



the

DUNYA

AND ITS REALITY

الدنيا و حقيقتها لابن القيم

BY IBN AL QAYYIM

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

Consonants

ء	'	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	'	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels

Short	اَ	a	اِ	i	اُ	u
Long	آ	ā	يَ	ī	وُ	ū
Diphthongs	أَيَ	ay	أَوْ	aw		

Glyphs

ﷺ *Sallallāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* (May Allāh’s praise & salutations be upon him)

ﷺ *‘Alayhis-salām* (Peace be upon him)

ﷻ *‘Aza wa jal* (Mighty and Majestic)

ﷺ *Radiyahallāhu ‘anhu* (May Allāh be pleased with him)

ﷺ *Radiyahallāhu ‘anhum* (May Allāh be pleased with them)

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TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praise belongs to Allah, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, and the Supreme. I ask Allah, the Exalted, to elevate the rank of our Prophet Muhammad, the final messenger sent as a mercy for the creation.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ
الْعُرُوزُ ﴿٥﴾

O mankind, verily, the promise of Allah is true. So do not let this worldly life deceive you, and let not the chief deceiver (Satan) deceive you about Allah.

[Sūrah Fāṭir 35:5]

“*The Dunya and Its Reality*” by ibn al-Qayyim is taken from his larger work titled “*Uddat as-Sabirin wa Dhakhirat ash-Shakirin*.” In this book Ibn al-Qayyim expounds upon parables extracted from the Qur’ān, Sunnah, and statements of the Salaf to shed light on the reality of the Dunya.

Rasheed ibn Estes Barbee

Muḥarram 1440/September 2018

THE FIRST SIMILITUDE

Man in This World



The slave has three states. The first state is his condition where he is nothing, and this is before he exists. The last state is from the time of his death until the state that has no end, the eternal life. After the soul exits the body it will have its presence either in Paradise or the Hellfire; then it will be returned to its body for recompense according to its actions. It will then reside in one of these two abodes—Paradise or the Hellfire—for eternity. The second state is between these two, which is from the time he exists until he dies. This is the state that lies in the middle and consists of the days of his life. Therefore, look at the time man spends in this middle state compared to the first and last states, and you will notice man's years in this world are less than the blink of an eye. Those who are able to view the world like this will not cling to it; and they will not care how their days pass by, whether they have difficulty and restricted means or ease and luxury. For this reason, the Prophet ﷺ did not put brick on brick or reed on reed (meaning he did not construct a building), and he ﷺ said:

مَالِي وَلِلدُّنْيَا، إِنَّمَا مَثَلِي وَمَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رَاكِبٍ قَالَ فِي ظِلِّ شَجَرَةٍ فِي
يَوْمٍ صَائِفٍ، ثُمَّ رَاحَ وَتَرَكَهَ

I have no need of worldly comfort. My example in this world is like a rider who took a nap in the shade beneath a tree on a scorching hot day, he rested and then left it.¹

And he ﷺ said:

مَا مَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَثَلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِصْبَعَهُ فِي النَّيْمِ
فَلْيَنْظُرْ بِمِ يَرْجِعُ

The likeness of this world in comparison to the Hereafter is that of one of you dipping his finger into the sea. So let him look to see what he brings forth.²

This alludes to the statement of the Messiah Jesus ﷺ:

الدُّنْيَا قَنْطَرَةٌ، فَاعْبُرُوهَا وَلَا تَعْمَرُوهَا

This world is a bridge; therefore, cross it and do not reside on it.³

¹ al-Bukhārī 3098

² Ṣāḥiḥ Muslim 2858

³ Kitāb Dham ad-Dunya 3/215

This example is correct. This life is a bridge to the Afterlife. The cradle is the first nook at the beginning of the bridge, while the niche in the grave is the last nook at the end of the bridge. Some people cross half of the bridge, while others cross two thirds of the bridge. Some people only have one step left on the bridge, but they are unaware of this. Regardless of how much is left, everyone must cross it. Thus, whoever stops on the bridge and begins to decorate it with various adornments, while being incited to cross it, then he is extremely ignorant and foolish.



THE SECOND SIMILITUDE

The Desires of the Worldly life



Worldly desires in the heart are like food cravings in the stomach. At the time of death, the person will find disdain for the worldly desires within his heart, and its stench and grossness; just as he finds it from delicious food after it has been digested from his bowels. The more delicious the food is, the greasier the food is, the sweeter it is, the filthier its excrement will be. Every desire in the soul is similar to this. The stronger and more desirous it is, then its harm will be more severe at the time of death. Just as the person who is agonized by what he loves, if he loses that thing his agony will increase according to his love for it.

The Prophet ﷺ said to Dahhak ibn Sufyān:

أليس تُؤْتَى بطعامك وقد مُلِحَ وفُزِحَ ثمَّ تشربُ عليه اللبنُ والماءُ قال
 بلى، قال: فالإمامُ يصيرُ؟ قال: إلى ما قد علمتَ يا رسولَ الله قال:
 فإنَّ الله عزَّ وجلَّ ضربَ مثلَ الدُّنيا بما يصيرُ إليه طعامُ ابنِ آدمَ

Don't you receive your food while it has been salted, and seasoned, and then you drink milk and water? He said: "Certainly O Messenger of Allāh." The Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him, said: "What becomes of it?" He said: "It becomes as you are aware of O Messenger of Allāh." He said: "For surely Allāh, the Exalted, has made an example for this worldly life in what becomes of the food of the son of man."¹

Some of the Salaf would say to their companions, "Let's go so I may show you the worldly life." So, he would take them to a garbage dump and say, "Look at its fruits, chickens, honey, and fats."



THE THIRD SIMILITUDE

The Pleasures of the World Distract Its Inhabitants from the Hereafter



The world has pleasures and delights which distract its inhabitants from the Afterlife, and they are followed by regret according to

¹ Collected by Aḥmad

their heedlessness. This is similar to a people who boarded a ship that carried them to an island. The navigator of the ship told them to dismount the ship to take care of their needs, while warning them to not linger; and he cautioned them that the ship would move on. Thus, they all went to various parts of the island.

Some of them took care of their needs and hurried back to the ship, where they found empty space. Therefore, they took the most spacious, comfortable areas they desired.

Some of them remained on the island looking at its flowers and amazing lights; and listening to the chirping of its birds, while being impressed by its rocks and stones. Then their soul reminded them that the ship was leaving quickly. They rushed back to the ship, but only found a tight place to sit, so they sat therein.

