

CHAPTER TWO

Envy is a Sickness of the Heart

Some people said while explaining its meaning:

‘Envy (*hasad*) is a grievance that befalls one due to knowledge of the good condition of the wealthy.’

So in accordance with this it is not possible that the person upon whom the blessings have been bestowed be jealous of these blessings because this person has them and is accustomed to them.

A group of people said:

‘It is a desire to have the blessings removed from the one who is envied even if the one who is jealous does not attain the likes of these blessings.’

This is different from *ghubṭa*¹ (also meaning envy) because it

¹ *Ghubṭa*: envy, referring to the permissible form of envy where the envier wishes to have the same blessings as the envied but without desiring to see them removed from the envied. This is opposed to *hasad*, the blameworthy form of envy where the envier wishes to see the blessings removed from the envied.

refers to a desire to possess the blessings bestowed upon the one who is envied but without the desire to see them removed from him.

[2.1 The Types of *Hasad*]

Strictly speaking, envy (*hasad*) is hatred and disliking the good condition of the envied one. This of two types:

1) Unrestricted dislike of the blessings bestowed upon the envied. This is the type of jealousy which incurs blame, so when one hates something he is then hurt and grieved by the existence of what he hates, and this becomes a sickness in his heart such that he takes pleasure in removal of the blessings from the envied even if this does not result in any benefit to him except for the single benefit of having the pain that was in his soul removed. But this pain is not removed except as a result of his continuously watching the envied so that the jealous person finds relief when the blessing is removed, but then it becomes more severe as is the case of the one who is sick, for it is possible that this blessing, or one similar to it, returns to the envied. This is why this second group said:

‘It is a desire to have the blessings removed,’

for indeed the one who dislikes the blessings bestowed upon other than him desires to see them removed.

2) That he dislikes the superiority of that person over him, and he desires to be like him or better, so this is jealousy and has been called *ghubṭa*, and the Prophet (ﷺ) called it *hasad* in the *ḥadīth* reported by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim from the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Umar, (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhum*), that he (ﷺ) said:

There is no envy (*hasad*) except in two cases: a person to whom Allāh has granted wisdom, and he rules by this and teaches it to the people, and a person to whom Allāh has granted wealth and property and along with this the power to spend it in the cause of Truth.²

This being the wording of Ibn Mas'ūd. The wording of Ibn 'Umar, (*radīy Allāhu 'anhumā*) is,

A person to whom Allāh has given the Qur'ān and he recites it night and day, and a person to whom Allāh has granted wealth and property from which he gives in charity night and day.³

Al-Bukhārī also reports this *ḥadīth* from Abū Hurayrah (*radīy Allāhu 'anhū*) and its wording is,

There is no desirable form of jealousy except for two types: a person to whom Allāh has given the Qur'ān and he recites it day and night, so when a person hears him he says, 'If only I were given the likes of what he has been given so that I may act upon it the way this person is.' And a person to whom Allāh has bestowed wealth and he spends in the cause of Truth, so a person says, 'If only I were given the likes of what he has been given, so that I may act upon it the way this person is.'⁴

² *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* [Eng. Trans. 1/62 no. 73], *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [Eng. Trans. 2/389 no. 1779].

³ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* [Eng. Trans. 6/500 no. 543], *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [Eng. Trans. 2/388 no. 1777].

⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* [Eng. Trans. 6/501 no. 544].

So the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade *hasad*, with the exception of two cases which are referred to as *al-ghubṭa*, meaning that a person love the condition of someone else and dislike that this person be superior in this way (without his wishing that it be removed from that person).

So if it is asked: 'Then why is this called envy when he loves only that Allāh bestows these blessings upon him?' It is said, 'The starting point of this love is his looking towards the favours Allāh has bestowed upon someone else and his disliking that this person be favoured over him. So if this other person were not present then he would not have desired these blessings. So because the starting point of this love is this dislike that someone else be made superior to him, then this is called envy due to the love following the dislike. As for desiring that Allāh bestows favours upon him without consideration of people's material conditions then this is not envy at all.'

