KHAWF – FEAR

QUR'AN - (The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He enables a way out for him (of every difficulty). (Surah At-Talaaq, 2)¹

Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He makes his affair easy for him. (Surah At-Talaaq, 4)²

Whoever keeps from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety, He blots out from him his evil deeds, and vastly enlarges reward for him. (Surah At-Talaaq, 5)³

Will you not fight against the people who have broken their pledges and have done all they could to drive the Messenger (from where he chooses to dwell), and initiated hostilities against you? Do you hold them in awe? But, assuredly God has greater right to be held in awe, if you are sincere believers. (Surah At-Tawbah, 13)⁴

Then, a while after that, your hearts became hardened; they were like rocks, or even harder, for there are rocks from which rivers come gushing; there are some that split and water issues from them; and there are still others that roll down for fear and awe of God. (Whereas your hearts are harder than rocks, and) God is not unaware and unmindful of what you do. (Surah Al-Baqarah,74)⁵

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=65

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=65

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=65

⁴ http://mguran.org/index.php?option=com_guran&action=viewayat&surano=9&min=10&show=10

⁵ http://mguran.org/index.php?option=com_guran&action=viewayat&surano=2&min=70&show=10

Those to whom some people said: "Look, those people have gathered against you, therefore be fearful of them. " But it increased them only in faith, and they responded: "God is sufficient for us; how excellent a Guardian He is!" (Surah Al-'Imran, 173)⁶

The true believers are only those who, when God is mentioned, their hearts tremble with awe, and when His Revelations are recited to them, it strengthens them in faith, and they put their trust in their Lord. (Surah Al-Anfal, 2) ⁷

HADITH

Thabit narrated from Anas, that:

The Prophet entered upon a young man while he was dying. So he said: "How do you feel?" He said: "By Allah! O Messenger of Allah! Indeed I hope in Allah and I fear from my sins." So the Messenger of Allah said: "These two will not be gathered in a worshipper's heart at a time such as this, except that Allah will grant him what he hopes and make him safe from what he fears."⁸

'A'isha, the wife of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), reported:

I never saw Allah's Messenger (ماليوساء) laugh to such an extent that I could see his uvula-whereas he used to smile only-and when he saw dark clouds or wind, (the signs of fear) were depicted on his face. I said: Messenger of Allah, I find people being happy when they ace the dark cloud in the hope that it would bring rain, but I find that when you see that (the cloud) there is an anxiety on your face. He said: 'A'isha, I am afraid that there may be a calamity in it, for a people was afflicted with wind, when the people saw the calamity they said:" It is a cloud which would give us rain" (Qur'an. xlvi. 24).9

Abu Dharr narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w) said:

"Indeed I see what you do not see, and I hear what you do not hear. The Heavens moan, and they have the right to moan. There is no spot, the size of four fingers in them, except that there is an angel placing his forehead in it, prostrating to Allah. By Allah! If you knew what I know, then you would laugh little and you would cry much. And you would not taste the pleasures of your women in the beds, and

⁶ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=3&min=170&show=10

⁷ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=8

⁸ http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/10/19

⁹ http://sunnah.com/muslim/9/17

you would go out beseeching Allah. And I wish that I was but a felled tree." [Abu 'Eisa said:] There are narrations on this topic from 'Aishah, Abu Hurairah, Ibn 'Abbas, and Anas. [He said:] This Hadith is Hasan Gharib. It has been related through routes other than this, that Abu Dharr said: "I wish that I was a felled tree." And it has been related from Abu Dharr in Mawquf form.¹⁰

'Ala' reported on the authority of his father who reported on the authority of Abu Huraira that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

If a believer were to know the punishment (in Hell) none would have the audacity to aspire for Paradise (but he would earnestly desire to be rescued from Hell), and if a non-believer were to know what is there with Allah as a mercy. none would have been disappointed in regard to Paradise.¹¹

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud that the Messenger of Allah (عَيْنِكُ) said:

"There is no believing slave who sheds tears, even if they are like the head of a fly, out of fear of Allah, and they roll down his cheeks, but Allah will forbid him to the Fire." 12

Ibn 'Abbas (May Allah be pleased with them) reported:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (عيانياله) saying, "Two eyes will never be touched by the fire of Hell; an eye which weeps out of Fear of Allah and an eye which spends the night in guarding in the Cause of Allah ."13

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Messenger (عطواله) said, "The deeds of anyone of you will not save you (from the (Hell) Fire)."

