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Section Seven: The Obstacles And Barriers Preventing Being Benefited By The Qur'an

Now that the greatness of the Book of Allah has been understood by considering all the required aspects of greatness, and the way of being benefited by it has been opened, it will be necessary for the learner of, and the benefit-deriver [*mustafīd*] from, the Book of Allah to apply a further important discipline in order to get [the best] advantage. It is removing the causes which prevent the advantage, and which we call "the veils" between the benefit-deriver and the Qur'an. These veils are many, to some of which we shall refer presently.

One of these thick veils is self-conceit, through which the learner sees himself, because of this veil, in no need of getting any benefit from the Qur'an. This is one of Satan's important masterpieces, by which he always tries to inspire man with imaginary perfections, telling him to be contented with what he has, and to disregard everything other than that which he already has.

For example, he makes the people of *tajwīd* [reciting the Qur'an with intonation] contented with this small knowledge which they have, making it quite big in their eyes, slighting other knowledge to them, and making them compare the carriers of the Qur'an with themselves, causing them to be deprived of understanding the luminous divine Book and of getting any advantage from it. Similarly, he causes the men of letters to be contented with the meaningless from making them believe that all the Qur'anic affairs are only those that they have.

He engages the exegetes, as usual, with the ways of recitation, the different opinions of the linguistics, the times of revelation, the occasions of revelation, whether the *āyah* was revealed in Mecca or in Medina, the number of the *āyahs*, their letters and the like. The scholars are also kept indulged in only learning the different aspects of indications, the diverse ways of arguments and the like.

Even the philosopher, the wise man and the gnostic are imprisoned by Satan behind the thick veil of terminology, concepts and so on. The benefit-deriver [*mustafīd*] must tear open these veils in order to

look at the Qur'an from behind them, taking care not to stay at any one of these veils, so as not to be left behind the caravan of the travelers to Allah, nor be deprived of the sweet divine invitations. The Glorious Qur'an itself instructs that one should not remain still and should not be satisfied with a certain limit.

This is frequently referred to in the stories of the Qur'an. Moses ('a), a great prophet as he was, was not contented with that position, nor was he satisfied with his high position of knowledge. He no sooner met that perfect man, al-Khidr, than he addressed him, quite humbly and modestly, saying:

“May I follow you that you may teach me right knowledge of what you have been taught?”¹

He kept following him and acquired the knowledge he wanted to learn. Prophet Abraham ('a) also was not satisfied with the great state of faith and the special knowledge of the prophets ('a). He asked the Lord:

“My Lord! Show me how you give life to the dead.”²

He wanted to proceed from the state of cordial faith up to the state of tangible confidence. Higher even than that is when Allah, the Exalted, told the Seal of the Prophets, the most learned person of all Allah's creatures, to say:

“...Say: O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge.”³

Such instructions of the divine Book and relating the stories of the prophets, are but for us to learn from them, and to bring us to conscience and wake us from our negligent sleep.

Another one of the veils is that of the false ideas, and the *batal* ways, which are sometimes caused by the inabilities of the person himself, and they are mostly the outcome of subordination and imitation. This veil particularly conceals from us the Qur'anic knowledge. For example, if, by listening to our fathers, mothers, or some ignorant preacher, we got a false idea fixed in our hearts, it would be a veil, a barrier between us and the noble divine *ayahs* [of the Qur'an].

Thus, even if there were thousands of *ayahs* and *hadiths* defying that idea, we would either dismiss them on the basis of their exoteric meanings, or we would not consider them with the aim of understanding. Regarding beliefs and knowledge there are numerous examples, but I shall abstain from counting them, as I do know that this veil cannot be torn by the sayings of someone, like me.

Nevertheless, just to present a sample, I will refer to one of them, which is somewhat easier to understand: Despite all the *ayahs* which have been revealed in respect of meeting Allah and knowing Him, all the narratives that were related to the same subject and all the indications and allusions, open and hidden, in the invocations and the supplications of the Imams ('a), some uninformed and vulgar persons have spread the belief that the way to knowing Allah was completely closed.

