

أصحاب الأندود

The People
Of The Ditch

بقلم الشيخ رفاعي سرور

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The People of the Ditch

A historical outlook on the *da'wab*

A thorough study on the methodology of the *da'wab*

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This is the way...

The author.

Author's Introduction

All praise is due to Allāh Alone, and may prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allāh.

This is a story that was narrated in a *hadīth* on the authority of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). Anyone who narrated a *hadīth* on the authority of the Messenger (ﷺ) was either a narrator who specialised in narration - such as Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ‘Abbās - or he was a Companion who was not a specialist, but felt compelled that he should narrate a particular *hadīth* either due to the legal rulings it comprised with regards his livelihood – such as ‘Adiyy ibn Hātīm who narrated *hadīths* about hunting, since he was a hunter – or due to the deep impact of its meanings. The narrator of this *hadīth* falls into the latter category, and narrated it because he was deeply affected by its meaning – the narrator is Suhayb al-Rūmī. He was among the Muslims who were oppressed in Makkah and wanted to emigrate with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) but was unable to do so, so he tried to escape after the Emigration. The polytheists found out about his plan and chased him. When they drew closer to him, they said to him, “You came to us a poor man, and you became rich when you were among us. Do you now wish to take this wealth to Muhammad?” He replied, “If I tell you where my wealth is, will you leave me alone?” They said, “Yes.” So he told them where his wealth was and they left him alone. When he reached the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and told him what happened, he (ﷺ) said, “*A profitable sale! A profitable sale!*”¹

It was in relation to Suhayb al-Rūmī that Allāh ﷻ revealed,

And among mankind is he who would sell himself, seeking the Pleasure of Allāh. And Allāh is Kind to [His] slaves [al-Baqarah, verse 207]

Khabbāb ibn al-Arat also narrated a portion of this *hadīth* on the authority of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and explained how the callers to Allāh were tortured and sawed in half, as will be mentioned later in the story. To know who Khabbāb was, it should suffice to say that he was the one who voiced the hopes of all the oppressed Muslims when he said, “I went to the Prophet (ﷺ) when he was leaning on his cloak in the shade of the Ka‘bah. We had endured a lot of harm from the polytheists, so I said to him, “Will you supplicate to Allāh for us?”...and in one narration, “Will you ask Allāh to help us?”²

To know who Khabbāb was, it should also suffice to to say that he learnt *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’* directly from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Imām Ahmad reported on the authority of Ma‘diyy Karib that he said, “We went to ‘Abdullāh and asked him to recite to us *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’*³ but he said, ‘I do not have it [memorised], but you

¹ Cited by al-Hākim (3/398) and al-Tabarānī (4/348). al-Hākim said, “It is authentic according to the criteria of Muslim.” It was also authenticated by al-Albānī.

² Reported by al-Bukhārī in the chapter: The harm received by the Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions from the polytheists in Makkah (12/315) in the Book of Compulsion, under the heading: “Those who preferred to be killed, beaten and humiliated over disbelief.”

³ **Translator’s note:** The *sūrah* is referred to as ‘*Tā Sīn Mīm al-Mi‘atayn*’ in this hadīth, which means: The chapter that begins with *Tā Sīn Mīm* and has two hundred verses. See the next footnote for further details on which this is *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’*.

should go to the one who learnt it from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ): Khabbāb ibn al-Arat.’ So we went to Khabbāb ibn al-Arat and he recited it to us, may Allāh be pleased with him.”¹

There is an important point to note from the narration of this *hadīth* that was reported in *Sahih al-Tirmidhi*, this being that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) would always mention another *hadīth* along with this one. It was narrated on the authority of Suhayb who said, “When the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) prayed the afternoon prayer he would whisper (*hamasa*) – and some people say this means he would move his lips as though he was talking – so someone said to him, “O Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), when you pray the afternoon prayer, you whisper.” He said, “A prophet from among the prophets was amazed at [the numbers] of his nation, so he said, ‘Who can equal these?’ So Allāh revealed to him that he should grant them a choice – either Allāh could take vengeance upon them, or He could invest their enemy with authority over them. They chose vengeance, so Allāh spread death over them, and on that day 70,000 of them died.”

He said: Whenever the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) narrated this other *hadīth*, mentioned on the authority of Suhayb, he would narrate the *hadīth*, “There was [once] a king...”

After learning that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) would always mentioned these two *hadīths* together, two essential points of a single issue should be considered: the relationship between the number [of people], and how effective that number is.

- The first *hadīth* shows how a large number can be ineffective, expressed by the Prophet’s amazement at the large number.
- The second *hadīth* shows that a small number can prove effective by removing itself from any feelings of having its own might and power, and relying instead upon the might and power of Allāh. This is the purport of this *hadīth*, for there were no more than three individuals making *da‘wah* to Allāh – the monk, the young boy, and the King’s courtier.

This aspect becomes clearer when it is viewed alongside one of the verses that have been mentioned in the Qur’ān regarding this story. The exegetes said regarding the statement of Allāh **فَمَنْ يَدْعُ إِلَى تَالِيسَ**,

And by the witness, and the witnessed.¹

¹ Cited by Ahmad in *al-Musnad* [6/3980] through Wakī’ ibn al-Jarrāh, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Abū Is’hāq, on the authority of Ma’diyy Karib al-Hamdānī, on the authority of Ibn Mas’ūd (may Allāh be pleased with him)

There is a difference of opinion regarding the father of Wakī’. Abū Is’hāq is al-Subay’ī, and he would make mistakes. Only Abū Is’hāq narrated on the authority of Ma’diyy Karib – as far as I know – and al-Bukhārī did not mention anything about him in *al-Tārīkh* (8/41).

Despite this, al-Hāfidh al-Suyūṭī said it was *jayyid* in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (5/82), and al-Shaykh Shākir said it was authentic in *Sharh al-Musnad* #3980.

al-Haythamī said in *Mujma‘ al-Zawā‘id* (7/84), “Ahmad reported it, and his narrators are reliable (*thiqah*), and al-Tabarānī also reported it.”

Note: *Tā Sin Mim al-Mi‘atayn* is in reference to *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’* and not *Sūrat al-Qasas*, indicated by a number of matters, including:

1. *al-Shu‘arā’* has 227 verses, while *al-Qasas* has only 88.
2. In *al-Zawā‘id* (7/82), al-Haythamī put this *hadīth* under the chapter heading, *Sūrat Tā Sin Mim al-Shu‘arā’*.
3. al-Suyūṭī mentioned it in *al-Durr al-Manthūr* under the section on *Sūrat al-Shu‘arā’*.
4. When al-Suyūṭī mentioned it, he mentioned the wording of Abū Nu‘aym in *al-Hilyah*, which includes the words, “...to ask him about *Tā Sin Mim al-Shu‘arā’*.”
5. In Shaykh Shākir’s explanation, he showed that it was in reference to *al-Shu‘arā’* not *al-Qasas*.
6. al-Hāfidh Ibn Kathīr mentioned it when speaking about *al-Qasas*, and al-Suyūṭī repeated it again when speaking about *al-Qasas*.

that the witness refers to the Day of ‘Arafah, and the witnessed refers to Friday. Both represent a large number that proves effectiveness through worship and humility.

We should note that these two important points - the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mention that there was once a prophet who was amazed at his nation, and the *hadīth* “*There was [once] a King...*” - are both narrated on the authority of Suhayb.

This is the *hadīth* of the weak and oppressed...and the lesson taught by those who lived through days of pain and torture for the sake of calling to Allāh (*da‘wah*).

This is the main issue of importance within the story.

A secondary importance is that the story encompasses a complete *da‘wah* experience: its events detail all the various stages and methods of this work, from the initial stage of individual *da‘wah* to the later stage of the collective faith of a group, the transition to which includes the fundamental phase of moving the *da‘wah* from being performed in secret to being openly proclaimed.

Likewise, the events of the story are a direct confirmation of Allāh’s Decree. Thus, the events should be researched in detail, with the aim of defining the methodology according to which the *da‘wah* should be carried out in line with the concept of Allāh’s Decree and His Causes, to enable this methodology to achieve the true Islamic state of affairs for which we strive.

Rifā‘ī Surūr

¹ **Translator’s note:** al-Burūj, verse 3

The Hadith

It is reported on the authority of Suhayb رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said: “There was [once] a King over those who were before you, and the King had a [court] magician. When [the magician] grew old, he said to the King, “I have become old, so send a young boy to me [as an apprentice] so that I may teach him magic.” So [the King] sent him a young boy to teach.

“On his way [to the magician], he came across a monk, so he sat with him and listened to what he had to say, and it impressed him. Whenever he went to the magician, he would pass by the monk and sit with him, so that when he reached the magician, the magician would hit him [for being late]. So [the boy] complained of this to the monk, who replied, “*When you fear the magician, then say ‘My family delayed me.’ And when you fear your family, then say ‘The magician delayed me.’*”

“When he was [doing this], he happened to come across a huge beast that blocked [the path] of the people. So [the boy] said [to himself], “*Today I will know whether the magician is superior or the monk.*” He took a stone and said, “*O Allāh, if the way of the monk is more beloved to You than the way of the magician, then kill this beast so that the people may pass.*” He threw [the stone], killed [the beast], and the people [were able to] pass. [The boy then] went to the monk and told him [about what had happened], so the monk replied, “*O my son! Today you are better than me! You have reached to the stage that I see, and you will [soon] be tested. When you are tested, do not indicate [anything] about me.*”