They said, "Even you (will not be saved by your deeds), O Allah's Messenger (عيالوالله)?" He said, "No, even I (will not be saved) unless and until Allah bestows His Mercy on me. Therefore, do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and worship Allah in the forenoon and in the afternoon and during a part of the night, and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (Paradise).¹⁴

¹⁰ http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/36/9

¹¹ http://sunnah.com/muslim/50/27

¹² http://sunnah.com/urn/1292990

¹³ http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/12/21

¹⁴ http://sunnah.com/bukhari/81/52

COMMENTARIES

<u>From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi — a thematic tafseer</u>

The Words, The Twenty-Fourth Word, Fifth Branch, First Fruit

O soul and O friend! Two faculties, through which one may experience fear and love, have been included in man's nature. This love and fear are bound to be turned towards either creatures or Creator. However, fear of creatures is a grievous affliction, while love for them is a calamitous tribulation. For you will fear people who will neither pity you nor accept your pleas for mercy. So fear is a grievous calamity. As for love, the one you love will either not recognize you or will depart without bidding you farewell. Like your youth and property. Or else he will despise you because of your love. Have you not noticed that in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases of metaphorical love, the lover complains about the beloved. For to love and idol ize worldly beloveds with the inner heart, which is the mirror of the Eternally Besought One, oppresses the beloved, and he finds it disagreeable and rejects it. Because man's nature rejects and casts away things that are contrary to it and unworthy of it. (Physical loves are outside our discussion.)

That is to say, the things you love either will not recognize you, or they will scorn you, or they will not accompany you. They will part from you in spite of you. Since this is so, direct your fear and love to the One by Whom your fear will become pleasurable abasement, and your love, shadowless happiness. Yes, to fear the Glorious Creator means finding a way to His compassionate mercy, and taking refuge in it. Fear is a whip; it drives you into the embrace of His mercy. It is well-known that a mother gently scares her infant, for example, and draws it to her breast. The fear is most pleasurable for the child, because it drives him to her tender embrace. Whereas the tenderness of all mothers is but a flash of Divine mercy. That means there is a supreme pleasure in fear of God. If there is such pleasure in fear of God, it is clear what infinite pleasure there is to be found in love of God. Moreover, one who fears God is saved from the calamitous and distressing fear of others. Also, because it is for God's sake, the love he has for creatures is not tinged with sorrow and separation.

Indeed, man loves firstly himself, then his relations, then his nation, then living creatures, then the universe, and the world. He is connected with all these spheres. He may receive pleasure at their pleasure and pain at their pain. However, since nothing is stable in this world of upheavals and revolutions swift as the wind, man's wretched heart is constantly wounded. The things his hands cling onto tear at them as they depart, even severing them. He remains in perpetual distress, or else plunges into heedless drunkenness. Since it is thus, my soul, if you have sense, gather together all those loves and give them to their true owner; be saved from those calamities. These infinite loves are particular to One possessing infinite perfection and beauty. When you give it to its true owner, you will be able to love everything without distress in His name and as His mirrors. That means this love should not be spent directly on the universe. Otherwise, while being a delicious bounty, it becomes a grievous affliction.¹⁵

¹⁵ http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.367

The Letters, The Twenty-Ninth Letter, Sixth Section, Second Stratagem

One of the strongest and most basic emotions in man is the sense of fear. Scheming oppressors profit greatly from the vein of fear. They restrain the pusillanimous with it. The agents of the worldly and propagandists of the people of misguidance take advantage of this vein of the common people and of the religious scholars in particular. They frighten them and excite their groundless fears. For example, in order to scare a coward who is on a roof and put him in danger, a scheming man shows him something which he supposes is harmful; he excites his fear and draws him gradually towards the edge of the roof; then he makes him fall and break his neck. In exactly the same way, they make people sacrifice most important things due to most unimportant fears. Trying to avoid a mosquito bite, they flee into the dragon's mouth.