Some of them remained, enjoying those beautiful rocks and amazing flowers; then they took some things from the island back with them. But when they reached the ship they only found a small tight space. The items they took back with them made it even tighter. Thus, these belongings became heavy and troublesome upon them, but they were not able to discard them. They did not find anyone to take them for them, nor any place on the ship to put them. They put them on their necks and regretted taking them back to the ship, but their regret did not benefit them at all. Then the flowers they took on the ship withered and shriveled; their fragrance changed, and the odor harmed them.

Some of them entered the forest and forgot about the ship. They went far off on their excursion, such that when the captain of the ship called out that the ship was departing, his voice did not reach them due to them being preoccupied with its amusement. They spent some time picking fruits, some time smelling the flowers, and some time enjoying the beautiful trees. In the midst of this, they are fearful a beast of prey will attack them. They are not safe from thorns pricking their clothes and feet. They are not safe from branches poking them in the stomach or box-thorns ripping their clothes or uncovering their private area. They are not safe from frightening sounds terrifying them.

Some of them reached the ship but did not find anywhere to sit, thus they died on the shore. Some of them were distracted with their desires until a wild beast slaughtered them or a viper bit them. Some of them got lost and wandered about until they died.

These are examples of the people and their distraction, their fleeting portion of the worldly life and their forgetting the return and end result of their affair. How evil is the intellect that is distracted by material items which will wither away! So, this has distracted his mind and disabled him from obtaining safety.



THE FOURTH SIMILITUDE

Their Deception of the Worldly Life



The people are deceived by the worldly life, while their belief in the Afterlife weakens. Ibn Abi Dunya collected a narration¹ that Ḥassan said that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said to his Companions:

إِنَّمَا مَتْلِي وَمَتَلِكُمْ وَمَتَلُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَتَلِ قَوْمٍ سَلَكَوا مَفَاژَةَ غَبْرَاءَ، حَتَّى إِذَا لَمْ يَنْدُرُوا مَا سَلَكَوا مِنْهَا أَكْثَرَ أَوْ مَا بَقِيَ، أَنْفَعُوا الرِّادَ، وَحَسَرُوا الطَّهْرَ، وَبَقُوا بَيْنَ ظَهْرَانِي الْمَفَاژَةِ، لَا زَادَ، وَلَا حَمُولَةَ، فَأَيَقِنُوا بِالْهَلَكَةِ، فَبَيْنَا هُمْ كَذَلِكَ إِذْ حَرَجَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَجُلٌ فِي خَلَّةٍ يَقْطُرُ رَأْسُهُ، فَقَالُوا: إِنَّ هَذَا قَرِيبٌ عَهْدٍ بِرَيْفٍ، وَمَا جَاءَ هُمْ هَذَا إِلَّا مِنْ قَرِيبٍ. قَالَ: فَلَمَّا انْتَهَى إِلَيْهِمْ قَالَ: يَا هَؤُلَاءِ، قَالُوا: يَا هَذَا، قَالَ: عَلَامَ أَنْتُمْ؟ قَالُوا: عَلَى مَا تَرَى. قَالَ: أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ هَدَيْتُكُمْ إِلَى مَاءٍ رِوَاءِ وَرِيَاضِ خُضْرٍ، مَا تَعْمَلُونَ؟ قَالُوا: لَا نَعْصِيكَ شَيْئًا. قَالَ: غُهِدْكُمْ وَمَوَائِقَكُمْ بِاللَّهِ، قَالَ: فَأَعْطُوهُ غُهِدَهُمْ وَمَوَائِقَهُمْ بِاللَّهِ لَا يَعْصُونَهِ شَيْئًا. قَالَ: فَأُورِدْهُمْ مَاءَ رِوَاءِ وَرِيَاضًا خُضْرًا " قَالَ: فَمَكَتْ فِيهِمْ مَا سَاءَ اللَّهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا هَؤُلَاءِ، قَالُوا: يَا هَذَا، قَالَ: الرَّحِيلُ. قَالُوا إِلَى أَيْنَ؟ قَالَ: إِلَى مَاءٍ لَيْسَ كَمَايِكُمْ، وَإِلَى رِيَاضٍ لَيْسَتْ كَرِيَاضِكُمْ. قَالَ: فَقَالَ جُلُّ الْقَوْمِ، وَهُمْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ: وَاللَّهِ مَا وَجَدْنَا هَذَا حَتَّى ظَنَنَّا أَنَّا لَنْ نَجِدَهُ، وَمَا نَصْنَعُ بِعَيْشِ

¹ Narrated from Ishāq ibn 'Ismā'īl from Rūḥ ibn 'Ubādah from Hishām ibn Hussein

خَيْرٍ مِنْ هَذَا؟ قَالَ: وَقَالَتْ طَائِفَةٌ وَهُمْ أَقْلُهُمْ: أَلَمْ نَعْطُوا هَذَا الرَّجُلَ
 عُهُودَكُمْ وَمَوَاطِئَكُمْ بِاللَّهِ أَلَا تَعْصُوهُ شَيْئًا، وَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمْ فِي أَوَّلِ حَدِيثِهِ،
 فَوَاللَّهِ لَيَصُدُّكُمْ فِي آخِرِهِ؟ قَالَ: فَرَاخَ فِيمَنْ اتَّبَعَهُ، وَتَخَلَّفَ بَقِيَّتُهُمْ، فَندَرَ
 بِهِمْ عَدُوًّا، فَأَصْبَحُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَسِيرٍ وَقَتِيلٍ

Indeed, my example, your example and the example of the world is like a people who are going through a dust-covered desert with no water, such that they don't know if the road they have traveled is more or if what is left to travel is more. They ran out of supplies and fatigue has set in. They are still in the middle of the desert with no supplies and no transport. Thus, they are sure they will die. While they were in this condition, suddenly there was a man walking toward them dressed in a garment and his hair was wet. They said, "This person is from the countryside and he could have only come from a nearby place. When he reached them he said, "O people, how are you doing? They responded, "As you see." The man said, "What do you think if I guide you to fresh water and a green garden, what will you do?" They said, "We will not disobey you at all!" The man said, "Make a covenant and promise, witnessed by Allāh." They gave him their covenant and promise in the Name of Allāh ﷻ that they would not disobey him. He took them to the fresh water and green garden.

The man remained with them as long as Allāh ﷻ willed and then he said to them, “O people, let’s move out.” They responded, “Where are we going?” He said, “We are going to water which is not like your water, and to a garden which is not like your garden.” The majority of the people said, “By Allāh, we did not find this until after we thought we would never find it; then shall we find a life better than this?!” The minority of the people said, “Didn’t we give this man a promise by Allāh, that we would not disobey him? He was true with his initial promise, so by Allāh he will be truthful in his other promise.” The man left with those who followed him while the rest of them remained behind. So the enemy rushed those who remained behind. Some of them were killed while the others became prisoners¹.