The door of knowing Allah and discerning the Beauty [of Him] is interpreted to be the same as meditating upon the very Essence of Allah, which is prohibited, or rather impossible. They may even refrain from entering this field and prefer not to acquaint themselves with such knowledge, which is the delight of the eyes of the prophets and holy men [*awliyā*].

It is much to be regretted by the people of Allah to see a chapter of knowledge, which can very aptly be described as the goal of sending the prophets and the most cherished demand of the holy men, should be so prohibited to the people that a simple mentioning it would be regarded complete disbelief and mere heresy. These people take the knowledge [*maʿrif*] of the prophets and the holy men [*awliyā*] to be the same as the knowledge [*maʿrif*] of the common people and [unlettered old] women about Allah's Essence, Names and Attributes.

Sometimes they say even more than that: “So-and-so has good, vulgar beliefs. We wish we kept to the same vulgar belief.” This is quite correct, because when this wretched person utters these words, he has already lost his vulgar beliefs, and, at the same time, regards other beliefs, which are the beliefs of the elite and the people of Allah, to be false. This wish is quite similar to the wish of the disbelievers who, as in the noble *ʿyāh*, say:

“...and the disbeliever shall say: O would that I were dust!”⁴

Should we want to relate in detail the *ʿyāhs* and the narratives concerning the meeting with Allah, in order to expose this corrupt belief caused by ignorance and Satanic conceit, we would need to write a separate book. Especially, if we wanted to explain the knowledge which has been neglected due to this thick satanic veil, it would be clear that this negligence is one of the stages of neglecting and discarding the Qur'an, and it is probably the most regretful stage, as is described in the Qur'an:

“And the Messenger said: O my Lord! My people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken [thing].”⁵

Forsaking the Qur'an has many stages and countless degrees, and we may possess a good number of them.

If we bound this divine Book in a nice and valuable cover, and we kissed it and put it on our eyes whenever we wanted to recite it or to take an *istikhṛāh* (consulting the Qur'an to do or not to do something) with it, would it mean that we did not forsake it?

If we spent most of our lives perfecting our intonation when reciting the Qur'an, and improving our linguistic and rhetorical knowledge of it, would it mean that we brought the Qur'an out of being forsaken?

If we learnt the different ways of reciting the Qur'an and other relevant subjects, would we be declared not guilty of deserting it?

If we took in all the aspects of the miraculousness and the artistic beauties of the Qur'an, would we be excluded from the complaint of the Messenger of Allah? Never! None of these is intended by the Qur'an

and its Great Revealer! The Qur'an is a divine Book, and it contains divine affairs.

The Qur'an is the string connecting the creatures to their Creator, and through its instructions there should be a spiritual and invisible tie between the servants of Allah and their Lord. From the Qur'an there should emerge divine sciences and intuitive knowledge. The Messenger of Allah, according to a narrative in the noble *al-Kāfi*, said: "Knowledge is of three kinds: a clear *ḥayāh*, a fair obligation and a current tradition."⁶

The Glorious Qur'an is the bearer of these sciences. If we could take them in, we would not be deserting the Qur'an. If we accepted the calls of the Qur'an, and learnt from the stories of the prophets (*ʿa*) which are full of admonishments, information and philosophies, and if we absorbed the admonitions of Allah, the Exalted, of the prophets and of the wise men, as stated in the Qur'an, we would not be deserting it, as indulging in the formal picture of the Qur'an is also keeping to the earth, and is of Satan's whisperings, from which one must seek refuge with Allah.

Another veil that prevents us from being benefited by this luminous Book is to believe that except what the exegetes have written or understood, no one has the right to make use of the noble Qur'an.

Contemplating and thinking about the noble *ḥayāhs* are mistakenly regarded to be interpretation, as interpretation according to one's own opinion is not allowed, and thus, because of this false belief and invalid opinion, the Glorious Qur'an was deprived from being utilized in any way and, consequently, it was completely deserted, despite the fact that to utilize it morally, faithfully and gnostically has nothing to do with exegesis, be it according to opinion or else.