One time, an eminent person - May God have mercy on him - was frightened of climbing into a rowing-boat. One evening, we walked together to the Bridge in Istanbul. We had to board a boat; there was no carriage and we were going to Eyüp Sultan. I insisted. He said: "I'm frightened. Perhaps it'll sink!" I said to him: "How many boats do you reckon there are, here on the Golden Horn?" He replied: "Perhaps a thousand." So I asked him: "How many boats sink in a year?" He said: "One or two. Perhaps none at all." I asked him: "How many days are there in a year?" "Three hundred and sixty," he replied. So I said to him: "The possibility of sinking, which provokes these groundless fears and makes you anxious, is one in three hundred and sixty thousand. Someone who is frightened at such a possibility is not a human being, he couldn't even be an animal!" Then I asked him: "How long do you reckon you will live?" He replied: "I am old; perhaps I'll live another ten years." So I said to him: "The appointed hour of death is secret, so we could die any day. In which case, you might die on any day of the three thousand six hundred. You see, there is a one in three thousand possibility that you might die today rather than one in three hundred thousand like the boat; so tremble and weep, and write your will!" He came to his senses, and I got him, trembling, to board the boat. When on board, I told him: "Almighty God gave the sense of fear to preserve life, not to destroy it! He did not give life so that it would be burdensome, difficult, painful, and torment. If fear is caused by a possibility of one in two, three, or four, or even one in five or six, it is a precautionary fear and may be licit. But to fear a possibility of one in twenty, thirty, or forty, is groundless, and makes life torture!"

My brothers! If those who toady to the atheists attack you by frightening you into giving up your sacred *jihad* of the word, say to them: "We are the party of the Qur'an. According to the verse,

We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it, (15:9)

we are in the citadel of the Qur'an. The verse,

For us God suffices, and He is the Best Disposer of Affairs(3:173)

is a firm bastion surrounding us. Utilizing fear at a one in thousands possibility of some minor harm coming to our fleeting transient lives here, you cannot drive us through our own wills down a way on which there is a hundred per cent possibility of its causing thousandfold harm to our eternal lives!" And say too: "Is there anyone who has suffered harm due to Said Nursi, our friend in the service of the Qur'an and Master and foreman in running this sacred work, or from people of truth like us who are his companions on the way of truth? Is there anyone who has been caused any trouble at the hand of his close students, that we might be caused it too? So should we be anxious at the possibility of suffering it? This brother of ours has thousands of friends and brothers of the hereafter. Although for twenty to thirty years he played an influential role in the social life of this world, we have not heard that a single of his brothers suffered harm because of him, and at that time he was brandishing the club of politics. Now he holds the light of reality rather than the club. For sure, long ago they mixed him up in the Thirty-First of March Incident and they crushed some of his friends, but it later became clear that others had instigated the affair. His friends suffered misfortune, not because of him but because of his enemies. Moreover, at that time he saved very many of his friends. So satans like

you shouldn't get it into their minds to make us throw away an eternal treasury out of fear at a danger the possibility of which is not one in a thousand but in thousands." You should say that and hit those toadies of the people of misguidance in the mouth, and drive them away! And tell them this:

"And if the possibility of death is not one in hundreds of thousands but a hundred per cent probability, if we have a jot of sense, we will not be frightened and abandon him and flee!" For it has been seen through repeated experiences, and it is seen, that the calamity which is visited on those who betray their elder brother or their Master in times of danger, strikes them first. And they are punished mercilessly and they are looked down upon contemptuously. Both physically dead and their spirits abased, they are in effect dead. Those who torment them feel no pity for them, for they say: "Since they betrayed their Master who was loyal and kind to them, they must be completely despicable and deserve contempt, not pity!"

Yes, the reality is this. Also, if a tyrannical, unscrupulous man throws someone to the ground and stands over him certain to crush his head with his foot, and the man on the ground kisses that savage oppressor's foot, due to his abasement his heart will be crushed before his head, and his spirit will die before his body. He will lose his head, and his self-respect and pride will be destroyed. By displaying weakness before the savage tyrant without conscience, he encourages him to crush him. But if the oppressed man spits in the tyrant's face, he will save his heart and his spirit, and his body will be a wronged martyr. Yes, spit in the shameless faces of the oppressors!