THE FIFTH SIMILITUDE

The Shade of a Tree



The similitude of this world and its inhabitants is like the example given by the Prophet ﷺ of the shade of a tree and a person traveling in it toward Allāh ﷻ.

¹ Collected in *Az Zuhub* by ibn Abi Dunya, Ḥadīth 177

مَالِي وَلِلدُّنْيَا، إِنَّمَا مَثَلِي وَمَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رَاكِبٍ قَالٍ فِي ظِلِّ شَجَرَةٍ فِي
يَوْمٍ صَائِفٍ، ثُمَّ رَاحَ وَتَرَكَهَا

I have no need of worldly comfort. My example in this world is like a rider who took a nap in the shade beneath a tree on a scorching hot day; he rested and then left it.¹

Thus, he takes shelter in the shade of the tree during a scorching hot day, then he moves on and leaves the shade behind. Ponder this similitude well and look at how it coincides with the reality of this world. The greenery and verdure of this world is like a tree. The rapid manner in which this world vanishes away bit by bit is like the shade. And the slave is a traveler heading toward the meeting with his Lord ﷻ. When the traveler sees a tree on a hot day, he does not deem it appropriate to build a home under the tree or take it as a permanent residence; rather he shades himself according to his need. If he exceeds this, he is cut off from his companions.



¹ al-Bukhārī 3098

THE SIXTH SIMILITUDE

This World is Detached and Vanishing



The Prophet ﷺ gave the similitude of this world as being like the one who dips his finger into the sea.

مَا مَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا مَثَلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِصْبَعَهُ فِي الْيَمِّ
فَلْيَنْظُرْ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ

The likeness of this world in comparison to the Hereafter is that of one of you dipping his finger into the sea; so let him look to see what he brings forth.¹

The water that remains on the finger of someone after removing it from the sea is like this world in comparison to the Hereafter. This is from the best similitudes. This world is vanishing and severed, even if the length of this world was longer than it actually is. The Afterlife is eternal, and it will never come to an end. That which is limited cannot be compared to that which is limitless.

If the heavens and earth were filled with seeds, and after every one thousand years a bird would take away one seed, the seeds would eventually deplete. While the Hereafter will never deplete.

¹ Ṣāḥiḥ Muslim 2858

Thus, this world, compared to the Afterlife, is equivalent to that one seed compared to the heavens and earth full of seeds.

If the oceans were equipped with seven more oceans and they turned into ink, and all the trees were pens to write the Words of Allāh ﷻ, the ink would dry and the pens would wear out while the Words of Allāh ﷻ would never deplete. This is because the Words of Allāh ﷻ have no beginning and no end, while the oceans and trees have an end.

Imām Aḥmad and others have said that Allāh ﷻ continues to speak if He wills. His perfection and Holiness apply to His speech as well. And His perfection is inseparable from His essence. Thus, His speech will only be perfect. The one who speaks is more complete than the one who does not speak. Allāh ﷻ is not at all affected by weariness, fatigue or exhaustion from speaking. He creates and controls His creation with His speech. His Words are that which brings the creation into existence, and by way of His speech He commands them. This is the reality of His dominion, His Lordship and His divinity. He ﷻ is the Lord and the King, and there is no deity worthy of worship other than Him.

This world is only a breath from the breaths of the eternal life and an hour from its hours.



THE SEVENTH SIMILITUDE

A Gluttonous Killer



The Prophet ﷺ gave this example in a *ḥadīth* that Bukhārī and Muslim have agreed is authentic. This is the *ḥadīth* of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ. He said:

قَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَخَطَبَ النَّاسَ فَقَالَ " لَا وَاللَّهِ مَا أَخْشَى عَلَيْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِلَّا مَا يُخْرِجُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِنْ زَهْرَةِ الدُّنْيَا " . فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ آيَاتِي الْخَيْرُ بِالشَّرِّ فَصَمَتَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَاعَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ " كَيْفَ قُلْتَ " . قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ آيَاتِي الْخَيْرُ بِالشَّرِّ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " إِنَّ الْخَيْرَ لَا يَأْتِي إِلَّا بِخَيْرٍ أَوْ خَيْرٌ هُوَ إِنَّ كُلَّ مَا يُنْبِثُ الرَّبِيعُ يَقْتُلُ حَبَطًا أَوْ يَلْمُ إِلَّا أَكَلَةَ الْخَضِيرِ أَكَلَتْ حَتَّى إِذَا امْتَلَأَتْ خَاصِرَتَاهَا اسْتَقْبَلَتِ الشَّمْسُ تَلَطَّتْ أَوْ بَالَتْ ثُمَّ اجْتَرَّتْ فَعَادَتْ فَأَكَلَتْ فَمَنْ يَأْخُذُ مَالًا بِحَقِّهِ يُبَارِكْ لَهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يَأْخُذُ مَالًا بِغَيْرِ حَقِّهِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَأْكُلُ وَلَا يَشْبَعُ

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ stood and addressed the people saying, “By Allāh, I do not fear for you, O people, except that which Allāh brings out for you from the flowers (adornment) of the world.” A man said, “O Messenger of Allāh, does good bring about evil?” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was silent for a

while and then he said, “What did you say?” The man said, “I said, O Messenger of Allāh, does good bring about evil?” The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said to him, “Good only brings about good, but is it really good? Every plant that sprouts in the Spring either kills or nearly kills the grazing animals because of bloat; except the pasture-eating animal which eats until both its hips are full, and then stands in the sun and defecates and urinates and again starts grazing. Whoever takes wealth according to its right will be blessed in it; and whoever takes wealth without its due right then his similitude is like the one who eats and does not get full¹.

The Prophet’s only fear for them is the worldly life, and he ﷺ called it “flowers.” He likened the world to flowers in its aromatic odor, beauty, and its brief life. After, the flowers are fruits which are better and longer-lasting than the flower.

His statement, “Every plant that sprouts in the Spring either kills or nearly kills the grazing animals because of bloat,” is from the most excellent examples which contain a warning from this worldly life and being preoccupied and pleased with it. The grazing animal enjoys the Spring vegetation. Thus, it eats with its eyes and it may die from bloat. Bloat is when the animal’s stomach swells due to overfilling or illness. Abdominal bloating occurs in humans and

¹ Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim 1052

animals. Al-Hārith ibn Māzin ibn ‘Amr ibn Tamīm became sick while travelling and died of bloat. Thus, he was given the ascription ‘al-Ḥabaṭī’ (الْحَبْطِيُّ), which is taken from the word “bloat.”

