of its base qualities. Weaning is truly difficult for the child; and all men are children with respect to their intellects with the exception of those who have weaned and regulated them, and as such have comprehended the truth by way of knowledge and action. It is such people who are able to see what is behind this storm-cloud; what is behind the darkness, thunder, and lightning; it is such people who realise that this storm-cloud is the source of life for existence.

Az-Zamakhsharī said, ‘The religion of Islām has been likened to the cloud, because hearts are given life by it as the earth is by

water; disbelief has been likened to darkness; threat and promise has been likened to thunder and lightning; and trials and tribulations that terrify the disbelievers have been likened to thunderclaps. The meaning of '*or that of a storm-cloud*' is 'or that of people caught in a storm-cloud.'

Both these parables contain great points of wisdom:

[i] The one who is seeking light is seeking light from something else, not from himself; when that light goes, he remains in that original darkness. This is the state of the hypocrite; he affirms belief on his tongue but does not believe or have love in his heart; as such what light he acquires as a result of this is borrowed.

[ii] Fire requires fuel to keep it alight. This fuel is comparable to food that is required to sustain animal life. Likewise the light of faith requires fuel so as to maintain it: beneficial knowledge and righteous action. If this fuel is taken away, it dies out.

[iii] Darkness is of two types: a perpetual darkness which is not preceded by light and a temporal darkness which is preceded by light. It is the latter of these two which is most severe upon the one who faces it. The darkness of the disbelievers is of the first type for they have never seen the light, the darkness of the hypocrites is of the second type for they saw the light and then were plunged in darkness.

[iv] This parable points to their state in the Hereafter for there they will be given a superficial light just as their light in this world was superficial. Then, at the time when they need light most, it will suddenly die: they will halt on the Bridge and be unable to

cross it for only those with firm light may do so. That light is only made firm with beneficial knowledge and righteous actions. Therefore their parable which describes their state in this life corresponds to their state in the Hereafter: when light is apportioned to the people before the Bridge, the light of the believers will remain and the light of the hypocrites will die. When this is understood one understands why Allāh said, '*Allāh removed their light,*' employing the 'bā' and did not say '*adh-habaAllāhu Nūrahum.*'

For further detail one can read the ḥadīth recorded by Muslim on the authority of Jābir bin 'Abdullāh (*raḍīyAllāhu 'anhumā*). He was asked about the crossing of the Bridge to which he replied, "We would come on the Day of Judgement on a hill standing above the people. Then the people will be summoned along with the idols that they used to worship, one after another. Then our Lord, Blessed and Exalted, would come to us and say, 'Who are you waiting for?' They would say, 'We are waiting for our Lord.' He would say, 'I am your Lord.' They say, 'We are not sure until we look upon You.' He would then manifest Himself and laugh, and would leave with them following. Every person among them, the believer and hypocrite, would be given light. On the Bridge spanning Hell there would be hooks and spikes which would take whoever Allāh willed. Then the light of the hypocrites would die out and the believers would secure salvation. The first group saved would consist of seventy thousand people whose faces would be like the moon and they will not be judged. The next group would have faces like the stars of the sky, and so on. The intercession would commence till the point that there would come out of Hellfire the one who said, 'None has the right to be worshipped save Allāh,' and there was only in his heart a barley grain's worth

of faith. They would be brought to the courtyard of Paradise and the inhabitants of Paradise would sprinkle water over them...,” to the end of the ḥadīth.

Ponder carefully his saying, ‘...and would leave with them following. Every person among them, the believer and hypocrite, would be given light...,’ and ponder carefully His saying, ‘*Allāh removed their light and left them in darknesses, unable to see,*’ and ponder their state when their light is extinguished and they are left in the pitch of darkness whereas the believers proceed on, following their Lord. Ponder his (ﷺ) saying in the ḥadīth concerning the intercession, ‘Every nation will follow the god that they used to worship,’ the polytheist will follow his god and the person of *Tawḥīd* will follow Allāh. Ponder His saying,

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

The Day the shin will be uncovered and they are summoned to prostrate but they will not be able to.