“The boy [later began to] cure the blind and the lepers, and cure the people of all types of illness. One of the King’s courtiers who had become blind heard [about him], so he came to him bearing many gifts, and said, “*All that I have here will be yours, if you cure me.*” [The boy] replied, “*I do not cure anyone, but rather Allāh بِحلاله و ناله is the One Who cures. If you have faith in Allāh بِحلاله و ناله, I will call upon Allāh to cure you.*” The man had faith in Allāh, and Allāh cured him. He then went to the King and sat by his side as he used to sit before. The King then said to him, “*Who has returned to you your sight?*” He said, “*My Lord.*” [The King] said, “*Do you have a Lord other than me?*” He said, “*My Lord and your Lord is Allāh.*” [The King] then took him and continued to torture him until he pointed him to the boy. So the boy was brought to the King, who said to him, “*My boy, has your magic has reached such a level that you can cure the blind and the leper, and do the things you do...?*” He said, “*I do not cure anyone. It is only Allāh بِحلاله و ناله Who cures.*” The King] then took him and continued to torture him until he pointed him to the monk. So the monk was brought and it was said to him, “*Renounce your religion,*” but he refused. So [the King] ordered for a saw to be brought, which he placed in the middle of his head and his head was sawed until it split in half. The courtier was then brought and it was said to him, “*Renounce your religion,*” but he refused. So [the King] ordered for a saw to be brought, which he placed in the middle of his head and his head was sawed until it split in half. The boy was then brought and it was said to him, “*Renounce your religion,*” but he refused. So [the King] pushed him towards a group of his men and said to them, “*Take him to such-and-such mountain, and climb the mountain with him until you reach the peak. If he renounces his religion [leave him], but if he does not then throw him [off the mountain].*”

“So they took him and climbed the mountain with him. He said, “*O Allāh, save me from them in any way You please,*” [whereupon] the mountain then began to shake and they all fell off it [except the boy]. He then went walking [back] to the King, and the King said to him, “*What did your Companions do?*” He said, “*Allāh بِحلاله و ناله saved me from them.*” So [the King] pushed him towards a group of his men and said, “*Take him in a long boat to the middle of the ocean. If he renounces his religion [then leave him], but if he does not then throw him [into the ocean].*”

“They took him, and he said, “*O Allāh, save me from them in any way You please,*” [whereupon] the boat overturned and they drowned. [The boy] then went walking [back] to the King, and the King said to him, “*What did your Companions do?*” He replied, “*Allāh بِحلاله و ناله saved me from them.*” He

then said to the King, “You will not be able to kill me until you do what I say!” [The King] said, “What is that?” He replied, “[You should] gather all the people on a single plain and tie me to a [tree] trunk. Then, take an arrow from my quiver and place it in the middle of the bow, and say, ‘In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy,’ then shoot me [with the arrow]. If you do that, you will [be able to] kill me.”

“So [the King] gathered all the people in a single plain and tied him to a [tree] trunk. He then took an arrow from his quiver, placed it in the middle of the bow, said, “In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy,” and fired the arrow. The arrow hit his temple. [The boy] placed his hand on his temple, and then died. So the people said, “We believe in the Lord of the boy, we believe in the Lord of the boy, we believe in the Lord of the boy.”

“The King was then told, “Do you see what you feared? By Allāh, that which you feared has happened! The people have believed [in the Lord of the boy].” So [the King] ordered for ditches [to be dug] at the junctions of all the roads. When they were dug, fires were lit in them and [the King] said, “Whoever does not renounce his religion, then throw him in [the fire], or tell them to jump into it.” So this was what happened, until a woman came carrying a baby, and she hesitated to jump into the fire, so her child said to her, “O Mother! Have patience, for you are upon the Truth!”¹”

[Reported by Muslim, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasāʿī]

There was [once] a King over those who were before you, and the King had a [court] magician...

This is the beginning of the story. This specifies the historical period of the events without making specific mention of the time and place they occurred. Thus, the lessons that can be derived from the events remains abstract and absolute, thereby making it possible to espouse the lessons and benefit from them without linking them to their surrounding conditions and circumstances.

Stripping the events of a definite historical time-period is the basis on which this story was preserved, because it was thereafter able to serve as historical evidence that fulfills its role – the lessons of an experience that will last until the end of time, until the Appointed Day.

Thus, the only historical placement was in the saying of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), “over those who were before you,” by which he meant “in the past.” By he (ﷺ) wanted to link this past to the present *daʿwah*, and thus he (ﷺ) said, “before you.” Thus, after being divested of a time-period, the events of this story were made part of the current *daʿwah*; this current status quo is a true extension of the state of the *daʿwah* since the beginning of time, and this is the primary meaning that can be derived from the beginning of this *hadīth*.

A secondary meaning that can be gained through the opening words of the *hadīth*, “**There was [once] a King**”, is that with these words, the nature of this *daʿwah* was defined: the first issue clarified is the necessity of a confrontation between the *daʿwah* and the disbelieving rule of power that has authority over the people to whom the *daʿwah* is being given and wants to be established.

The necessity of a confrontation between the *daʿwah* to truth and between false rulers was very clearly stated in the *daʿwah* of Prophet Mūsā when Allāh ﷻ said to him,

Go to Firʿawn, for he has indeed transgressed [all bounds]
[al-Nāziʿāt, verse 17]

¹ Cited by Muslim in The Book of Piety and Heart-Softeners (130), and this is his wording. It is also cited by Ahmad (6/17), al-Tirmidhī in The Book of Exegesis #340, and al-Nasāʿī, also in The Book of Exegesis, as it appears in *Tuhfat al-Asbrāf* (4/199)

Mūsā was commanded this, despite that his message was not primarily meant for Fir‘awn, for he was sent to Banī Isrā’īl and all he wanted to do was take Banī Isrā’īl out of Egypt,

*So send with me Banī Isrā’īl (The Children of Israel)*¹

Despite this, however, Mūsā had to confront Fir‘awn because he was the one who had control over the people for whom Mūsā’s message was intended.

It was an ideological confrontation that was linked to the vision and methodology of the *da‘wab* and affirmed all the truths of the message. Thus, Mūsā’s *da‘wab* to Banī Isrā’īl was started in a natural manner by confronting Fir‘awn and his people.

Through this, we can understand that there will inevitable by enmity between those who call to the truth and between a false rulership, and this can be foreseen by simply thinking about the course of the *da‘wab* and pondering the reality of the people.

Despite this, any *da‘wab* given in an oppressive state of affairs, that appears to be a solely conceptual or ideological direction unable to confront the power and rule of oppression, will be killed by the convention and rejected by the people, like an embryo that has rejected by the womb before it takes form. The *da‘wab* should be directed to all people – the rulers and the ruled – because the *da‘wab* is a call to the truth. If it directed only at the ruled and not the rulers, then it will become an ideology that submits to those who rule with falsehood; if it is directed at the rulers and not the ruled, then it will become another tool employed by false rulers to achieve their ends.

Thus, the Messenger (ﷺ) was very keen to openly proclaim his *da‘wab* to everyone from the earliest days of his Prophethood and to clearly state that it was a call to all people. He would send messages to the Kings calling them to Islām - even though he was still in a very weak position – thereby affirming the various dimensions of the *da‘wab* from the beginning. He did not wait to consider the possibilities or weigh up the differences in power and strength between himself and these Kings.

Among these Kings were those who understood the intent of the Messenger (ﷺ), such as Heraclius who received the Messenger’s (ﷺ) letter calling him to Islām. When he wanted to enquire further on the matter, he began to discuss it with Abū Sufyān who was in the land of the Byzantines at the time. A wonderful dialogue ensued between Heraclius and Abū Sufyān, that ended with Heraclius attesting, “By Allāh, if what you say is true, then he will soon occupy the earth under these two feet of mine. If I knew that I would definitely reach him, I would take it upon myself and desire to meet him. And if I were with him, then I would surely wash his feet.”²

Heraclius then continued to affirm his understanding of the nature of the true call, by directing his counsel to the Byzantines, and he said, “O Byzantines! Would you allow your Empire to become established, and give your pledge of allegiance to this Prophet?!”

But also among these Kings were those who did not understand the intent of the Prophet (ﷺ), such as Chosroes - the King of Persia - who was amazed at the audacity of the Messenger (ﷺ) to send a letter calling him to Islām. He tore up the letter that the Prophet (ﷺ) sent him, so the Prophet (ﷺ) asked Allāh to completely disperse his Kingdom, and said, “O Allāh! Tear up his Kingdom completely!”³

¹ al-A‘rāf, verse 105. Allāh ﷻ said in Tā-Hā, verse 47, “So send with us the Children of Israel, and do not torment them.”

² Cited by al-Bukhārī in ‘The Beginning of Revelation’ (1/31-33), narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās on the authority of Abū Sufyān ibn Hard. It was also cited by Ahmad (1/262).

³ Cited by al-Bukhārī in ‘The Book of Battles’, narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be pleased with them both).

From the Messenger of Allāh's (ﷺ) supplication against the King of Persia, we can realise that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) thought that he had every right to send his letters to the Kings. We can also realise that these letters had an important role to play in the spread of the *da'wah*, and that even Kings should realise this; the *da'wah* does not hold less importance than the King of Persia for him to feel that he can tear it without having his Kingdom torn in return.

Quraysh were also among those who did not understand the intent of the Messenger (ﷺ) and thought that he was only after rulership. So their chiefs offered him to be a leader over them, saying, "If you seek leadership, then we will make you a leader over us." But the Messenger (ﷺ) rejected their offer.¹

Rulership is necessary in the vision of the *da'wah*, but it will not come in the form of a gift from its usurpers and it will not be achieved by bargaining cheaply. Rather, it must be regained through *Jihād* and action, to form a true Islamic state not merely an individual reign or rulership that neither has the ability to rule nor to continue its rulership.

This is affirmed through the example of al-Najāshī (Negus) - the King of Abyssinia - who voluntarily embraced Islām. But despite being under his rule, Abyssinia did not become an Islamic State, because al-Najāshī's acceptance of Islām did not necessitate his ability to establish the laws of Islām in his land, even though he was the ruler.

Similarly, Heraclius - the King of the Byzantine Empire – desired that the Romans to accept Islām, and made this apparent when he said, "O Byzantines! Would you allow your Empire to become established, and give your pledge of allegiance to this Prophet?!" But he did not express anything other than a personal desire that they accept Islām, even though they would have had to submit to his rule and command.