Likewise, gluttony in wealth is deadly, such that this gluttony or covetousness can kill the individual. If it does not kill him it can take him near death. This is found in his ﷺ statement “nearly kills.” Many of the wealthy are killed by their wealth. They are covetous in amassing it, while others are in need of it. Those in need of it cannot get it except by killing those who possess it, or by nearly killing them by overpowering them.

His statement “except the pasture-eating animal” is the similitude of the person who takes from this world according to his needs. He is like the sheep that eats the green according to its needs. It eats until both its hips are full because the hips are the two sides of its stomach.

His statement “and then stands in the sun and defecates and urinates and again starts grazing,” has three benefits:

One: After it took its need from the pasture, it left it and stood in the sun to digest what it consumed.

Two: It turned away from what would harm it from gluttony, with regard to the pasture, and it turned to what would benefit it. Thus, it stands in the sun to absorb the heat, which promotes easier digestion.

Three: It urinated and defecated what it had gathered in its stomach from the pasture so that it could take relief by expelling it. If it would have remained in its stomach it would have killed it. Similar to this is the collecting of wealth for its benefit, and to do with it as the sheep does.

The first part of the *ḥadīth* is concerning gluttony in the amassing of wealth, and covetousness in obtaining it. So, his similitude is that of the animal that allows its gluttony to cause it to eat until it dies of bloat, or until it nearly dies. Gluttony will either kill or nearly kill. The Spring sprouts various types of beans and grass; thus, the animal consumes a great deal until its stomach bursts. When it exceeds its capacity its stomach bursts and it dies. Likewise, is the person who amasses the worldly life without letting go of it; but rather he clings to it or does not give it its due right.

The last part of the *ḥadīth* is the similitude of the moderate eater of the pasture that benefits from its eating. It is not driven by gluttony or the covetousness to consume more than it can handle. Rather, it eats according to its need. It takes what it needs and then turns to what will benefit it. The example of the animal urinating and defecating is the example of the person spending his wealth upon what is due from him. This is because holding on to it will harm him. He is saved from the harm of amassing it by taking what he needs from it and spending it upon what is due from him, just as the animal is saved from harm by urinating and defecating.

This *ḥadīth* alludes to being balanced between deadly gluttonies through over-consummation and completely turning away from the necessities and dying from hunger. This *ḥadīth* also directs those who amass wealth to that which will preserve the strength and health of the body and heart; and this is by spending their wealth in good noble causes, and not holding onto that which will harm them. And with Allāh ﷻ lies all success.



THE EIGHTH SIMILITUDE

This World is Green and Sweet



It has been narrated by ‘Amr ibn Shu‘aib, from his father, from Sulāyman ibn Yāsar, from Maymūnah that she said, “The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ:

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلُوَّةٌ خَضِرَةٌ، فَمَنْ اتَّقَى اللَّهَ فِيهَا وَأَصْلَحَ، وَإِلَّا فَهُوَ كَالْآكِلِ وَلَا
يَشْبَعُ، فَبَعْدَ النَّاسِ كِبُعْدِ الْكُؤُكْبِينَ: أَحَدُهُمَا يَطْلُعُ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ، وَالْآخَرُ
يَغِيبُ بِالْمَغْرِبِ

Verily the *dunya* is sweet and green, so whoever fears Allāh ﷻ in it and rectifies [himself, then he is successful], and if not then he is like the eater who does not become full. The difference between the

people in this affair is like two distance stars, one rises in the East and the other sets in the West.¹

He warned against its greenery and finding pleasure in it, and he warned of its sweetness and the hearts illuminating for it. This sweetness and greenery are beautified for the inhabitants of the world and made beloved to them, especially since they are created from it. As the saying goes, “We are children of the world, and from it we grew. And the thing you come from will be beloved to you.”

The people are of two categories. The first category is those who rectify and fear Allāh ﷻ. Thus, he uses the *dunya* to fear Allāh and rectify his situation, and it does not urge him to engross himself completely in it or to be greedy toward it. He does not take from it that which is not permissible.

The second category is those who do not fear Allāh ﷻ or rectify their situation. Thus, his importance and efforts are put toward amassing the worldly life. Therefore, he is like the person who eats but does not become full. And this is from the most excellent examples.

The purpose of eating is to maintain good health and strength, so the person eats according to his needs. The intent of eating is not the food itself or the desires of the individual. The person who places his appetite above the purpose will never be satisfied. For

¹ Majmū' az Zawaid 10/249

this reason, Imām Aḥmad said, “A small amount of the worldly life suffices while a large portion of it does not suffice.”

The people differ greatly concerning this matter of fearing Allāh ﷻ, rectifying their condition and eating without satisfaction. The differing of two people in this affair is like two stars, one rising in the East and the other setting in the West.



THE NINTH SIMILITUDE

The Dunya is Insignificant to Allāh



Al-Mustawrid bin Shaddad said:

كُنْتُ مَعَ الرِّكْبِ الَّذِينَ وَقَفُوا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى
السَّخْلَةِ الْمَيْتَةِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "أَتَرُونَ هَذِهِ هَانَتْ
عَلَى أَهْلِهَا حِينَ أَلْقَوْهَا". قَالُوا مِنْ هَوَانِهَا أَلْقَوْهَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ "فَالدُّنْيَا
أَهْوَنُ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ عَلَى أَهْلِهَا"

I was with the caravan of those who stopped with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ at a dead lamb. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, “Do you think that this was insignificant to its owners when they threw it away?” They said, “It is because of its insignificance that they threw it away, O Messenger of Allāh!” He

said, “The world is more insignificant to Allāh ﷻ than this to its owners.”¹

Tirmidhi said this *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan ṣāḥih*.

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ did not merely compare this world to a dead lamb, rather he said this world is more insignificant to Allāh ﷻ than that dead lamb. In another narration collected by Imām Aḥmad he said:

فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَلدُّنْيَا أَهْوَنُ عَلَيَّ مِنَ تِلْكَ السَّخْلَةِ عَلَى أَهْلِهَا

**I swear by the One who has my soul in His Hand,
surely this world is more insignificant to Allāh ﷻ
than this lamb to its owner.**²

Thus, the Prophet ﷺ affirmed the statement by swearing by Allāh ﷻ, although he is the truthful one who speaks the truth. Therefore, if this world is more insignificant and despicable to Allāh ﷻ than that dead lamb, then loving it and longing for it is more despicable and insignificant to Allāh than that lamb. Because it was a small lamb it was even more insignificant to its owner than a large sheep. Perhaps, if it had been a large sheep they could have benefitted from its wool or by tanning its skin. But a small dead lamb is extremely inconsequential. And with Allāh ﷻ aid is sought.