One time when the British had destroyed the guns on the Bosphorus and occupied Istanbul, the head clergyman of the Anglican Church, the main religious establishment of that country, asked six questions of the Shaikh al-Islam's Office. I was a member of the Darü'l-Hikmeti'l-Islamiye at the time. They asked me to answer them, saying that they wanted a six-hundred-word reply to their six questions. But I told them: "I'll answer them not with six hundred words, or even with six words, or even a single word, but with a mouthful of spit! For you can see that government; the moment it set foot on our Bosphorus, its clergyman arrogantly asked us six questions. Faced with this, we should spit in his face. So spit in the pitiless faces of those tyrants!" And now I say:

My brothers! At a time a tyrannical government like the British had occupied us the protection of the Qur'an was enough for me, although it was a hundred per cent certain that harm would come to me from confronting them in this way through the tongue of the press, so it is definitely a

hundred times more sufficient for you in the face of the harm that may come to you at the hand of these insignificant bullies, which is only a one in a hundred possibility.

Furthermore, my brothers! Most of you have done your military service. Any who haven't, have certainly heard this. And any who haven't heard it, let them hear it now from me: "The people who receive most wounds are those who abandon their trenches and run away. While the people who receive fewest wounds are those who persevere in their trenches!"

The allusive meaning of the verse,

Say: "The death from which you flee will truly overtake you" (62:8)

shows that those who run away are more likely to meet death through their flight!16

¹⁶ http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.202.477

Mathnawi Al-Nuri, The Sixth Treatise, A grain contained by a fruit in the garden of the Qur'an

KNOW, O FRIEND, that intellect, which comprehends the universe and goes so far beyond it, is sometimes drowned in a drop, disappears in an atom, is lost in a hair, and restricts existence to what it is lost in, wishing to include all that it comprehends in that which has swallowed it. If you had the power to possess and control this material domain, if it really belonged to you, your fear and anxiety about maintaining it would make it very hard for you to benefit from it. However, the All-Munificent Bestower of bounties agrees to provide whatever you need. All you have to do is to eat from the table of His favors and thank Him. Thanking Him will cause Him to increase His favors upon you, for it means seeing the act of favoring or giving bounties. Seeing this act removes the grief arising from the bounties' disappearance, for this disappearance is not eternal. Like fruits eaten this year being succeeded by new ones next year, it means departing to make room for something new. Thus, it gives you the delight of ever-renewed pleasure. Their latest call: All praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds (10:10), indicates that praising is itself a pleasure. Praising means that you see the tree of [Divine] favoring in the favor of fruits. It removes the pain arising from the thought of their disappearance, and becomes the pleasure itself. ¹⁷

Fethullah Gulen - Sufism 1 — a thematic tafseer

Khawf and Khashya (Fear and Reverence)

In Sufism, fear denotes abstaining not only from all that is forbidden, but also from those deeds from which it is advisable to refrain. It also signifies, as the opposite of hope or expectation, that a traveler on the path to Truth does not feel secure against deviation and thereby incurring Divine punishment in the Hereafter. As a result, the traveler refrains from conceit and self-praise.

According to Al-Qushayri, fear forces a traveler on the spiritual path to hold back and refrain from displeasing God. As such, it pertains to the future. Fear arises from one's apprehension of being subjected to something displeasing, or uneasiness over not obtaining what is desired. In that sense also, fear pertains to the future. In many verses, the Qur'an points out the future results of one's deeds and actions, and thereby seeks to establish a world embracing the future, one in which it is possible to discern the future with both its good and bad elements.

Implanting fear concerning their end or whether they will die as believing Muslims in the hearts of its followers, the Qur'an warns them to be steadfast in their belief and practice of Islam. Many verses cause hearts to tremble with fear, and are like threads with which to knit the lace of life. For example: Something will appear before them which they had never anticipated (39:47); and Say: Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers by their works? Those whose efforts have been wasted in the life of the world while they thought they were doing good (18:103-4). How happy and

¹⁷ https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/sgia/imeis/masnavinuriye ingilizce 23 02 07.pdf

prosperous are those who knit the laces of their lives with these threads! With such warnings, the Qur'an orients us toward the Hereafter and encourages us to consider it more important than anything else.

In His luminous Speech, God Almighty uses fear as a whip to force us to His Presence and honor us with His company. Like a mother's reproofs to her child that draws him or her to her warm, affectionate arms, this whip attracts the believer toward the depths of Divine Mercy and enriches him or her with God's blessings and bounties that He compels humanity to deserve and receive out of His Mercy and Graciousness. For this reason, every decree and command mentioned in the Qur'an and forced upon humanity originates in Divine Mercy and uplifts souls, in addition to its being alarming and threatening.