For example, suppose someone could get out some lessons from the dialogue between the prophets Moses and al-Khidr (*ʿa*), how they talked to one another, how severely Moses, great a prophet as he was, traveled in order to acquire the knowledge which he lacked, and he implored al-Khidr (*ʿa*) in the way stated in the noble *ḥayāh*:

"May I follow you that you may teach me right knowledge of what you have been taught?"⁷

Then al-Khidr's reply, the excuses of Moses (*ʿa*), the greatness of the station of knowledge, and how a student should behave toward his tutor, in which there may be twenty disciplines. What connection all these have with exegesis, or exegesis according to opinion? Many advantages of the Qur'an are of this kind. Take, for example, someone, who, in respect of Islamic teachings, understands from Allah's saying: **"All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the worlds"** that all praise and extolments are exclusively Allah's.

He learns from it His Unity of Actions, and says that from the noble *ḥayāh* he deduces that every perfection, beauty, might and majesty which are in the world and which the eye of the squint-eyed and the heart of the veiled ascribe to the beings are Allah's and no being has itself any share of them. Therefore, praise and extolment are solely Allah's, and nobody shares them with Him.

But has this anything to do with exegesis, be it according to opinion or not? There are so many other affairs from which many usages can be obtained, though having no connection with exegesis

whatsoever.

Besides, to exegete according to opinion is still arguable, as probably it does not concern the *ʿayāh*s about knowledge and the speculative sciences, which conform with the criteria of intellectual proofs, nor the ethical *ʿayāh*s which have to do with intellect, since such exegeses coincide with the strong intellectual proofs or with explicit rational indications, such that if an exterior does not conform with them, they are to be turned away from that exterior.

For example, the noble *ʿayāh*s:

“And your Lord comes, and the angels rank on rank,”⁸

Or

“The Beneficent has settled on the Throne,”⁹

In which the conventional [*ʿurf*] understanding contradicts the proof, to refute the exterior and to explain them by proof is not explaining according to opinion, and can never be prohibited.

Therefore, it is possible, or believed, that exegesis according to opinion concerns the *ʿayāh*s of precepts, of which the hand of opinion and intellect is short, and they must be devotionally and obediently taken from the treasurers of revelation and the descending places of the angels of Allah, as most of the noble *ḥadīṡ*s in this respect defy the Sunni jurisprudents who wanted to comprehend Allah's religion by way of their own intellects and by comparisons.

Some noble narrative says: “Nothing is farther away from the intellects of men than the exegesis of the Qur'an.”¹⁰ Another noble narrative says: “Allah's religion cannot be conceived well by intellects.”¹¹ Such narratives prove that by “Allah's religion” they mean devotional obedience to the religious precepts, or else, proving the Maker, *tawḥīd*, Glorification, the Resurrection Day and Prophethood, or rather all sorts of knowledge are within the intellect's lawful right and field of specialty.

That which is in the expressions of some notable narrators who said that proving monotheism depends on traditional proof is strange, or, more aptly, it is one of the disasters from which we must take refuge with Allah. This speech does not need to be condemned and disgraced, but our complaint is to Allah.

Another veil that prevents understanding this heavenly Book and being benefited by its knowledge and admonitions is the veil of disobediences [*ma'ṣi'ah*] and the opacity caused by rebellion against the sanctity of the Lord of the worlds. By this veil the heart is prevented from understanding the truths.

It must be noted that just as there is a corresponding image for each of the good and bad deeds in the heavenly world, there is a similar one inside the soul, through which the innermost part of the soul gets either luminous and likewise the heart gets purified and luminous, in which case the soul becomes clear and polished like a mirror, prepared to receive the invisible manifestation and the appearance of the

truths and knowledge, or the soul gets dark and devilish, in which case the heart becomes like a rusty and tarnished mirror, unable to reflect any divine knowledge and invisible truths.

A heart in such a condition will gradually fall under the authority of Satan, and *ib/* becomes the possessor of the kingdom of the spirit, and the hearing and seeing, and the other senses and powers, too, become at the disposal of that evil creature. The hearing becomes completely blocked against the divine teachings, and the eyes do not see the splendid divine signs and they become blind to Allah's truth, signs and *yahs*.