¹ Jāmi' at-Tirmidhi 2321

² Collected by Aḥmad

THE TENTH SIMILITUDE

A Sea That Must Be Crossed



This world is similar to a sea that all the creation must cross in order to reach the shore that contains their homes and residences. It is not possible to cross it safely without a ship. Thus, Allāh ﷻ sent His messengers to teach their nations how to use their ships and how to board them to safety. This is by obeying Allāh ﷻ and His messengers, worshipping Allāh alone, working sincerity for Him, and striving for the Afterlife.

Those who desire the Hereafter and strive for it will board and ride the ship. They will turn away from plunging into the sea because they know you cannot cross the sea by diving into it and swimming.

As for the foolish, they will deem the work on the ship as difficult, so they will say, “We will rush the sea and when we get weak we will swim across it.” Most of the people of the world are like this. They dive into it, and when they get weak they swim until they drown.

The people who boarded the ship were saved just as it saved those who boarded the ship with Nūḥ ؑ, while the inhabitants of the earth drowned. Ponder this example and the condition of the peo-

ple of this world and it will be clear to you how the similitude agrees with reality.



THE ELEVENTH SIMILITUDE

A Vessel Filled with Honey



The similitude of this world is like that of a vessel filled with honey. The flies see this vessel and fly toward it. Some of them sit on the edge of the vessel and take from the honey until they satisfy their needs, and then they fly away. Some of them are led by their greed to plunge themselves into the abyss of the honey. Their submersion into the honey prevents them from enjoying it, except for a brief enjoyment, until they perish in the middle of it.



THE TWELFTH SIMILITUDE

Seeds Scattered on the Earth



This world is like seeds scattered on the surface of the ground. All the seeds fall into a snare, and around those seeds are seeds that did not fall into snares. The birds fly in to take the seeds.

Some birds are content with the seeds on the outside and do not put themselves in the middle of the seeds. They take their needs and move on.

Some birds are pushed by their greed to dive into the middle of the seeds. It doesn't finish collecting the seeds except while screaming from being caught in the snare placed for it.



THE THIRTEENTH SIMILITUDE

Moths Rushing the Fire



The similitude of this world is like that of a man who kindles a tremendous fire. The moths and grasshoppers see the light; thus, they rush toward it and plunge into it. Those who have knowledge of their situation benefit from the light and warmth of the fire from a distance. The Prophet ﷺ alluded to this exact example in a *ḥadīth* narrated from Mālik ibn 'Ismā'īl, from Hafs ibn Humayd, from Ikrāmah, from Ibn 'Abbās, from 'Umar ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنِّي مُمَسِّكٌ بِحُجْرَتِكُمْ عَنِ النَّارِ وَتَقَاحُمُونَ فِيهَا تَقَاحِمَ الْفَرَاشِ، وَالْجَنَادِبِ
فَأَوْشِكُ أَنْ أُرْسَلَ حُجْرَتِكُمْ

I am holding on to you by your waistbands from the fire, while you are plunging into it like the plunging

of moths or grasshoppers. Thus, I am about to release
your waistbands.¹

In another wording he said:

مَثَلِي وَمَثَلُكُمْ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ أَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَجَعَلَ الْجَنَائِبُ وَالْفَرَاشُ يَقَعْنَ فِيهَا
وَهُوَ يَذُبُّهُنَّ عَنْهَا وَأَنَا أَخِذُ بِحُجْرَتِكُمْ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَقْلَتُونَ مِنْ يَدِي

The likeness of me and you is that of a man who lit a
fire and grasshoppers and moths started falling into
it, and he tried to push them away. I am seizing
your waistbands and trying to pull you away from
the Fire but you are slipping away from my grasp.²

This is an example of the people of this world, those who are en-
grossed in it. The messengers call them toward the Hereafter
while they are plunging into this world just like moths plunge
into the fire.



THE FOURTEENTH SIMILITUDE

The Green Valley



The similitude of this world is like that of a people who went out
on a journey with their wealth and families, and they passed by a

¹ Musnad of 'Umar, Ḥadīth 22

² Muslim 2285 and al-Bukhārī 3427

grassy valley with lots of water and fruits. So, they descended into the valley, set up their tents, and built homes and castles. A man passed by them whom they knew for his good advice, honesty and trustworthiness. He said, "I saw with my two eyes an army behind this valley heading toward you, so follow me. I will show you a path to save you from the enemy." A small group of them followed him. He yelled at the group: "O people, come to safety, they are coming for you!" The people responded to him saying, "How can we leave this valley when our livestock is here, our wealth and homes, and we have taken residence here?" He advised them, saying, "Let every individual save himself by taking what is light to carry, if not he will be captured, and his wealth will be annihilated." But the wealthy people of position and status found it difficult to leave the bliss and affluence they were experiencing. The foolish people said, "I have family who are remaining here, and they have more wealth and family than me, so what befalls them will befall me along with them." A small group left with the advisor, so they succeeded and were saved. The army attacked the valley in the morning, killing the people and destroying their wealth.

The Prophet ﷺ gave this example in the *ḥadīth* agreed upon by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, from the *ḥadīth* of Abū Burda, from Abū Mūsā. The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا مِثْلِي وَمِثْلُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ كَمِثْلِ رَجُلٍ أَتَى قَوْمًا فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي
رَأَيْتُ الْحَيْشَ بَعِثْتَنِي، وَإِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْعُرْيَانُ فَالْتَّجَاءَ . فَأَطَاعَهُ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ
قَوْمِهِ فَأَدْلَجُوا، فَأَنْطَلَقُوا عَلَى مَهْلِهِمْ فَنَجَّوْا، وَكَذَّبَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا

مَكَانَهُمْ، فَصَبَّحَهُمُ الْجَيْشُ، فَأَهْلَكَهُمْ وَاجْتَاكَهُمْ، فَذَلِكَ مَثَلٌ مَنْ أَطَاعَنِي،
 فَاتَّبَعَ مَا جِئْتُ بِهِ، وَمَثَلٌ مَنْ عَصَانِي وَكَذَّبَ بِمَا جِئْتُ بِهِ مِنْ
 الْحَقِّ

My example and the example of what I have been sent with is that of a man who came to some people and said, “O people! I have seen the enemy's army with my own eyes, and I am the naked warner; so protect yourselves!” Then a group of his people obeyed him and fled at night, proceeding stealthily until they were safe. While another group of them disbelieved him and stayed at their places until morning when the army came upon them and killed and annihilated them. So, this is the example of the person who obeys me and follows what I have brought, and the example of the one who disobeys me and disbelieves the truth I have brought.¹

