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Question 59: Why is Charity Compared To An Ear Having 700 Grains?

Question: It is mentioned in Surah Baqarah:

"The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) hundred grains in every ear..." (2:261)

In spite of the fact that we have inquired of the agricultural scientists that if we have a piece of land which is prepared from every aspect. It is irrigated properly and birds also do not pick up its grain and the seed is also not destroyed in it and no trouble descends on it and the soil is also of a good quality and all the conditions of growing a crop on it is fulfilled then how much wheat can be produced from a stalk of wheat?

They replied: thirty or at the most forty and nothing more than this seen till now.

Thus how does the Almighty say that it is like the ear which gives 700 grains whereas if Allah had desired He could have given more.

Answer: Two points have to be kept in mind in the reply to this question.

Firstly the above quoted ayat does not mention wheat or any other grain, rather the word Habb – grain is used. And that the one posing the question has given the examples of wheat, which is such a derivation that is not even mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Thus if we find a grain whose one grain gives seven hundred grains it would be sufficient to justify the above ayat.

If by chance there are some seeds, one of which is Maize if it is planted at fixed place it is possible that one grain would produce seven grains (7 ears of hundred grain's each, i.e. or more could be obtained.)

It is said that Bajra also produces many grains.¹

Secondly even if for the sake of argument we consider the above ayat there is another possibility and it is that when two things are compared to each other. There is a distinction of the compared thing which is not in the thing with which it is compared though from the aspect of the actual topic of discussion there is similarity in it.

For example it is said:(His face is like the moon which does not set) or he is a sun that never sets or he is tall as the date palm, though we know that moon always sets and there is sunset also and there is no tree on the earth that walks.

Therefore such comparisons imply that for example his face is fresh and luminous like the moon and only the difference is that there is decline for the moon but that person has no decline or his body has the qualities of tall stature of a date palm but his distinction is that he can walk and the date palm cannot walk. Many such kinds of examples are found in literature.

In addition to poetic examples the Qur'an itself has such comparisons and similes. For example when the Holy Qur'an gives the examples of pure and best things it says it is like a tree that bears fruits.²

Although there is not tree that bears fruits all the year round or even if there is such a tree would be very rare. Thus the implication is that this tree of goodness has a distinction over all the other trees and it is that there is no autumn for this tree and neither is there any restriction on it for bearing fruits.

The Holy Qur'an also gives the examples of the light of Allah and says:

His light is as a niche in which is a lamp...³

In the same ayat He says:

... the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touches it not.

Though any oil, however pure it may be, does not light up without fire. Actually it is a distinction which is given as a simile.

The ayat regarding which question is posed in that too the growth of the seed of Charity seventy fold is a distinction which the seed of Charity has over all the seeds of the word.

^{1.} In Tafseer Minhajus Sadiqueen this reply is indicated under the commentary of the above ayat

^{2.} Surah Ibrahim 15:25

^{3.} Surah Nur 24:35

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