The heart does not become learned in religion, and is deprived of meditating on the clear signs of Allah, His Names and His Attributes, as Allah, the Exalted says:

“They have hearts, with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are as cattle nay, they are even worse...”[12](#)

Their look at the world is like the look of the cattle and the animals at it, void of value and deliberation. Their hearts, like the hearts of the animals, lack meditation and remembrance, or rather, the more they think of the *yahs* and hear admonitions and instructions, the more their negligence and haughtiness increase. Thus, they are even lower than the beasts and graver in going astray.

Another one of the thick veils, which is a heavy curtain between us and the teachings and admonitions of the Qur'an, is the veil of loving this world, which causes the heart to be completely devoted to it, and the inclination of the heart entirely turns towards mundane matters, neglecting remembering Allah and turning away from both remembrance and the One to be remembered. The more the love for this world and its affairs, the thicker the veil and the curtain on the heart.

Sometimes this love so overwhelms the heart, and the power [*sult*] of endearing post and position becomes so influential that the light of the divine nature [*fitrat 'ull*] in the heart is put off, and the doors of happiness are closed to man's face. It is, however, possible that the locks of the hearts mentioned in the noble *yah*:

“Will they, then, not meditate on the Qur'an, or are there locks on the hearts?”[13](#)

Are those locks of mundane attachments. The one who wants to be benefited by the Qur'anic knowledge and to make use of the divine admonitions will have to purge the heart from such impurities, and drive away the pollution of cordial sins, which are being engaged with other than Him, because the non-purified [heart] is no place for these secrets. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“It is surely a noble Qur'an, in a protected Book; none shall touch it save the purified ones.”[14](#)

Just as the touching of the external body of this Book is not allowed for the one whose external body is not purified, by both legislation and obligation, similarly its knowledge, admonitions and secrets are

prohibited to the one whose heart is smeared with the filths of the mundane longings. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“This is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guide for those who fear Allah.”¹⁵

The one who does not fear Allah and is faithless according to the God-fearing and faith of the common people is deprived from the formal lights of the admonitions of the Qur'an and of its true beliefs, while the one who does not fear Allah and is faithless according to other degrees of fearing Allah, which are the fearing of the elite, of the upper elite and of the uppermost elite is deprived from the other degrees of the Qur'an.

However, going into the details and relating other *ʿayyāhs* to the same effect would lengthen the subject. Nevertheless, we are going to end this chapter with an honored *ʿayyah*, which will be sufficient for the wakeful people, provided that it is well pondered upon.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

“...Indeed there has come to you from Allah a light, and a clear Book, with which Allah guides him who seeks His pleasure unto the ways of safety, and brings them out of darkness into the light by His permission, and guides them unto a straight path.”¹⁶

There are many specific points in this noble *ʿayyah*, and to explain them we would need to write a separate thesis, for which there is no opportunity now.

¹ Sūrah al-Kahf 18:66

² Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:260

³ Sūrah Tī-Ḥā 20:114

⁴ Sūrah an-Naba' 78:40

⁵ Sūrah al-Furqān 25:30

⁶ Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1, “Book of the Merits of Knowledge,” ch. on “The Description of Knowledge and its Merits,” hadīth 1, p. 37.

⁷ Sūrah al-Kahf 18:66

⁸ Sūrah al-Fajr 89:22

⁹ Sūrah Tī-Ḥā 20:5

¹⁰ Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 89, “The Book of the Qur'an,” ch. 8, hadīth 48, p. 95; 'Ayyūshī's Exegesis, vol. 1, p. 12.

¹¹ Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 2, “Book of Knowledge,” hadīth 41, p. 303, as quoted from Ikml ad-Dīn (Completing the Religion).

¹² Sūrah al-An'ām 7:179

¹³ Sūrah Muhammad 47:24

¹⁴ Sūrah al-Wāq'iah 56:77-79

¹⁵ Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:2

¹⁶ Sūrah al-M'īdah 5:15-16

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