THE FIFTEENTH SIMILITUDE

A Guest and a Loan

A man prepared his home and decorated it and placed in it every type of amenity. He invited the people to his home. Each time someone would enter his home he would sit them on a soft, cozy couch. He presented them with a gold tray containing food. He

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 7283

placed in front of them splendid containers containing everything they needed, and he put servants at their disposal. The intelligent person understood that all of this enjoyment, to include the home and the servants, belonged to the homeowner. Thus, he enjoyed these amenities and hospitality for the time that he was a guest in the home. He didn't attach his heart to any of this and he didn't tell himself he would own any of it. Rather, he relied on the homeowner, just as the guest does. He sat down where he was seated by the host, ate what was presented in front of him, and didn't ask for anything other than that. He sufficed with the knowledge of the homeowner, his generosity, and the hospitality presented to him. Thus, he entered the home in a noble manner, enjoyed the home in a noble manner and exited the home in a noble manner. Consequently, the homeowner had no criticism of him.

As for the foolish person, he tells himself he will take permanent residence in the home, own the amenities and use them however he desires. So, he sits wherever he wants to sit without being seated. He takes the amenities and places them throughout the home in order to hide them. Everything the homeowner gives him, he tells himself he will own it. He gives preference to himself over all the other guests. The homeowner is aware of everything he is doing, but his generosity prevents him from expelling him from his home. This continues until he thinks he can be obstinate with these amenities, and the home of the host, and use them just as the real homeowner uses them. He believes he can take over the home and make it his. Then the homeowner sends his servants to expel

him from the home with a violent removal. They take everything in his possession and he does not keep any of these amenities. He earns the anger of the homeowner; and he is exposed in front of the homeowner and servants, and put to shame.

Thus, let the intelligent person ponder this similitude in the proper manner, for surely it coincides with reality. And with Allāh ﷻ aid is sought.

‘Abdullah ibn Musūd ؓ said, “Everyone is a guest in this world, and his possessions are a loan. Thus, the guest will move on and the loan will be given back.”

‘Anas ibn Mālik said, “My mother (Umm Sulaym) gave birth to a son and sent me with him to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. I said, “This is my brother.” So, he took him and softened a date and rubbed it on his palate.”¹

‘Anas said, “The son of Umm Sulaym became sick. When Abū Ṭalḥa went to the masjid he died. Umm Sulaym said to her family, “No one inform him of the death of his son until I inform him.”

فلما رجع أبو طلحة قال: ما فعل ابني؟ قالت أم سليم وهي أم الصبي: هو
أسكن ما كان، ففريت إليه العشاء فتعشى

When Abu Talha returned he said, “How is my son doing?” Umm Sulaym—who was the boy’s mother—

¹ Muslim 2144

said, **“He is more peaceful now than he was before.”**

She brought him his dinner and he ate.

After dinner Abū Ṭalḥa laid down to sleep. Umm Sulaym perfumed herself and lay next to him and they were intimate. At the end of the night Umm Sulaym said, “O Abū Ṭalḥa, if some people borrow something from another family and then [the members of the family] ask for its return, would they refuse to give it back to them?” He said, “No.” She said,

فَإِنَّ ابْنَكَ كَانَ عَارِيَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ، فَاقْبِضْهُ. فَاسْتَرْجِعْ ، وَحَمِدَ اللَّهُ

Verily your son was a loan from Allāh, and He took his soul. Thus, say, “Verily, from Allāh we come and to Him we return,” and praise Allāh.

Abū Ṭalḥa got angry, and said, “You left me uninformed until I stained myself and then you told me about my son.” He went to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ and informed him about the matter. Thereupon the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said:

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ فِي لَيْلَتِكُمَا

May Allāh bless the night you spent together!¹.



¹ al-Bukhārī 5470 and Muslim 2144

THE SIXTEENTH SIMILITUDE

Salt Water



A group of people trekked across the desert until they were stricken with thirst, thus they went to the sea. Sea water is most bitter and salty; but due to their severe thirst, they did not taste its bitterness or salt, and so they drank it. The salt water didn't quench their thirst; and the more they drank the more their thirst increased, until they damaged their bowels and died of dehydration.

The intelligent people knew that this water was bitter and salty, and the more he drinks the more he will become thirsty. Thus, they abandoned it and travelled until they found a land with sweet vegetation. They dug into the core of the land and fresh sweet water sprung out for them. They drank the water and used it for soaking and cooking. They called their brothers who were at the edge of the sea, saying, "Come now to the fresh water!" Some of the people at the salt water mocked them, while others ignored them because they were pleased with what they had. A few people here and there responded to their call.

This is the exact example given by Jesus the Messiah ﷺ. He said,

طَالِبِ الدُّنْيَا مِثْلُ شَارِبِ مَاءِ الْبَحْرِ، كُلَّمَا ازْدَادَ شُرْبًا ازْدَادَ غَطْشًا حَتَّى

يَقْتُلُهُ

The one who seeks after the worldly life is like the one who drinks salt water. The more he drinks, the more his thirst increases, until it kills him.¹



THE SEVENTEENTH SIMILITUDE

The Companion and the Journey



The similitude of man, his wealth, his actions, and his family is like that of a man with three companions. The man has to take a long, mandatory journey. He calls his three companions and says, “The time has come for me to embark upon this long journey and I am in severe need of you all now.”

One of them said, “I was your brother up until this situation, but from now on I am not your brother or your companion. And this is all I have for you.” Thus, he replied to him, “You will not benefit me at all.”

He said to the second one, “What do you have?” He said, “I was your brother and your companion up until this point. I will be with you until I prepare you for travel and you mount your riding beast, but from there on I will not accompany you.” He said to him, “I need you to accompany me on my journey.” He replied, “There

¹ *Az Zuhud* by ibn Abi Dunya, Ḥadīth 326

is no way I can do that for you.” He said to him, “You will not benefit me at all.”

He said to the third one, “What do you have for me?” He replied, “I was your companion in health and sickness, and I am your companion now. I am your companion as you prepare for your journey and during your travel. If you move, I move with you; if you descend I descend with you. When you arrive at your destination, I will be your companion and I will never leave you.” He said to him, “You were the most insignificant of my companions to me and I used to prefer the other two companions over you. If only I would have known your rights and virtue over the other two.”

The first companion is his wealth; the second companion is his relatives, family and friends; and the third companion is his actions.