This is why the generality of mankind have been tried with this second type of envy that has also been called *al-munāfasah* (competition) because two people compete in a single desired matter, both of them trying to attain the same good. The reason for their trying to attain it is that one of them dislikes that the other be blessed with this matter over him just as any one of two competitors dislikes that other beat him.

Competition is not considered blameworthy in general, rather it is considered to be praiseworthy when competing for righteousness, the Exalted said,

﴿٢١﴾ إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يُنظُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ تَعْرِفُ فِي
 وَجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٢٤﴾ يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴿٢٥﴾
 يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

Indeed the pious will be in delight. On thrones, looking on. You will recognize in their faces the brightness of delight. They will be given to drink pure sealed wine. The last thereof (that wine) will be the smell of Musk, and for this let those compete who want to compete.

[*Sūrah al-Mutaffifin* (83):22-26]

So one is commanded to compete for these delights and not to compete for the delight of this fleeting world. This is in total agreement to the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (ﷺ), for he forbade envy except of the one who has been granted knowledge and he acts according to it and teaches it, and the one who has been bestowed wealth and spends it (in the way of Allāh). As for the one who has been granted knowledge but does not act upon this knowledge, or the one who has been bestowed wealth but does not spend this is obedience to Allāh, then such a person is not to be envied and neither is his condition to be hoped for, for he is not in a state of good that is desirable, rather he is being presented with punishment. He also allowed jealousy for the one who has been given a responsibility and he fulfils it with knowledge and justice, and fulfils the trusts of its owners, and judges amongst the people by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.

The station of such a person is lofty but this only comes after a great amount of effort (*jihād*) - the same is true of the *mujāhid*. But the souls do not envy the one who is in severe hardship and this is why the Prophet (ﷺ) did not mention it even though the

mujāhid, fighting in the Way of Allāh, is superior to the one who is spending wealth. The opposite is true for the teacher and spender for they have no enemy in the physical world, but in the case that there were an enemy that they would have to perform *jihād* against, then their ranking is more superior (than their station without having an enemy to fight). Similarly the Prophet (ﷺ) did not mention the one who prays, fasts and performs the pilgrimage, because there is no tangible benefit attained from the people for these actions by which the person can be exalted or disgraced, as can be attained in teaching and spending.

[2.2 Between *Hasad* and *Ghubta*]

Fundamentally, envy occurs when someone else attains power and authority; otherwise the one who is performing actions is not normally envied, even if this person be blessed with far more food, drink and wives than others, as opposed to these two blessings of power and authority, for they cause a great deal of envy. This is why you find envy directed at the People of Knowledge, who have a following amongst the people that you will not find directed to others who do not have such a following. Similarly for the one who attracts a following due to his spending his wealth, for the people benefit this person by nourishing his heart, and this person brings benefit to them by nourishment of the bodies. Mankind is in need of that which will correct them in both these matters, this is why Allāh, the one free from imperfection, has propounded two parables,

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا
 مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنْ آثَارِ رِزْقِ أَحْسَنًا
 فَهُوَ يَنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ
 بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ
 أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمٌ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى
 مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ
 يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

Allāh puts forward the example: a slave under the possession of another, he has no power of any sort, and (the other) a man on whom We have bestowed a good provision from Us, and he spends thereof secretly and openly. Could they be equal? (By no means, not). All the praises and thanks be to Allāh. Nay! (But) most of them know not. And Allāh puts forward another parable of two men, one of them dumb, who has no power over anything, and he is a burden to his master, whichever way he directs him he brings no good. Is such a man equal to one who commands justice, and is himself on the Straight Path?