Weakness and oppression should not be factors that prevent a confrontation between the *da'wah* and the oppressive ruler. Beyond a consideration of the physical possibilities, there is nothing that should preclude such confrontations. Thus, the Messenger (ﷺ) clarified that the leader of the martyrs will be a man who stands up to a tyrannical ruler, to command him with the good and forbid him from his evil, knowing that he will be killed for it. He (ﷺ) said, "*The leader of the martyrs will be Hamzāh, and a man who stands up to a tyrannical ruler, commands [the good] and forbids him [from evil], and is killed [for it].*"² This is because he has achieved what the martyrs achieve when they kill disbelievers who possess strength and power. But in addition to this, the other martyrs fight with the possibility of being victorious or being granted martyrdom, while he confronts the ruler with only one possibility – that of martyrdom.

...and the King had a [court] magician...

This indicates that the King had employed a magician to use magic as a means by which to maintain his rulership. Magic was not simply a phenomenon that happened to be present in society, but rather it was a force that presided over and ruled the society. This factor can lead us to understand the reality of that time – it was a corrupt reality founded on oppression and ruled by desire, at the head of which was a King who believed in magic and whose power lay in subjugating his people.

We can further understand the true extent of this, by realising that any government is in charge of the end result of all dimensions of society; it forms the basis of its customs and the framework of

¹ Cited by: Abū Ya'lā in his *Musnad* (3/349); 'Abd ibn Humayd #1123; Abū Sa'īd in *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah* #182 through al-Ajlāh on the authority of al-Dhayyāl on the authority of Jābir, but the chain is weak due to al-Ajlāh. Also see: *al-Zawā'id* (6/20) and Ibn Kathīr's commentary on Sūrah Fussilat. The *hadīth* was declared *hasan* by al-Albānī.

² Cited by al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak* (3/195), and al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsat* (922)

its manners and etiquettes. So what would be the end of this society, the basis of its customs and the framework of its manners, when it all stemmed from subjugation and sorcery?

Such a government represents tyranny, because all types of government are a form of control over the human state of affairs. If the government is sound, it will strive to build and form the human structure, and the ruler himself will benefit if his people are sane, intelligent and strong. This is the nature of the Islamic government that protects and strengthens the individual. But if the government is ignorant, it will try to fragment the human structure and disperse the society, because an ignorant government is after nothing more than continual control, even if it causes the destruction of society. In this situation, the ruler will benefit if the people following him are foolish, ignorant and weak.

Insofar as magic is a form of deception and falsehood, it can help achieve the goals of a tyrannical ruler. Any methodology that is not from Allāh and where the people do not submit to Him, will also achieve the same results as magic; the only difference is in name and form, but what both have in common is that they desire for there to be no rational force or strong mind in society. This end can be achieved either through magic or through any man-made system of government, because all systems other than Islām agree with magic in its essence. Magic presents itself by instigating fear and exploiting ignorance. Any man-made system that leads a person to believe that he is safe, by instigating fear that imposes the desired methodology upon him through his ignorance and weakness, has achieved the same results as magic.

When [the magician] grew old, he said to the King, "I have become old, so send a young boy to me [as an apprentice] so that I may teach him magic"...

This provides us an example of the people of evil, who want to see the optimum conditions for them to flourish and thrive. Another clear example lies in the magicians of Fir'awn who came to the city to confront Mūsā and the first thing they said was,

“Indeed, there will be a reward for us if we are the winners.” [Fir'awn] said, “Yes, and you will be of those nearest [to me].” [al-A'rāf: 113-114]

They did not ask who they would be up against and what the issue was - this was not important to them. They were only concerned about their reward. But interestingly, it seems that the magician's request for a young boy to teach was not for the sake of his personal interest, because he made the request when he felt he was close to death.

This brings a new dimension to light: after the magician had become old and had lived out his life working to make the state of affairs advantageous to the King, he was no longer interested in personal benefits. Rather, he himself wanted his work to continue through the young boy – he had been a magician all his life, and had to keep his work alive through a new life, so he requested a young apprentice. But our analysis should not stop here - we can also see that what propelled him to make this request was the devil (*shayṭān*) that presided over all the ages of ignorance; the *shayṭān* has experienced all stages of human existence from the beginning of time, thereby enabling him to link together all the generations of ignorance one after another so that he may utilise them in his propagation of evil and corruption.

Thus, we need to understand the danger of the presence of ignorance in society, in light of it having existed over many generations, and the danger of the interpretation offered in justification of it by ignorants over many generations:

It does not exist due to feelings of empathy between generations, because their people are scattered and dispersed and cannot empathise with one another! Any ignorant generation that claims that it is working for the future of mankind and cares for the children of the future is lying, just as they lied in their claim of the historical roots of man. This is not an instance of historical determinism that has been imposed upon man and which he cannot end or change, because history and the events of history only occurred by the Decree of Allāh Alone. Only the Muslims - with their creed, and their understanding of the laws of this Decree and the means of its actualisation – are the ones able to put an end to the existence of ignorance, if they hold fast to these laws and adhere to their causes.

So [the King] sent him a young boy¹ to teach...

When one reads this phrase, it makes them wish they could reach out their hand to take this young boy and protect him from these people. Nothing causes more sadness than seeing a child's natural innocence lost and corrupted in the climate of oppressive societies. What will happen if we see a person wandering astray and an innocent soul being corrupted, and we do not advance to protect this soul regardless of whatever efforts or actions it will entail?

And what if we see a person who dies as a disbeliever after having been born with an innate nature that recognised Allāh and the truth (*fiṭrah*), and we had not presented to him a means of guidance to the truth?

The true caller to Islām is the one who feels his responsibility towards this natural *fiṭrah*, and towards protecting it from any external influence of ignorance; he is deeply aware of the value of this *fiṭrah* in the reality of his *da'wah*, that it is the guarantor of the *da'wah* in this climate of ignorance, and if it becomes corrupted then the *da'wah* will have no existence or scope. This was the intent of Nūh when he asked Allāh to destroy his people when he saw the extent of their misguidance, evil and disbelief,

And Nūh said, "My Lord! Do not leave any disbeliever to live upon the earth! Truly, if You leave them, they will mislead Your slaves, and they will only give birth to wicked disbelievers."

[Nūh: 26-27]

The effect of their ignorance even reached as far as the bellies of pregnant mothers, such that the women of the time would only give birth to wicked disbelievers. When such a point is reached, all hope is lost.²

On his way [to the magician], he came across a monk, so he sat with him and listened to what he had to say, and it impressed him...

By the Decree of Allāh **فَبَدَّلَ وَاعِلٍ** this young boy met a strange monk while on his way to the magician, so he sat with him and listened to what the monk was saying, and the words impressed him. No reason has been given in explanation of why he sat down before first listening to what was being said.

It could not have been easy for the boy, for he was learning magic from the magician at the same time as learning religion from the monk, and there is a clear contradiction between the two: religion is about clear realities and ordered thought, while magic is about deep deviancies and concocted lies; religion develops the mind, while magic murders it; religion is a cure for the illnesses of the time, while magic causes one to deviate from them; and religion builds life, while magic destroys it. Thus, it was very difficult for the boy to continue learning both religion and magic with peace of mind, and we should note that he would sit with the monk as a matter of choice, but with the magician as a matter of compulsion.

Whenever he went to the amgician, he would pass by the monk and sit with him, so that when he reached the magician, the magician would hit him [for being late]. So [they boy] complained of this to the monk...

¹ A *ghulam* ('young boy') refers to someone past the age of weaning, but not yet at the age of puberty.

² The magician's request was narrated in al-Tirmidhī with the words, "Find me a young boy with understanding." - or he said, "a clever boy who is quick to understand," - "so that I may teach him what I know." This brings to light an important dimension of the plot of the ignorant who call to corrupting the *fiṭrah*, which is that they focus on the intelligent, distinguished people who have the special aptitude and ability needed to guarantee that their ignorance will prevail.

From the text we can see that the boy continued to sit with the monk whenever he went to the magician, even though the magician would hit him for being late. We should not forget that he was only a young boy, so being hit by the magician was a test and an affliction for him.

But Allāh ﷻ wanted to raise the boy from the very beginning in a true and disciplined manner, and He wanted the boy's link to the *da'wab* to be in line with its nature, because this boy would later become a fundamental base for that *da'wab* and would guide the people towards it.

Thus, his character had to be perfected for the *da'wab*, something that can only be achieved by being prepared to face afflictions and have patience with them as and when they occur.

The nature of a person who accepts faith is what will define the extent to which he embraces it, adheres to it, and calls to it. Those who accept the religion, despite the afflictions it causes them, are the one who will adhere to it until the end; grabbing it with force is a guarantee that one will continue upon it.

Allāh wanted the internal constitution of this boy to be in harmony with the nature of the *da'wab*, and that his character not deviate from its burdens, and thus He afflicted the boy during the period in which his character was being established and consolidated. The boy was patient and true to his test.

But the boy would complain of this affliction to the monk in the manner of one facing a problem that is hindering the continuation of his journey, not in the manner of a person offering excuses to quit and turn back. If a caller has good sense it will enable him to discover the underlying cause of any complaint.

Thus, in light of the affairs, the monk had to solve the boy's problem for him. This is an obligation imposed by the *da'wab* on its callers, that they facilitate the path for those who are responsive to their call. Allāh ﷻ explained the value of such facilitation, when He commanded Mūsā to go to Fir'awn; Mūsā laid out his problems before Allāh ﷻ and said,

And they have [the charge of] a sin against me, so I fear that they will kill me.¹
[al-Shu'arā':14]

and,

Mūsā said, "O my Lord! Open up my chest for me, easen my task for me, and loosen the knot from my tongue, so that they understand my speech. And appoint for me a helper from my family – Hārūn, my brother; increase my strength through him, and let him partake in my task, so that we may glorify You much, and remember You much. Indeed, You are Ever-Watchful over us." Allāh said, "You are granted your request, O Mūsā."
[Tā-Hā:25-36]

Similarly, when Allāh sent our Prophet (ﷺ) saying, "Indeed, Allāh looked at the people of the Earth and hated them [all] – both Arabs and non-Arabs – except a few remnants from the People of the Book. Allāh sent me to the Quraysh, and I said, "O my Lord, they will break my head to pieces as though it were bread." He said,

¹ Thus, in the exegesis of al-Shu'arā', verses 12-13, "Verily, I fear that they will belie me, and my breast will tighten, and my tongue will not express well," Ibn Kathīr said that these were things that Mūsā asked Allāh to remove from him.