There is a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet ﷺ with this exact example, but it is not authentic. It has been collected by Abū Ja‘far in the book, “*Weak Narrations*” from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Shuhāb, from ‘Urwa, from ‘Ā’isha. The *ḥadīth* narrated from Ibn al-Musayib, from ‘Ā’isha, is connected to the Prophet ﷺ; and it is an authentic example that coincides with reality.



THE EIGHTEENTH SIMILITUDE

The Call of the Dunya



This is from the best similitudes. A king built a home. Those who see did not see, and those who hear did not hear of a home better than this home, or more spacious than this home, or of a home containing more delights of the soul than this home. A path leading to this home was prepared, and a caller was sent out to call the people to it.

There was a beautiful woman sitting on the path. She was adorned with assorted types of adornments and she wore various types of jewelry. All the people had to pass by her. She had helpers and servants at her disposal. The woman and her helpers had provisions for those walking on the path toward the king.

The king said to the woman and her helpers, “Whoever lowers their gaze from you, does not allow you to distract them from me, and seeks provisions from you that will allow them to reach me, then serve him and give him provisions. Don’t hinder him from his travel to me; rather, assist him with everything that will allow him to complete his journey.

But whoever turns his eyes toward you, is pleased with you, prefers you over me, and desires to reach you, then impose upon him an evil punishment and humiliation. Make him chase behind you

with a pursuit of loneliness. Whoever eats from you, then lead him astray with it for a while, then snatch all of it away from him. Take mastery over all those who follow and serve you. The more he increases his love for you, exalts and honors you, then reciprocate him with alienation, distance and belittlement until he is disconnected from you with misery.”

Thus, ponder this similitude and the condition of the call of the worldly life and the call of the Afterlife. And with Allāh ﷻ aid is sought.

This example is extracted from the narration narrated from Allāh, the Exalted:

يَا دُنْيَا، اخْدِمِي مَنْ خَدَمَنِي، وَأَتَّعِبِي يَا دُنْيَا مَنْ خَدَمَكَ

O Dunya; serve whoever serves Me, and cause fatigue and trouble O Dunya to whoever serves you.¹

THE NINETEENTH SIMILITUDE

The Race

A king designs a city in the best place, with the freshest air and the most water. He plows rivers and plants trees. He says to his citizens, “Race to the best places in the city; and whatever place you

¹ *Knowledge of the Science of Ḥadīth* by al-Hakim, Ḥadīth 207

reach, it belongs to you. Whoever lags behind, then the people will beat him to the city, take all the homes and take residence therein; and he will remain in misery and regret.”

The king gave them an arena for the race and placed in the arena large trees with extended shade. Beneath the trees there was fresh running water and the trees yielded every type of fruit. On the tree branches were birds with amazing voices.

The king said to them, “Do not be deceived by these trees and shade. For soon, the trees will be uprooted, the shade will recline, its fruits will cease, and its birds will die. As for the city of the king; its food is continuous, its shade is extended, and its bliss is unending. It contains that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no man has ever imagined.”

The people heard about it, so they rushed out in pursuit of it. They passed by these trees while they were tired, hot and thirsty; so all of them rested beneath the trees. They took from their shade, tasted the sweetness of their fruits and listened to the chirping of their birds.

It was said to them, “You only sat beneath the trees for shelter and to reenergize yourself for the race, so prepare yourself to return to the race and be on guard. When the horn is sounded return to the race track.”

Most of them said, “How can we abandon this shade and easily accessible water, fresh fruits, and easy living for a race in a hot, dusty

arena of weariness and a long journey? How can we leave this for a thirsty desert that will bring us hunger? How can we sell these commodities which are present for a far-off distant commodity? Shall we abandon what we see for that which we don't see? A kernel received in the hand is better than a promise tomorrow. Take what you see and leave what you heard about. We are the children of today and this present life. How can we abandon this for an unseen life in a far-off land when we don't know when we will arrive there?"

From every one thousand people, one person stood up and said, "By Allāh ﷻ, this place of ours is in shade that will rescind, beneath trees whose fruits will cease and whose birds will die. Will we abandon the race toward the shade of all shades, that will never rescind, and delightful provision that will never cease? No one does this except for the weakest of the weak. Is it befitting for a traveler who rests beneath shade to pitch his tent beneath it and take up residence there fearing the heat or cold? Would anyone do this except for the most foolish person?"

A group of them rushed back to the race, and they did not feel alienated by the small number of friends with them. They marched on with strong determination. They did not allow the criticism of the blamers to affect their journey, while those who stayed behind were beneath the tree sleeping.

It wasn't long before the twigs wrinkled, the leaves fell off, the fruits ceased to blossom, the branches dried, and the tree was up-

rooted. Those who were beneath the tree were now exposed to the heat and hot wind. Because the shade was no longer protecting them, all their provisions burned. They were surrounded by fire and none of them were able to escape. They said, “Where are those who were with us beneath the shade, and then they left and abandoned the shade?” It was said to them, “Turn your eyes upward and you will see their homes.” So they looked up and saw them in castles far away in the city of the king. They were enjoyed assorted kinds of delights. This caused those who remained behind to increase in their misery, regretting not being amongst them. Now there was a barrier between them and what they desired. It was said to them, “This is the recompense of those who lag behind.”

﴿ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴾

**And We wronged them not, but they used to
wrong themselves.¹**



¹ Sūrah an-Naḥl 16:118

THE TWENTIETH SIMILITUDE

The Torn Garment



The *dunya* is like the similitude given by the Prophet ﷺ of a torn garment hanging on by its last thread. Ibn Abi Dunya collected the narration from 'Anas ibn Mālik ؓ. The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَثَلُ هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا مَثَلُ ثَوْبٍ شُقَّ مِنْ أَوَّلِهِ إِلَى آخِرِهِ، فَبَقِيَ مُتَعَلِّقًا بِخَيْطٍ فِي آخِرِهِ، فَيُوشِكُ ذَلِكَ الْخَيْطُ أَنْ يَنْقَطَعَ

The similitude of this worldly life is the example of a garment torn from the top of it to the bottom of it. It remains hanging on by its last thread. And that thread is about to break.¹

If you would like more clarity on this similitude, then look at the narration collected by Imām Aḥmad, from the *ḥadīth* of Abū Sa'īd. He said:

صَلَّى بِنَا رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَوْمًا صَلَاةَ الْعَصْرِ بِنَهَارٍ نُمُّ قَامَ حَاطِبًا فَلَمْ يَدْعُ شَيْئًا يَكُونُ إِلَى قِيَامِ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا أَخْبَرْنَا بِهِ حَفِظَهُ مَنْ حَفِظَهُ وَنَسِيَهِ مَنْ نَسِيَهِ

¹ Narrated from al-Faḍl ibn Ja'far from Waḥb ibn Hamad from Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd al Qaḥtan from Abū Sa'īd Khalaf ibn Habīb from 'Anas ibn Mālik

One day, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ led us in ‘Aṣr prayer while it was still daytime. Then he stood to give us a sermon. He did not leave anything that would happen until the Hour of Judgement, except that he ﷺ informed us about it. Whoever remembered it remembered it, and whoever forgot it forgot it.