[*al-Qalam* (68): 42]

He (ﷺ) mentioned this verse in the ḥadīth of intercession on this occasion talked about in the previous ḥadīth and in the ḥadīth he said, ‘...so He will uncover His shin,’ and thereby made clear that it was His shin that was being talked about in the verse. Ponder all of this and you will come to understand a secret from the secrets of *Tawḥīd*, understanding of the Qur’ān, and how Allāh deals with the people of *Tawḥīd* as compared to the people of *shirk*.

[v] The first parable deals with them acquiring darkness which

is a similitude for misguidance and confusion, the opposite of which is guidance. The second parable deals with their acquiring fear, the opposite of which is safety and security. The hypocrites are not guided and neither are they safe,

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ
وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

Those who believe and do not mix their faith with any wrongdoing, they are the ones who are safe; it is they who are guided.

[*al-An'ām* (6): 82]

Ibn 'Abbās and other exegetes said, 'The similitude of these people's hypocrisy is that of a person who kindled a fire in a dark night on a terrifying occasion. He warms himself up, sees what is around him, and is saved from what he feared; then while in that state, the fire is suddenly extinguished and he remains once again in that darkness in a state of fear and utter confusion. The hypocrites, by their outwardly testifying to faith, have secured their wealth and children, they marry the believers, they inherit from them, and they acquire a portion of the war booty. This is their light, but when they die, they return once again to darkness and fear.'

Mujāhid said, 'The fire alighting for them means their going towards the Muslims and guidance. Their light being taken away means their going towards the polytheists and misguidance.'

The acquiring of light and its removal has been explained variously to take place in this life, or the life of the grave, or in the Hereafter. The correct position is that it occurs in all three stages

of life, for they are recompensed for their state in this world in all three stages with,

جَزَاءً وَفَاءً ﴿٧٦﴾

...a fitting recompense.

[*an-Naba'* (78): 26]

وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿٦١﴾

Your Lord does not wrong His slaves.

[*Fuṣṣilat* (41): 46]

In the resurrection a person shall reap what he sowed in this world and that is why it is called the Day of Recompense,

وَمَن كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

Those who are blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter and even further off the Path.

[*al-Isrā'* (17): 72]

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى

Allāh augments those who are guided by giving them greater guidance.

[*Maryam* (19): 76]⁶

To return to the discussion at hand...Allāh, the Blessed and Exalted, has propounded two parables, one for fire and one for wa-

⁶ At this point the author, may Allāh have mercy upon, digresses to a lengthy discussion concerning this issue. Since it is unrelated to the explanation of the parable at hand, the translator has opted to omit it.

ter, in *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, *Sūrah al-Ra'd*, and *Sūrah al-Nūr*. This is because life comes about through water and light; the believer has a living and illuminated heart, and the hypocrite has a dead and dark heart. Allāh, Exalted is He says,

أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي
النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلْمَةِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا

Is someone who was dead and whom We brought to life, supplying him with light by which to walk among people, the same as someone who is in utter darkness, unable to emerge from it?

[*al-An'ām* (6): 122]

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ ﴿١٩﴾ وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ
﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَا الظِّلُّ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ ﴿٢١﴾ وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾

The blind and the seeing are not the same, nor are darkness and light, nor are cool shade and fierce heat. The living and dead are not the same, Allāh makes anyone He wills to hear but you cannot make those in the grave to hear.

[*Fāṭir* (35): 19-22]

Therefore He considered those who follow His guidance, and illuminate themselves with His light to be alive, taking refuge under a shade that saves them from the heat of doubts, misguidance, innovation, and *shirk*. And He considered one who does not do

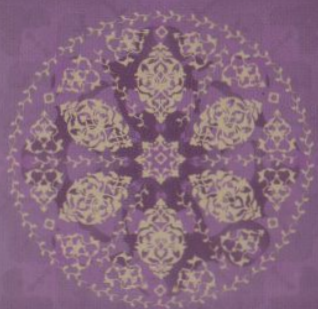
so to be blind and dead, submerged in the heat of disbelief, *shirk* and misguidance, engulfed in layer after layer of darkness.

Allāh knows best.⁷

⁷ Ibn Qayyim, *Ijtimā' al-Juyūsh al-Islāmiyyah* [pp. 63-72, 79-87]; *Tafsīr al-Qayyim* [pp.114-126]. The author also has an explanation to both these parables in his *al-Ambāl fī-l Qur'ān* and *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib*.

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