[*Sūrah al-Nahl* (16):75-76]

These two parables were propounded by Allāh for His Own Holy Self and for that which is worshipped besides Him, for indeed the idols are not capable of performing any actions that would be of benefit, and neither of saying anything that would be of benefit. So when a completely powerless slave under the possession of someone is considered, and another to whom Allāh has provided a goodly provision from which he spends in secret

and in the open, can this slave, incapable of doing good, and this person capable of doing good for the people in secret and open, ever be equal? And He, free is as He from defect, is able to bestow good upon His servants, and as He is continuously doing so. So how can this incapable slave (i.e. the idol) who cannot do anything, be likened to Allāh to the extent that he is worshipped alongside Him? So this is the parable of one to whom Allāh has bestowed wealth from which he spends day and night.

The second parable: when two people are considered, one of them is dumb, he does not understand nor speak, and is not capable of anything and is in fact a burden upon his master, for whichever way he directs him he brings no good and hence he is of absolutely no use. The other is a just scholar - enjoining justice and acting justly, and is upon the Straight Path. This person is then like the one upon whom Allāh has conferred wisdom and he acts according to it and teaches it. And Allāh has propounded this parable for Himself, for He is All-Knowing, All-Just, All-Powerful, commanding justice, He is maintaining His creation in justice is upon the Straight Way as He, the Exalted said,

شَهِدَ
 اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ
 لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾

Allāh bears witness that there is none worthy of worship but He, and the angels, and those having knowledge; (He is always) maintaining His creation in Justice. There is none worthy of worship but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.

[Sūrah *Al 'Imrān* (3):18.]

And He said upon the tongue of Hūd,

إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

Indeed my Lord is upon the Straight Path.

[*Sūrah Hūd* (11):56]

This is why the people used to exalt the home of al-‘Abbās: ‘Abdullāh used to teach the people and his brother used to feed them, and so they used to exalt them due to this.

Mu‘āwiyah, (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), saw the people asking Ibn ‘Umar about the rites of Ḥajj and Ibn ‘Umar would give them the verdicts, to which Mu‘āwiyah said, ‘By Allāh this is nobility’ or something similar.

[2.3 The Competition between aṣ-Ṣiddīq and ‘Umar]

So here is ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) competing with Abū Bakr (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*) with respect to spending in charity as is established in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* (of al-Bukhārī) from ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, (*radīy Allāhu ‘anhu*), that he said:

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) commanded us to give in charity, and this coincided with my possessing some wealth. So I said (to myself): ‘If there is a day that I can better Abū Bakr than it is this one.’ So I went with half of my wealth and the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) asked me, ‘What have you left for your family?’ I replied, ‘The same amount.’ Then Abū Bakr came with everything that he possessed and the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) asked him, ‘What have you left for your family?’ He replied, ‘I have left Allāh

and His Messenger for them.⁵ So I said, 'I will never be able to better you in anything!'

So what 'Umar did here was competition and the permitted type of jealousy (*ghubṭa*), but the state of *aṣ-Ṣiddiq* was better than his, and thus he would generally be the victor in such competition due to his indifference to the condition of others.

[2.4 Moses Displays *Ghubṭa*]

Likewise is the case with Prophet Mūsā as is mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of *Mi'rāj* that he competed and felt jealousy towards the Prophet (ﷺ) to the point that he,

Cried due to the extent to which the Prophet (ﷺ) has surpassed him. So it was said to him, 'Why are you crying?' He replied, 'I am crying because there is a servant who shall be sent after me, and more of his nation shall enter Paradise than mine.'⁵

This *ḥadīth* is also reported in other than the *Ṣaḥīḥ* with a different wording,

We passed a person while he was saying in a loud voice, 'You have blessed him and honoured him (over me).' So we were raised to him and gave him our salām, he replied to our salām and said, 'Who is this with you O Jibrā'īl?' He said, 'This is Aḥmad.' He said, 'Welcome O Illiterate Prophet who has conveyed the Message of his Lord and sincerely advised his nation.' Then we moved on and I said, 'Who was this O Jibrā'īl?' He replied, 'That was Mūsā bin 'Imrān.' I said, 'And who was he censuring?' He

⁵ Reported by both al-Bukhārī and Muslim