“Fight against those who disobey you using those who obey you; send an army and We will send an army five times its size; spend and We will spend on you.”¹

The text clearly states that the Prophet (ﷺ) feared the Quraysh and told this to his Lord - just as Mūsā told Allāh of his fear of Fir‘awn - and that Allāh ﷻ reassured him just as He reassured Mūsā.

Regarding the necessity of paving the path of the *da‘wab* for those crossing it, the monk then said to the young boy:

When you fear the magician, then say “My family delayed me.” And when you fear your family, then say “The magician delayed me” ...

From the monk’s words, we can see how he viewed the current state of affairs – he saw it is a ‘land of war’ (*Dār Harb*), and thus he permitted the boy to lie, because lying is only permissible in three situations, as the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “Lying is only permissible in three cases: when a man speaks to his wife to please her, telling lies at times of war, and lying in order to bring about reconciliation between people.”² The monk considered himself to be in a state of war with the society in which he lived.

To further clarify the idea of lying being permissible in the three instances mentioned in the *hadīth*, we find that the permissibility was mentioned with the wording, “Indeed, Allāh has permitted...”³ So the permissibility is not based on an absolute command, but rather it is a concession that is restricted to certain situations.

The matter can further be clarified through a practical example that occurred at the time of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) during the battle of the Confederates (*al-Abzāb*): It is narrated on the authority of Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ūd al-Ghatafānī that he went to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and said, “O Messenger of Allāh! I have accepted Islām, but my people do not know of it, so command me as you please.” So the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “You are like a single man among us, so mislead them if you are able, for indeed, war is deception.”⁴

So Nu‘aym ibn Mas‘ūd left until he arrived [back] at Banū Quraydhah, whose ally he was in the pre-Islamic days, and he said, “O Banū Quraydhah! You know of my feelings for you, and [the relationship] between us.” They said, “You have spoken the truth. We have no accusations against you.” So he said to them, “Quraysh and Ghatafān are not like you; the land is your land, it contains your wealth, your children, and your women - you are unable to move to another land. Quraysh and Ghatafān have come to fight Muhammad and his companions, and you have assisted them in this, but their land and wealth and women are not here, so they are not like you. If they see an opportunity, they will take it, but if not then they will return to their land and will leave you alone with this man in your land. If he is alone with you, you will have no power against him. So do not fight with the people until you receive a pledge from their noblemen that will be a guarantee for you, that you will fight Muhammad with them until you kill him.” They said, “You have given a [sound] opinion.”

¹ It was cited by Muslim in ‘The Description of the Resurrection’ (17/196-197) on the authority of ‘Iyād ibn Himār, and Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (4/162)

² Cited by al-Tirmidhī #1939, from the *hadīth* of Asmā’ bint Yazīd. It is also reported by Ahmad (6/404) from the *hadīth* of Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Uqbah, and its chain is *sahīh*. There is a similar *hadīth* in the two *Sahīhs*: al-Bukhārī in ‘The Book of Reconciliation’ (5/299) and Muslim (16/157).

³ As in the narration in the *Sahīh*. Thus, Imām al-Nawawī mentioned in his explanation of *Muslim* (Chapter: The story of the people of the ditch, the magician, the monk and the young boy) that this *hadīth* contains an affirmation of the miracles of those close to Allāh, that is it is permissible to lie in times of war and similar situations and to save a soul from destruction – whether it is his soul or any other soul that should be protected. It is mentioned in *Fat’h al-Bārī*, the explanation of *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, that Ibn al-Munīr said: “*War is kbud‘ah*” means it is deception, not confrontation, because there are dangers in confrontation but victory can be achieved through deception, without danger. *al-Jihād* (158).

⁴ The saying of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), “*war is deception*,” was narrated in: al-Bukhārī, ‘The Book of *Jihād*’ (157), ‘The Book of Virtues’ (25), ‘Seeking Repentance’ (6); Muslim in ‘The Book of *Zakāh*’ (153), ‘The Book of *Jihād*’ (18, 19); Abū Dāwūd in ‘The Book of *Jihād*’ (92) and ‘The Book of the *Sunnah*’ (38); al-Tirmidhī in ‘The Book of *Jihād*’ (5); Ibn Mājah in ‘The Book of *Jihād*’ (28); al-Dārimī in ‘The Book of Expeditions’ (13), and Ahmad (1, 2, 3, 6).

He then went to the Quraysh and said to Abū Sufyān ibn Harb and the men from the Quraysh who were with him, “You know of my feelings for you, and that I have dissented from Muhammad. I have heard of an affair that I see it as my duty to tell you of, as advice to you, so keep it to yourselves.” They said, “We shall do this.” He said, “You [should] know that the Jews regret what has happened between them and Muhammad, and they sent a message to him saying, ‘We regret what we have done, so will it please you that we give you some of the noblemen from the two tribes of Quraysh and Ghatafān to decapitate, then we will fight with you against them until you eradicate them?’ He replied, ‘Yes.’ So if the Jews come to you seeking a pledge from your men, then do not give them even a single man.”

He then went to Ghatafān and said, “O people of Ghatafān! You know of my feelings for you. You are my kinsmen and my family, and the most beloved of people to me, and I do not think that you will accuse me of anything.” They replied, “You have spoken the truth. We have no accusations against you.” He said, “So keep what I tell you to yourselves.” They said, “We shall do that. What is the matter?” He then told them what he told the Quraysh, and warned them of the same things. Thus, he was able to stir up discord between them, and the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was then able to be victorious over them due to it.

Everyone who gives *da'wab* should caution themselves against overstepping the limits defined in the texts of the Prophet (ﷺ) about the permissibility of lying, so that lying does not become a part of their character and causes them to be written as a liar with Allāh. He would thereafter lose the strongest possibility of influencing the people, because the characteristic of trustworthiness in a caller causes people to have faith in the *da'wab*, and it is the foundation of working with the *da'wab* movement. It is for this reason that the first speech the Prophet (ﷺ) gave in his *da'wab* was the affirmation of his trustworthiness, when he said, “If I told you that there is an [enemy] cavalry waiting in the valley to attack you, would you believe me?” They said, “Yes, for you have never before lied to us before.” So he said, “Indeed, I am warning you of a severe torment before you.”¹

We will now return to the story of the boy, during the phase of his test.

We should know, that whenever there is a strong test or harm, there are always signs that help a person be patient and reassure their soul:

When he was [doing this], he happened to come across a huge beast that blocked [the path] of the people. So [they boy] said [to himself], “Today I will know whether the magician is superior or the monk.” He took a stone and said, “O Allāh, if the way of the monk is more beloved to You than the way of the magician, then kill this beast so that the people may pass.” He threw [the stone], killed [the beast], and the people [were able to] pass...

This tells us that the boy felt anxious and uneasy that he was meeting both the monk and the magician at the same time. It was possible for the boy to continue to learn about both religion and magic without these feelings of anxiety, if he listened to what the monk and the magician told him without thinking about it afterwards. The simple act of listening would not influence him in any way – both the religion and magic would be mere thoughts and words to the boy. But the anxiety that grew in his soul was because he was deeply influenced by the words of the monk, and completely understood the essence of the religion.

This information allows us to understand the great difficulties that the true Muslim must endure when facing the corrupt reality in which they live. We can also understand that the purity of Islām in a person’s soul must incite him to define his stance towards the truth, just as the boy did. His anxiety did not arise because he regarded the monk and the magician as being on the same level and simply wanted to incline more to one of the two, but rather he was searching for certainty from the outside world that corresponded to his innate certainty that the monk was on the right path. We know this because when he called to Allāh with the supplication that would determine which of the two he would truly feel at ease with, he said, “O Allāh, if the way of the monk is more beloved to You than the way of the magician...” He mentioned the monk before the magician because he wanted to consolidate his faith through the monk, and thus we also find that the boy said, “O Allāh.” Undoubtedly, this is what he learnt from the monk, and thus it means that the measure by which the boy wanted to compare the monk and the magician was one that

¹ al-Bukhārī (8/501) and Muslim (3/82) from the *hadīth* of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be pleased with them both)

he had taken and learnt from the monk, thereby indicating that the reality of the religion had been implanted in the boy's conscience, and filled his mind and spirit.

The boy's search for certainty through reality, by virtue of the monk, indicates the direction that the boy wanted to take in his religion - he wanted to use it to stir the lives of the people, so he would represent his faith to them in a physical and material manner. Thus, this confrontation had to begin with certainty as established their reality. In the eyes of the boy, the *da'wah* was not merely an individual idea and conviction, but over and above that he regarded it as being a reality which actualised the Decree that controls all that is in existence.

The boy made a good choice with the incident of the beast that blocked the path of the people, for all that occurred in this incident is rightly considered a true test of the essence and dimensions of the *da'wah*, as encompassed by the tests throughout the whole story.

There was a huge beast that blocked the path of the people, which the boy felt represented any tyrannical oppressor who blocked the path of guidance of the people. He took a stone, which represented the means by which the Divine Decree would be carried out in killing this beast, and he called upon Allāh – at the same time as providing the physical means – to kill the beast if the way of the monk was more beloved to Him than the way of the magician. The beast was killed and the people were able to pass, by which the boy knew that the truth affirmed by the Decree of Allāh in killing this beast was the truth that the monk was upon.

That the boy utilised the situation of the beast blocking the path of the people meant that the *da'wah* was alive in his heart. This life is what caused him to take advantage of the situation in its fullest meaning, and this is the nature of the *da'wah* when it is the life of the caller – he sees everything through the lenses of the *da'wah* and it is the measure by which he interprets any idea or event, because it is his creed, his vision, and his reality. It is not an individual desire that may soon change, or an ideological inclination that may soon be forgotten.

[The boy then] went to the monk and told him [about what had happened] ...