One whose heart is full of fear and awe for the Almighty cannot be afraid of others, and is therefore freed from all useless and suffocating fear. In His luminous, hope-giving Speech, the Almighty tells people not to fear anything or anyone other than Him: Have no fear of them. Fear Me, if you are true believers (3:175); exhorts them not to suffer groundless phobias: Fear Me alone (2:40) and: They fear their Lord, overseeing them from high, and they do all that they are commanded (16:50); and praises those hearts that fear and hold only Him in awe: They forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope (32:16).

He praises them because those who design their lives according to their fear of God use their willpower carefully and strive to avoid sins. Such sensitive and careful souls fly in the heavens of God's approval and pleasure. The following is an appropriate saying by the author of Lujja:

If you are fearful of God's wrath, be steadfast in religion, For a tree holds fast to earth with its roots against violent storms.

The lowest degree of fear is that required by belief: Fear Me, if you are (true) believers (3:175). A somewhat higher degree of fear is that arising from knowledge or learning: Among His servants the learned alone fear God truly (35:28). The highest degree of fear is that combined with awe and arising from one's knowledge of God: God orders you to fear Him in awe (3:28).

Some Sufis divide fear into two categories: awe and reverence. Although very close in meaning, awe connotes the feeling that leads an initiate to flee toward God, while reverence causes an initiate to take refuge in Him. An initiate who continuously feels awe thinks of fleeing, while one seeking shelter strives to take refuge in Him. Those choosing to flee make progress on the path difficult for themselves, for they live an ascetic life and suffer the pains of separation from the Almighty. However, those holding Him in reverence drink the sweet, enlivening water of nearness, which comes from taking refuge in Him.

Perfect reverence was a characteristic of all Prophets. When in this state, the Prophets nearly fell down dead, as if they had heard the Trumpet of Israfil and were brought before the full Majesty and Grandeur of the Truth. They were always conscious of the meaning of: When His Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down, and Moses fell down in a swoon (7:143). Among those brought near to God, the one nearest to Him and the master of reverence, upon him be peace and blessings, said: I see what you do not see and hear what you do not hear. If only you knew that the heavens creaked and groaned. In fact, they had to do so, for there is no space of even four fingers' breadth in the heavens where angels do not prostrate themselves. I swear by God that if you

knew what I know (with respect to God's Grandeur), you would laugh little but weep much. You would avoid lying with your wives and cry out prayers unto God in fields and mountains.

Here, the Prophet reveals his reverence that leads him to take refuge in God, and describes the awe of others that causes them to flee. Abu Dharr expresses this attitude of fleeing in his addition to this Prophetic Tradition: I wish I had been a tree pulled out by the roots and cut into pieces.

One whose soul is full of reverence and awe of God does not commit sins, even if he does not seem to feel fear. Suhayb was one of those overcome with awe of God. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, praised him, saying: What an excellent servant Suhayb is! Even if he did not fear God, he would not commit sins.

One who fears God sometimes sighs and sometimes weeps, especially when alone, in an attempt to extinguish the pain of being separate from Him as well as the fire of Hell, which is the greatest distance between him and God. As stated in the Tradition: A man who weeps for fear of God will not enter Hell until the milk drawn (from a mammal) is put back into the breasts (from which it was drawn), shedding tears is the most effective way of putting out the fires of Hell. A believer sometimes confuses what he or she has done with what he or she has not done and, fearing that the action has arisen from his or her fancy or carnal self due to a personal failure to resist temptation, feels great regret and seeks refuge in God. The description of such souls is found in the following Tradition:

When the verse: Those who give what they give while their hearts are in awe, because they are to return to their Lord (23:60) was revealed, 'A'isha, the Prophet's wife, asked the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings: Are those (who are in awe because they are to return to their Lord) those who commit such major sins as fornication, theft, and drinking alcohol? The Prophet, the Glory of Mankind, answered: No, 'A'isha. Those mentioned in the verse are those who, although they perform the prescribed prayers, fast, and give alms, tremble with fear that such acts of worship may not be accepted by God.

Abu Sulayman Darani says that although a servant must always be fearful (that God may not be pleased and therefore punish him or her) and hopeful (that God may be pleased), it is safer for one's heart to beat with fear and reverence. Sharing the view of Darani, Shaykh Ghalib expresses his feelings of fear: Open the eyes of my soul with a thousand-fold fear! ¹⁸

¹⁸ Mar 1993, Vol 15, Issue 170, http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/1352-key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24731-khawf-and-khashya-fear-and-reverence