قَالَ وَجَعَلْنَا نَلْتَفِتُ إِلَى الشَّمْسِ هَلْ بَقِيَ مِنْهَا شَيْءٌ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " أَلَا إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَبْقَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا فِيمَا مَضَى مِنْهَا إِلَّا كَمَا بَقِيَ مِنْ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا فِيمَا مَضَى مِنْهُ

So, we began turning toward the sun to see if anything of it remained (whether it has set or not). So, the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, “That which remains of this world in comparison to what has already passed is like what remains of this day of yours compared to what has already passed.”¹

Thus, this worldly life—all of it—is similar to one day, and the Prophet ﷺ was sent at the end of the day just before sunset.

Jābir and Abū Huraira ﷺ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

بُعِثْتُ أَنَا وَالسَّاعَةُ كَهَاتَيْنِ . قَالَ وَصَمَّ السَّبَابَةَ وَالْوَسْطَى

I and the Last Hour have been sent like this. He joined the forefinger with the middle finger together.¹

¹ Jāmi' at-Tīrmidhi 2191

Some of the Salaf would say, “Be patient, for surely it is only a few days. You are only stationary riders. Each of you will soon be called and you will respond without delay. Your souls have already announced your death. Death will grasp you and there is no way around it.”

Allāh, the Exalted, said:

﴿ فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّتْ نَعِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَأَمَّا

إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَسَلَامٌ لَكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٩١﴾

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَتَصْلِيَةٌ

﴿ جَحِيمٍ ﴿٩٤﴾

Then, if he (the dying person) be of those brought near to Allāh ﷻ, there is for him rest and provision, and a Garden of delights. And if he (the dying person) be of those on the right side, then (the angels will say), “Peace for you; (you are) from the companions of the right.” But if he (the dying person) be of the denying (of the Resurrection), those who are astray, then for him is entertainment with boiling water; and burning in Hellfire.²

¹ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2951

² Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah 56:88-94

THE TWENTY FIRST SIMILITUDE

A Small Portion from A Small Portion



The similitude of this world is like that of a large pond filled with water. It was made as a drinking place for humans and animals. The water decreased a great deal until nothing remained of it except some mud at the bottom, and the animals had urinated in that. Yet the people and animals were plunging into it.

'Utba ibn Ghazwān delivered us a sermon and he praised Allāh ﷻ and lauded Him, then said:

فَإِنَّ الدُّنْيَا قَدْ آدَنْتْ بِضُرْمٍ وَّوَلَّتْ حَذَاءً وَلَمْ يَبْقَ مِنْهَا إِلَّا صُبَابَةٌ كَصُبَابَةِ
الْإِنَاءِ يَتَصَابُهَا صَاحِبُهَا وَإِنَّكُمْ مُنْتَقِلُونَ مِنْهَا إِلَى دَارٍ لَا زَوَالَ لَهَا فَانْتَقِلُوا
بِخَيْرٍ مَا بِحَضْرَتِكُمْ

Verily the world has been given the news of its end, and it is running to meet its end swiftly. Nothing remains of it except like water left in the utensil which its owner leaves. You are going to shift to an abode which knows no end; and you should proceed there with the good before you.

فإنه قد ذكر لنا أن الحجر يلقي من سفير جنهم فيهوي فيها سبعين
عاماً، لا يدرك لها قعراً، والله لتملأن... أفعجبتكم؟!

We have been informed [by the Prophet ﷺ] that if a stone is thrown at one side of the Hellfire it would travel down for seventy years but would not reach its bottom. By Allāh ﷻ, it will be filled (with men and jinn). Do you find it strange?

ولقد ذكر لنا أن ما بين مصراعين من مصاريع الجنة مسيرة أربعين عاماً، وليأتين عليه يوم وهو كظيظ من الزحام

We have been informed [by the Prophet ﷺ] that the distance between two shutters of the gate of Jannah is forty years distance. And a day will come when it will be fully packed.

ولقد رأيتني سابع سبعة مع رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم ما لنا طعام إلا ورق الشجر، حتى قرحت أشداقنا، فالتقطت بردة فشققتها ببني وبين سعد بن مالك، فاتزرت بنصفها، واتزر سعد بنصفها، فما أصبح اليوم منا أحد إلا أصبح أميراً على مصر من الأمصار، وإني أعوذ بالله أن أكون في نفسي عظيماً، وعند الله صغيراً

I was the seventh amongst the seven who had been with the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, and we had nothing to eat but the leaves of the tree, until the sides of our mouths were injured. We found a sheet which we tore in two and divided between myself and Sa'īd bin Mālik. I made the lower garment with half of it and so did Sa'īd. Today, there is none

amongst us who has not become the governor of a city, and I seek refuge with Allāh ﷻ that I should consider myself great while I am insignificant to Allāh.¹

‘Abdullah ibn Masūd ؓ said, “Verily Allāh, the Exalted, has made all this world brief and that which remains of it is short-lived from that which was already brief. Nothing remains of it except a small portion from a small portion, similar to what remains of a puddle that the elite drank from and left a mud hole.

¹ Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim 2967

CONCLUSION

This worldly life resembles sleeping; living in it resembles a dream, and death resembles waking up.

This world is a farm; actions in this life are the seeds, and the harvest is on the Day of Judgment.

This world is like a home with two doors; one for the people to enter and one for them to exit.

This world is like a snake; soft to the touch, with a beautiful color, but its bite is deadly.

This world is like the most hideous woman; she veils her face while revealing her eyes by which she seduces the people. She invites the people to her home. If they accept her invitation she reveals herself, slaughters them with her knife and throws them into a hole. She gains mastery over her lovers and does this to them time and time again. Amazingly, her lovers see their slain brothers who have fallen victim, yet they compete for the same thing their brothers have fallen victim to.

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِينِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ

وَصَرَّفْنَا لَكُمْ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And you lived in the dwellings of men who wronged themselves, and it was clear to you how We dealt with them. And We put forth (many) parables for you.

[Sūrah 'Ibrāhīm 14:45]

Sufficient as examples of this world are the parables Allah ﷻ has given for it in the Qur'ān.