This is the spontaneous reaction of the caller when he goes through a difficult situation or amazing occurrence – he will turn to the one from whom he learn the methodology of this *da'wah*, to ask for the interpretation of what occurred in light of the *da'wah*. **“So the monk replied, “O my son! Today you are better than me!”** The stance that the monk took when he said this to the boy was not an ordinary one, but rather it represents the decisive moment in the life of every caller. The *da'wah* may breed and conceal an element of egotism in the caller, in that he feels that his *da'wah* is something that distinguishes him above the rest of the people.

This ugly psychological defect becomes forcibly unveiled during situations in which he is made to feel that there is someone who understands the *da'wah* better than him, and is more able to work for its benefit. But the monk was not this type of person; rather, he was pious and pure.

So the monk replied, “O my son! Today you are better than me!...”

...words of sincerity and impartiality. This learned monk was judicious when he informed the boy that he had become better than him, with no sin on his part – where is the place for sin in his soul when it was purely for Allāh **وَاللَّهُ وَتَالِئِهِ؟** He could not be accused of knowing what would happen, because he did not, and he was not giving *da'wah* so that he could be the leader of his followers. Thus, he opened out the path for he whom he thought would be able to serve the *da'wah* more than him. He made himself a mere dot on the circumference of the boy's ideological and active growth circle, and said to him, **“Today you are better than me.”** If we remember that the boy was young in age, and he had only met the monk for the first time a short while ago, we realise the extent of the monk's correct understanding of the *da'wah*: the *da'wah* is not dependant upon the age of a person, but rather it depends on his faith, merit, and influence.

Thus, the monk represents the necessity of a leadership that is unattached to the world in the reality of the *da'wah*, and the boy represents the necessity of responding in line with one's natural disposition.

The leader was a monk who did not want anything from the world, and the responder was a young boy, new to the world. So ascetic leadership along with acceptance are the correct ingredients that Allāh will bless to be the foundation of the *da'wah*, and they are the measure by which any link will be accepted or rejected, right from the beginning until the building is complete.

After noticing the impartiality in the monk's response we can also notice his empathy, for the monk told the boy that he was better than him with complete contentment, and after he had said, **"O my son!"**

If we realise that the relationship between the monk and the boy was a humanitarian relationship that had been built in the realm of the *da'wab* and that it nurtured such deep empathy, we can understand that however definitive and strong the humanitarian relationship in the work of any movement, it must also contain an element of empathy.

After noticing both the monk's impartiality and his empathy, we can also see the correct method of instilling discipline in another, for when the monk informed the boy of his distinguished status, he followed it up by informing him of the responsibilities that this would incur upon him. This is actually a method of protecting a person from self-conceit, because if a person knows of his status then he will always think of that status thereby breeding an attitude of conceit in him. Therefore, when the monk said to the boy **"Today you are better than me,"** he also said, **"and you will [soon] be tested."**

...do not indicate [anything] about me...

This represents the need for covertness in the methodology of a *da'wab* movement, for it gives the callers an opportunity to muster up their strengths and abilities.

From a practical perspective, covertness is sometimes necessary based on the circumstances of the *da'wab*. The extent of its necessity is defined by the methodology of thought and the boldness of the technique being used.

From a historical perspective, covertness has always been a fundamental phase in the history of the *da'wab*; for example, Nūh – the first messenger sent to the people on Earth – said,

Then indeed, I called to them aloud, and then I proclaimed to them in public, and I appealed to them in private.

[Nūh:8-9]

We will give a detailed example from the *da'wab* of Mūsā, wherein the need of covertness arose from the moment of his birth.

During the time in which Mūsā was born, Fir'awn had decided to kill any male children born to Banī Isrā'īl. Thus it was necessary to protect him, for he was one of the sons of Banī Isrā'īl who were being killed. So Allāh ﷻ arranged for him to be saved, and His plan began by inspiring to the mother of Mūsā,

And We inspired the mother of Mūsā [saying], "Suckle him, but when you fear for him, then cast him into the river and neither fear nor grieve. Indeed! We shall bring him back to you, and We shall make him from among the Messengers."

[al-Qasas:7]

An assessment of this plan of action will reveal the exact precision it entailed: Allāh commanded the mother of Mūsā to suckle him because Allāh prevented him thereafter from suckling from anyone else, such that his mother's milk would be the only milk that filled him. Similarly, Allāh ﷻ made the river partake in carrying out this plan of action, so that there would be no way that Fir'awn could trace where Mūsā came from and who he was. Allāh then ordered the river,

Then the river shall cast it up on the bank

[Tā-Hā:39]

And in the same moment that the family of Fir'awn took Mūsā from the river, Allāh gifted Mūsā with love from Him,

***And I bestowed in you love from Me,
in order that you may be brought up under My Eye***

[Tā-Hā:39]

He was also followed secretly by his sister,

So [his sister] watched him from a distance

[al-Qasas:11]

who then spoke to the family of Fir'awn, without informing them that she was his sister,

So she said, "Shall I direct you to a household who will rear him for you?"

[al-Qasas:12]

She did not tell them that the household she had in mind was his own natural house. Thus, Mūsā was returned to his mother in safety and protection after a precise, powerful, plan of action was carried out, the exact precision and strength of which can be established through the saying of Allāh,

An enemy of Mine and an enemy of his shall take him.

[Tā-Hā:39]

Mūsā had to be delivered to the family of Fir'awn to ensure his safety from them! This emphasises the importance of covertness in protecting Mūsā as an individual.

As for the importance of covertness in protecting the *da'wah*, then this is revealed in some verses of the Qur'ān, that also reveal the secret and precise planning in the *da'wah* of Mūsā, and that there were physical indicators of this.

It was indicated by the faith of one man from the family of Fir'awn,

And a believing man from Fir'awn's family who hid his faith said, "Would you kill a man [just] because he says, 'My Lord is Allāh?'"

[Ghāfir:28]

This man was from Fir'awn's family, despite which he was able to hide his faith, thereby indicating his genuineness and the strength of this plan. The Qur'anic verses more closely describe Fir'awn's reality and inform us of the faith of Fir'awn's own wife,

And Allāh has set forth an example for those who believe: the wife of Fir'awn, when she said, "My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise, and save me from Fir'awn and his deeds, and save me from the oppressive people."

[al-Tahrīm: 11]

This all happened while Fir'awn was unaware, despite the difficulty of keeping secrets in a marital relationship, for it is a relationship in which thoughts and feelings are shared between spouses. We should thus realise the precision and strength of this plan that occurred at the time of Mūsā, two factors of which were that he was secretly passed on to the family and wife of Fir'awn, and

the timing at which the believing man revealed his faith, for it was the time in which they had decided to kill Mūsā.

We shall now return to the story to find that the young boy has begun to play his role in the *da'wah*...

The boy [later began to] cure the blind and the lepers, and cure the people of all types of illness...

As he began his *da'wah*, he started doing acts of kindness to the people and drawing their hearts with things that would benefit them, and at the same time affirming the humanity of the *da'wah* callers and their love for their fellow men. The work he did was the actualisation of Allāh's Decree in the lives of these people. It would lead them thereafter to have faith in Allāh, because they would love the Decree that was meant for them, since it meant that they were being cured of all their illnesses. The love of the Decree would then transfer to become love for Allāh, for He is the One Who fulfills the Decree; love for the boy, for he is the means through which it was being fulfilled; and love for the *da'wah*, for it is the wisdom and cause of the Decree.

This was the case with all of the Prophets and their miracles, and the clearest example of this is that of Prophet 'Isā (peace be upon him), the miracle of whom was:

And I heal those born blind and the leper, and I bring the dead to life, with the Permission of Allāh
[Āl-'Imrān: 49]

And Sālih (may peace be upon him), the miracle of whom was the she-camel who would drink the water of the people one day, and give them milk and water the next.

He said, "Here is a she-camel; it has a right to drink [water], and you have a right to drink [water], [each] on a day that is known
[al-Shu'arā': 155]

But in the miracle of Mūsā, all dimensions of a miracle were clearly affirmed: his prophethood was established, a change was caused, and there was personal benefit in it.

It is through his miracles that his prophethood was established,

Mūsā said, "Even if I bring you something manifest?" [Fir'awn] said, "Bring it forth then, if you are of the truthful!" So [Mūsā] threw down his stick, and it became a clear snake.
[al-Shu'arā': 30-32]

It was also what saved Mūsā and those with him from Fir'awn,

Then We inspired to Mūsā, "Strike the sea with your stick." So it parted, and each part became like the huge mass of a mountain.
[al-Shu'arā': 63]

It was also what he used to strike the stone,

And [remember] when Mūsā asked for water for his people, so We said, “Strike the stone with your stick.” Twelve springs then gushed forth from it, and each [group of] people knew its where to get their [water].

[al-Baqarah: 60]

His miracle – which is a Divine Decree that is carried out through the Prophets as a means to convince the people of the Oneness of Allāh – was not only a supernatural occurrence, but it also had many physical benefits. Those who practise the *da‘wah* after the Prophets should know that no matter how much they are able to convince the people, it will not be enough if they do not receive some benefit - intellectual conviction must be coupled with love in their hearts, and the sphere of the *da‘wah* does not transgress the sphere of benefits by which these callers win over the hearts of the people.

The link between the miracle (*mu‘jizah*) of a Prophet and the miracle (*karāmah*) of a pious man is that the *karāmah* follows the *mu‘jizah* [in rank], just as the pious follow the prophets, and thus Ibn Taymiyyah says regarding the types of *karāmah*:

“They also include those used by their owners as a challenge that Islām is the true religion, like the boy who went to the monk and left the magician, and commanded [the King] to kill him with his own arrow in the Name of his Lord, because the convention was broken and they were unable to kill him...

“As for the righteous who call to the way of the Prophets and do not deviate from it, then their breaking the laws of nature is like the miracles of the Prophets...if it is decreed for these people that what happened to the Prophets also happened to them, just as the fire became cold and safe for Abū Muslim¹ as it did before him for Ibrāhīm, the father of the Prophets.

“These matters affirm the signs of the Prophets, and are also from their miracles that preceded them...”

As the boy was from the Nation of Prophet ‘Isā (peace be upon him), his miracle was of the same type as that of his Prophet, whose miracle was,

And I heal those born blind and the leper, and I bring the dead to life, with the Permission of Allāh

[Āl-‘Imrān: 49]

And the *karāmah* of the boy was that he began to **“cure the blind and the lepers, and cure the people of all types of illness.”**

When the boy was curing the leper and the blind, and curing the people from all types of illnesses, he was also establishing a movement founded in the people, and this is the true method of *da‘wah* in such societies, wherein magic was eliminating the intellectual ability and strength of the people. The people needed to be made aware of the reality they were in, and being aware of one’s existence is a form of being aware of one’s reality. Thus, the boy’s influence worked immediately in this state of affairs, through his treatment and medication by the permission of Allāh. From this, we can learn why the magicians of Fir‘awn were made to see the staff of Mūsā turn into a snake,

It will swallow up that which they have made

[Tā-Hā: 69]

When the magicians saw Mūsā’s snake swallowing up their snakes, they believed in Mūsā’s message because they knew it was real, and the influence of their magic was lost.

So the boy defined the important issues in his *da‘wah*, related them to the reality of the people, and then attracted their hearts to it, by which his *da‘wah* became a strong current that spread its way to all aspects of society.

¹ One of the Companions of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).

Up until this point, the King was not yet aware of what the boy was doing. This was truly a strange thing, because the boy was not far from the King's reach - the King was the one who brought the boy to the magician, and the boy was still being trained to become the King's magician! Furthermore, the boy acted in a very overt manner in society, but Allāh decreed that the King only come to know of the boy's affair through his courtier, and only after the *da'wab* had become a strong force in the society. This was the first phase...and at the beginning of every *da'wab* is a phase decreed in which the *da'wab* is protected in a number of ways...when the *da'wab* does not possess the physical means of protection, so the way that the boy's *da'wab* was protected was that he himself was kept guarded and hidden, despite his overtness and plentiful action.

One of the King's courtiers who had become blind heard [about him], so he came to him bearing many gifts, and said, "All that I have here will be yours, if you cure me."

The boy replied to the courtier in a way that showed that it is not he who cures, but rather Allāh **هو الله و تعال** is the One Who cures, **"I do not cure anyone, but rather Allāh هو الله و تعال is the One Who cures."** The boy disregarded the gifts presented by the courtier and they did not tempt his soul in the slightest. All he said was, **"If you have faith in Allāh هو الله و تعال, I will call upon Allāh to cure you."** This raised the value of the faith that the boy requested in the courtier's mind, because the only way he would be cured was through having faith, and this would replace the gifts and material objects that people hold in high regard. So everything became reversed and, **"The man had faith in Allāh, and Allāh cured him."**

When the boy said, **"I do not cure anyone, but rather Allāh هو الله و تعال is the One Who cures,"** he affirmed his own creed through the service he was offering the courtier. This is the primary foundation of winning people's hearts in the *da'wab*, for the service offered must be linked to the creed. This link is what will add value to the creed in the souls of the people from the onset. But there is a difference between offering a service for the sake of the service, and offering a service to emphasise a certain belief, and the following situation of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) will clarify this difference to us. A man came to him asking him for some wealth, so he (ﷺ) replied, *"Take whatever is in this valley."*¹ So the man said to him, "Are you mocking me?" He (ﷺ) replied, "No." So the man took all the camels that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) had without leaving any, and nobody stopped him. When he drew near to his tribe, he called out, "O my people, embrace Islām for I have come to you from one who does not fear poverty."²

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) wanted to give him all the wealth, so when the man thought about this he understood that the Messenger (ﷺ) does not fear poverty. This understanding was the primary cause of his acceptance of Islām and it is what made him call his people to Islām as well.

In reality, the Messenger (ﷺ) chose to treat an issue of faith that was alive in the reality of the pre-Islamic society in a materially beneficial manner. This issue was the fear of poverty and thus the incident had a deep influence on the man who, along with others, suffered from this problem.

When the boy said:

"If you have faith in Allāh هو الله و تعال, I will call upon Allāh to cure you."

he utilised the courtier's need to be cured and presented the faith to him before calling upon Allāh to cure him.

This represents another foundation of winning over the hearts, because when a person is in a position of need and compulsion, he is closer to Allāh than when he is self-sufficient.

Prophet Yūsuf used this technique in his *da'wab* when his companions in prison needed their dreams interpreted. He presented his *da'wab* to them before fulfilling their needs.

¹ The narration of Muslim states, "He gave him the sheep and goats that were between the two mountains."

² Cited by Muslim in *al-Fadā'il* (15/72) from the *hadīth* of Anas.

He said, “No food will come to you as your provision, but that I will inform you of their interpretation before [the food] comes. This is part of that which my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have abandoned the religion of a people that do not believe in Allāh, and are disbelievers in the Hereafter. And I have followed the religion of my forefathers - Ibrāhīm, Is’hāq, and Ya’qūb - never could we attribute any partners to Allāh. This is from the Grace of Allāh to us and to mankind, but most men are not grateful. O my two companions of the prison! Are many different gods better, or is Allāh, the One, the Irresistible? What you worship besides Him are only names that you have invented, you and your forefathers, for which Allāh has sent down no authority. The Command belongs only to Allāh - He has commanded that you worship none other than him Him, [and] that is the true religion, but most men know not.”

[Yūsuf: 37-40]

After giving this speech, he interpreted the two dreams.

“O my two companions of the prison! As for one of you, he will pour out wine for his master to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat from his head. Thus is the case of that over which you both enquired.”

[Yūsuf: 41]

Thus, Yūsuf addressed his *da’wab* to his two companions at the time when they needed to listen to him the most, and this is the moment of influence that the young boy created with the King’s courtier.

The man had faith in Allāh, and Allāh cured him...

Simply put, **“the man had faith in Allāh,”** because faith in Allāh is something that is concealed in the soul of every human. If a caller uses the correct method of *da’wab* with each person, it can unveil that reality, with the permission of Allāh.

All the boy had to do was ask the courtier to have faith in Allāh, and he had faith. If the speed of acceptance seems amazing, then we have been given an even more amazing example – that of the Queen of Sheba’s acceptance of Islām with Sulaymān. These examples affirm that the basis of the *da’wab* is not only words used in a particular situation, but another major factor is to employ the correct practical method that will successfully unveil the reality of faith that lies latent in the soul of every human being. This can occur without asking a person to have faith outright, or giving even a single word of direct *da’wab*, for all that happened with the Queen of Sheba and Sulaymān is that he put her through two experiences: the first was to ascertain the strength of her intellect which he did by taking her throne and disguising it, then showing it to her and asking her,

Is your throne like this?

[al-Naml: 42]

She offered the perfect reply,

It is as though it were [my very throne]
[al-Naml: 42]

She did not say that it was her throne because she was not completely sure, and she did not say that it was not her throne, because it was!

He then put her through a second experience, to remove her self-deception,

She was told, “Enter as-Sarh”, but when she saw it, she thought it was a pool and [tucked up her clothes] baring her legs. [Sulaymān] said, “Indeed, it is a Sarh, paved smooth with glass.” She said: “My Lord! Truly, I have wronged myself, and I submit with Sulaymān to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds.”
[al-Naml: 44]

By establishing intelligence and removing her self-deception, his *da'wab* to the Queen was complete, whereupon she said,

.and I submit with Sulaymān to Allāh, the Lord of the Worlds.
[al-Naml: 42]

From the examples of the boy's *da'wab*, the *da'wab* of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), the *da'wab* of Yūsuf to his companions in prison, and the *da'wab* of Sulaymān to the Queen of Sheba, we should learn that dealing with others in a correct manner is what will add worth to every word of the Islamic *da'wab*, and what will ascertain its influence.

Thus we can notice that the boy only ever spoke three sentences in the whole story in direct relation to the *da'wab*:

He said, “**Allāh ﷻ is the One Who cures,**” in reply to the courtier who asked to be cured, and in reply to the King when he claimed that the boy was able to do what he did through magic.

He said, “**Allāh ﷻ saved me from them,**” in reply to the King when he was saved from dying on the mountain peak and in the boat.

He said, “**and say, ‘In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy,’**” when he explained to the King the only manner in which he could be killed.

But these three phrases actually represent three dots on a single line – that of being firm in one's faith with the problems encountered in the reality of the *da'wab*.

Allāh is the One Who cures...Allāh is the One Who saves...Allāh is the One Who gives life and death...truths that were not repeated by the boy for the sake of dialectics and words. But rather he mentioned them as eternal truths established in reality in such a way that none is able to reject or argue with them.

The real beginning of this line – as mentioned in the story – is the faith of the boy himself, for he sought certainty through his reality, and called upon Allāh to kill the beast if the path of the monk was more beloved to Him than the path of the magician.

This means that the nature of receiving the truths of this religion and having certainty in them is what defines the nature of the *da'wab*, and both are connected points on a single line.

¹ **Translator's note:** The *sarh* is a palace, or a glass disc with water and fish underneath it, or a very tall building that is raised from the ground. For more details see *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*.

An intricacy worth noting is that the boy did not say to the courtier, “Do not indicate [anything] about me,” as the monk had said to him. This is because the boy’s *da’wab* had moved from the phase of covertness to the phase of overtness in his activities, for he used to **‘cure the people of all types of illness.’**

This transfer from the phase of covertness to the phase of overtness requires us to compare the two phases from four angles:

1. The manner of relationships.
2. The organisational structure.
3. The manner of movement.
4. The extent of abilities.

1. The manner of relationships.

In the phase of covertness we find individual and intimate relationships, like that of the monk with the boy. In the phase of overtness we find that the relationships are general, like that of the boy and the courtier who knew of the boy when he heard about him, as it says in the text, **“One of the King’s courtiers...heard [about him].”**

2. The organisational structure.

This was clear through each individual carrying out the *da’wab* according to his abilities; the monk did not begin overt action because he did not have the ability to influence the people. Similarly, the boy did not remain in the phase of covertness because had he done that, he would have deprived the *da’wab* of this influence.

Thus, the monk placed a systematic divider between covert and overt action when he said, **“do not indicate [anything] about me.”** This limit placed by the monk upon the boy largely resembles the divider placed by the Messenger (ﷺ) on Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī when he said to him after embracing Islām, *“Do not say anything until Allāh brings us in the open,”* because they were still weak and oppressed and in the covert phase, during which they would gather in the house of al-Arqam ibn Abū al-Arqam.

But Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī could not bear to know about Islām and keep it silent, and thus he went to the Sacred House of Allāh and said, “I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allāh, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and messenger,” after which the polytheists began beating him until they almost killed him. Despite this, the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was unable to do anything to Abū Dharr and left him to face the situation alone. The *da’wab* does not get involved in anything for which the time has not come - Abū Dharr overtly proclaimed Islām, but it was not yet the time for overt action.

3. The manner of movement.

In the phase of covert action it was very limited and defined, and thus we find that the boy met with the monk whenever he passed him on the way to the magician. This is largely analogous to the presence of the Messenger (ﷺ) in the house of al-Arqam ibn Abū al-Arqam in Makkah when the *da’wab* was still secret. Whoever wanted to embrace Islām would have to go to him there, so that nobody would know where he was.

Perhaps the clearest event that explains the manner of movement in this phase of activity, is in Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī’s¹ acceptance of Islām: al-Muthannā narrated to us on the authority of Abū Jamrah on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be pleased with them both), that he said: When Abū Dharr heard of the advent of the Prophet (ﷺ), he said to his brother, “Travel to this valley, and bring me information about the person who is claiming that he receives information from the Heavens. Listen to what he says, then come to me.” So the brother rode off until he went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and heard what he was saying. He then returned to Abū Dharr and said, “I saw him exhorting to the highest morals, and [I heard] words that are not poetry.” So [Abū Dharr] said, “You have not given me what I want.” So he packed his provisions and a small water-skin containing water, [then he travelled] until he arrived in Makkah. He went to the mosque² and

¹ Cited by: al-Bukhārī in ‘The Book of Virtues’ (7/173); Muslim (16/32) explained by al-Nawawī – both are from the *hadīth* of Ibn ‘Abbās (may Allāh be pleased with them both).

² The Sacred House of Allāh

sought out the Prophet (ﷺ), but he did not know who he was, and did not want to ask about him. After night had fallen, ‘Alī saw him and knew that he was a stranger, so [he told Abū Dharr to] follow him home, but neither one of them asked the other about anything until the morning. He then took his water and provisions to the mosque, and spent the day there, but the Prophet (ﷺ) did not see him until night fell, so he went back to bed. ‘Alī passed by him, so he said, “Has the man not yet found what he is looking for?” So [‘Alī] made him get up and go [back home] with him, neither one of them asking the other about anything. On the third day, the same thing happened. ‘Alī took him home, then said, “Will you not inform me of what has brought you here?” [Abū Dharr] replied, “If you give me a promise and covenant that you will guide me correctly, then I will.” So he told him, and [‘Alī] replied, “It is true, and he is the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). In the morning, follow me. If I see anything that shall cause me to fear for you, I will act as though I am pouring out water. When I move on, then follow me until I enter a house.” He did that and [Abū Dharr] followed him until they came to the Prophet (ﷺ). [Abū Dharr] heard his words, and accepted Islām immediately.

But in the phase of overt action, people are allowed to move about freely and openly, just as the boy used to move freely about the people to **“cure the blind and the lepers, and cure the people of all types of illness.”** Similarly, when the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was in al-Madīnah, he would visit the people in their gatherings such that ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy ibn Salūl – the leader of the Hypocrites – wanted to limit his (ﷺ) movements so he said to him, “Do not visit us in our gatherings, but if someone comes to you then speak to him.” ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāhah was present at the time and he said, “No, O Messenger of Allāh. Visit us in our gatherings.”¹ We understand from this that the leader of the Hypocrites wanted the manner and movement of the *da‘wah* to return to how it was in Makkah, and this was rejected by the Ansār of al-Madīnah.

4. The extent of abilities.

This means the ability to have open, general influence at the same time as the ability to oppose the pre-Islamic power that tries to eradicate this influence. An example of this is when the boy cured the blind and the leper and cured the people of all types of illness, at the same time as having the ability to confront the King from the moment he began his overt action until the end of the story. We are told that the boy was convinced that the King was unable to kill him when he said to him at the end of the story, **“You will not be able to kill me until you do what I say!”**

After comparing the phases of covertness and overtness, let us return to the story where we find that the courtier has come to the King and sat by him, just as he used to sit by him before.

The King then said to him, “Who has returned to you your sight?” He said, “My Lord.” [The King] said, “Do you have a Lord other than me?” He said, “My Lord and your Lord is Allāh.”

It is very strange for a man to claim lordship for himself - how can anyone make such a claim? Through research into this hideous phenomenon, one can find that the Qur’ān has attributed such claims to both Fir‘awn and to King Nimrod who disputed with Ibrāhīm about his Lord. three people shared two basic qualities: they all disbelieved in Allāh, and they all were in a position of rulership over the people.

Thus, the beginning point is disbelief in Allāh, a branch of which is disbelief in His fate and pre-destination. The disbeliever then thinks that he is the one who builds and directs his life how he pleases. If he is in a position of authority over some people, he will think that he is the only one who is able to influence their lives and he is in charge of them: he commands and is obeyed, he judges and his judgement is carried out, he acts according to his own desire with no objection and under no supervision, he acts freely with people’s lives with no opposition, and he is the one who is in a high position in the land, and is arrogant with his followers, as Fir‘awn said:

¹ Cited by al-Bukhārī in ‘The Book of the Sick’ (10/122), ‘The Book of General Behaviour’ (10/591), and ‘The Book of Seeking Permission’ (11/38, 39) from the *hadīth* of Usāmah ibn Zayd.

O my people! Are the dominion of Egypt and these rivers flowing underneath me not mine? Do you not see?
[al-Zukhruf: 51]

and he said,

I show you only that which I see [to be correct]
[Ghāfir: 29]

and then he said,

O chiefs! I did not know that you have a god other than me
[al-Qasas: 38]

But the believer does not concern himself with the likes of these people. Rather, he confronts them with strength and candour, just as the courtier did to the King when he said, “**My Lord and your Lord is Allāh.**” His response is a negation of the falsely claimed Lordship of the King, because it affirms the Lordship of Allāh alone, and a Lord cannot have a lord. Thus, the courtier put the King on the same level as the rest of the people in their servitude to Allāh **معبود و تبار**. He could not have been able to confront him in this way unless the sweetness of faith had entered his heart, because when this happens then one feels confidence, freedom and strength. The very magicians of Fir‘awn prostrated to Allāh after realising that Mūsā was the Messenger of Allāh and not a magician, so Fir‘awn tried to threaten them by saying:

I will cut off your hands and feet from opposite sides, and I will crucify you on the trunks of date-palms
[Tā-Hā: 71]

to which they responded,

Decree whatever you decree, for you can only decree [regarding] this life of the world
[Tā-Hā: 72]

And this is also how the King dealt with his courtier.

The King] then took him and continued to torture him until he pointed him to the boy...

He did not kill him immediately, because he wanted to find out the rest of his clan.

So the boy was brought to the King, who said to him, “My boy, has your magic has reached such a level that you can cure the blind and the leper, and do the things you do...?”

The tyrannical King said, “**My boy,**” but his words reeked of deception, malice and pressure. He tried to entice the boy with being close to him, a closeness that bears connotations of a bright future and luxurious life. The King then said, “**has your magic has reached such a level that you can cure the blind and the leper, and do the things you do...?”** Through these words, the King tried to remove the esteem that the people had for the boy, by trying to attribute his ability to cure them to the magic that he had learned from the King’s magician. This is always the reaction of those who refuse to acknowledge the truth – they try to interpret it in others ways. It is exactly what Fir‘awn did when Mūsā overcame him, when he said:

He is your chief who taught you magic
[Tā-Hā: 71]

And when Mūsā debated him with firmness and courage, he replied,

He said, “Truly, your Messenger who has been sent to you is a madman!”
[al-Shu‘arā’: 27]

This is also what the polytheists did with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and his Companions; when they saw him courageously and forcefully denying the divinity of their gods, they said,

One taught [by a human being], a madman!
[al-Dukhān: 14]

And when he confronted them with the rhetoric of the Qur’ān, they said,

A poet! We await for him a calamity of time!
[al-Tūr: 30]

And when they saw that the Companions were convinced of their *da‘wah*, they said,

These people have been deceived by their religion.
[al-Anfāl: 49]

A point to note in the way the evildoers interpret the truth with falsehood is that it only works if this interpretation is accepted by the people.

One example of this is how the polytheists interpreted the miracle with magic, courage with madness, eloquence with poetry, and confidence with deception. The Quraysh held a meeting to try and reach agreement on the characteristic they would attribute to the Messenger (ﷺ) and the Qur’ān, for the people to accept their interpretation.

They said, “Shall we say he is a soothsayer?” He said, “No, by Allāh, he is not a soothsayer. I have seen soothsayers and he does not have the tone or rhymed prose of a soothsayer.” So they said, “We will say he is madman.” He said, “He is not a madman. We have seen madness and know what it is like – it does not throttle him, engage him, or whisper to him.” They said, “So we will say he is a poet.” He replied, “He is not a poet, we know the entirety of poetry.” They said, “So we will say he is a sorcerer.” He said, “He is not a sorcerer. We have seen sorcerers and their magic, he does not give what they give or believe what they believe.” So they said, “So what shall we say O Abū ‘Abd al-Shams?” He said, “By Allāh, the speech he says is very sweet; the first part is fruitful and the last part is abundant. You will not be able to say anything about it without the people knowing that what you say is false. The most you can say about him is that you say he is a magician who has come with speech that is magic, that he uses to separate between a man and his father, and between a man and his brother, and between a man and his wife, and between a man and his family, so keep away from him with this.”

But the King was unable to entice the boy.

The King] then took him and continued to torture him until he pointed him to the monk...

It was not an act of treachery or treason, but stemmed from man’s limited capacity – a reality that has to be acknowledged. Any person who finds himself in the position of the boy when he informed the King about the monk will suffer a great deal of pain, greater than the pains of torture, then his self-esteem will lower; he will fold over on himself and despise himself, then he will continue to watch from afar with a look containing mercy - a happy countenance showing forgiveness, a hand offering help, and this becomes the obligation of the community at that time.

But this only happened after the boy exercised his limits of patience, endurance, and steadfastness, and this is the limit that defines whether a person who speaks under torture is to be

excused or blamed. But the limits of patience, endurance and steadfastness can only be reached after knowing that it is possible to fight the test.

The most important factor in this is that one enters the test with a preconceived determination that he will not cave in, because being tortured makes a person act involuntarily, but having this preconceived determination will materialise in his mind.

This state closely resembles that of sleep – if a person tries to sleep when he is determined to do something, then this determination will affect his sleep because he will be preoccupied with the matter at hand.

Similarly, when one is being tortured, having preconceived determination will nurture a form of willpower and resistance to caving in.

A person's soul may entice him to surrender, but this does not mean he should lose his self-confidence. Rather, he must postpone his confession for the longest time possible. Even if he does collapse and confess, he should not stop battling against the irreversible, final collapse.

Continuous struggle is the strongest possible form of confrontation.

The most important factor that aides this is for a person to go through the stages of torture and the goal required from each phase in his mind. For example, the first phase of torture is that an individual is made to see others being tortured – as the King did to the boy – the goal of which is to destroy the preconceived determination to remain silent, so that by the time he himself is tortured his resolve is crushed and he cannot be patient and display endurance and steadfastness. This is done by breeding fear in him preceding his own torture and then exploiting it, and this fear is a stronger tool than the torture itself.

Understanding such goals will enable an individual to avoid the expected results.

Similarly, when he reaches the phase of collapse, it does not mean that all his plans have been destroyed.

Attention must be paid to the mental relationship that exists between the individual that is being tortured and the other individuals who will be harmed if he confesses. The stronger the love and relationship, the stronger his determination, patience and endurance.

Any form of torture wants nothing more than to counter and destroy a person's willpower, and the method that achieves this goal more often than others is that of psychologically insulting a person's dignity, because the relationship between dignity and willpower is constant.¹ The stronger the dignity and determination of an individual, the stronger his willpower.

Thus, feelings of superiority and honour are some of the strongest factors that prevent a person from losing their willpower and collapsing under the pressure of torture, because being insulted, spitted at and kicked does not affect one's superiority and honour. Rather, it fills them with certainty that they have honour and superiority to the same degree that their tormentor has worthlessness and humiliation.

Fear and intimidation are the most dangerous effects of torture, and nothing can negate this danger other than feelings of tranquility and peace, which are only brought about through remembrance of Allāh,

Verily, in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest
[al-Ra'd: 28]

Just as remembrance of Allāh is the first and most continuous obligation on whoever is being tortured, then the numerous forms of remembering Allāh directly cure the many traces that torture can leave on a soul.

The supplication made when visiting a tyrannical ruler at the first moment of confronting them and seeking forgiveness, erases the sins that have caused the test in the first place. When these

¹ This is indicated by the punishment for fornication for a slave being half of that for a free person, because he only possesses as much willpower as he possesses dignity.

sins are erased, the cause of the test is removed. And when one seeks forgiveness, distresses are repelled.

Similarly, saying “Allāh is the Greatest,” enables one to feel the greatness of Allāh, thereby making the torture and the torturers easier to take. In the same manner, this result can occur by being content with the Decree of Allāh **بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ**.

This is the meaning understood by the Prophet’s (ﷺ) supplication in Tā’if, at the end of which he (ﷺ) said, “*If You are not angry with me, then I do not care. But Your mercy is more expansive for me.*”¹

Perhaps another form of remembrance that befits the time of torture is seeking refuge in Allāh in the form mentioned by the Prophet (ﷺ), “*I seek refuge in You from causing an evil to myself, or bringing it upon another Muslim.*”²

This is because confessions bring harm to oneself and to other Muslims. Whatever happens in the end, a person must remember the greater torment of Allāh and drawn parallels between the trials of the people and the torment of Allāh, as He **بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ** said,

Of mankind are some who say, “We believe in Allāh,” but if they are made to suffer for the sake of Allāh, they consider the trials of mankind as the punishment of Allāh,
[al-‘Ankabūt: 10]

When in actuality, no parallels whatsoever can be drawn.

Causing Allāh’s anger and being truly disgraced are prerequisites of His torment, torment that only increases and is not lessened through patience. On the other hand, being harmed and tested for the sake of Allāh leads to Allāh’s contentment, and whoever is harmed in His Way is honoured. The harm caused by other people eventually lessens, and having patience benefits the believer – the difficulties will end and the believer will come out of them, with the permission of Allāh.

After having spoken about torture, an important truth is ascertained: reliance upon Allāh is the feeling with which a Muslim enters a trial, and submitting to His decree is the feeling through which he will accept the results of the trial. Everything boils down to the fact that the test of torture – with everything that has been mentioned about it – is only in Allāh’s Hand.

We should understand from this situation that between this reliance with which we enter a trial, and the contentment with Allāh’s Decree by which we leave the trial, it is necessary to practically think about how to preserve the *da’wah* during the phase of covert action, and not rely completely on the faith of the followers. The monk could have moved from one place to another, so that if the boy weakened and gave away the monk’s location he would not be found. But Allāh Decrees, and He does what He Will.

So the monk was brought and it was said to him, “Renounce your religion,” but he refused. So [the King] ordered for a saw to be brought, which he placed in the middle of his head and his head was sawed until it split in half. The courtier was then brought and it was said to him, “Renounce your religion,” but he refused. So [the King] ordered for a saw to be brought, which he placed in the middle of his head and his head was sawed until it split in half

This event that occurred between the King, the monk and the courtier is the event that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was referring to when his Companions complained of their weakness to him:

It is narrated on the authority of Khabbāb ibn al-Arat (may Allāh be pleased with him), that he said: We complained to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) [about our state] when he was leaning

¹ Cited by al-Tabarānī in *al-Kabir* as in *Mujma‘ al-Zawā’id*, and al-Haythamī said (6/35), “It was reported by al-Tabarānī, and the chain includes Ibn Is’hāq who is a *mudallis* and a *thiqah*.” al-Albānī said in *Fiqh al-Sirah*, “This story was cited by Ibn Is’hāq with an authentic chain on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ka’b al-Quradhī with a *mursal* chain. I could not find a *musnad* for ‘Abdullāh ibn Ja’far in *al-Tabarānī al-Kabir*.”

² Cited by al-Tirmidhī in ‘The supplication’ and Abū Dāwūd in ‘The General Behaviour.’

against his cloak in the shade of the Ka'bah, and so we said [to him], "Will you ask Allāh to help us? Will you supplicate [to Allāh] for us?" He (ﷺ) said, "[In times] before you, a [believing] man would be seized and [a pit] would be dug for him in the ground, into which he would be placed. A saw would then be brought and placed on his head, [and his head would be saved] until it split into two halves. His flesh would be combed with iron combs until it was removed from his bones. But that did not distance him from his religion...By Allāh, Allāh will complete this affair [and grant victory to the religion] such that a rider will travel from San'ā' to Hadramawt¹, fearing none other than Allāh - and the wolf over his sheep - but you are impatient."²

That the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) mentioned this *hadīth* to his Companions indicates that it is the most severe form of torment that the callers to Allāh will be exposed to.

This is how the oppressors treat those who call to the Truth, leaving neither chance for discussion nor opportunity for persuasion.

The King was nothing more than an oppressor who employed the use of magic to ensure he remained in power. He saw no problems and abided by no principles, so the only solution he could find to the problem was torture and murder.

We should also note that the King wanted to make the monk and his courtier apostate before he killed them, because their apostasy would be the death of the *da'wah*, while their death would be its life. Thus, he only killed them after he had presented this option before them and lost hope in their apostasizing.

The boy was then brought and it was said to him, "Renounce your religion," but he refused. So [the King] pushed him towards a group of his couriers and said to them, "Take him to such-and-such mountain, and climb the mountain with him until you reach the peak. If he renounces his religion [leave him], but if he does not then throw him [off the mountain]."

We should notice here that the King desperately wanted the boy to apostate so that he would not be blamed for killing him and causing chaos to the people, who knew the boy through his good work and his love for righteousness.

This is from one angle...

From another angle, the King wanted the *da'wah* to lose this caller and tell the people that the boy did not believe anything because he recanted what he was calling to.

From a third angle, the King wanted the boy to ascertain his position by making him the court magician who would support the King for as long as he had this strange ability to cure the people from their illnesses.

The King's desire for the boy to apostate is affirmed through the nature of his dealings with him. The King first tended to the monk and the courtier, so that the boy could witness their end, be influenced by it and weaken. Similarly, the King chose a manner to kill the boy that was different to that of the monk and the courtier, a manner that gave him the chance to apostate during the distance of the journey from the palace and the mountain, and the ascent up the mountain. We know that the King did this for this reason, because he asked his men to offer the boy the chance to renounce his religion when they reached the mountain peak before throwing him off.

The King first tortured the courtier, then he tortured the boy, and then killed the monk and the courtier. He then said to the boy, "O my boy," and defined a specific manner by which to kill the boy - all of these actions had been carefully considered and chosen...

¹ **Translator's note:** Two cities in Yemen, a distance of approximately five days' travel by camel. See: *Fat'h al-Bārī*.

² Cited by al-Bukhārī in "The Book of Compulsion" (12/315, 316) from the *hadīth* of Khabbāb (may Allāh be pleased with him). The *hadīth* is also cited by Abū Dāwūd in "The Book of *Jihād*", al-Nasā'ī, *al-Musnad*, and others.

At what point should he resort to torture? When should he be soft? When should he kill them? How should he kill them? For each of these actions, there was always one definite goal - to eradicate the *da'wah*, either through the apostasy of the callers or by killing them.

The most important thing to notice about these attempts at killing, torture, and softness, is that the request to renounce the religion was made in the passive voice, **“it was said to him, “Renounce your religion.”** This was said to each of the monk, the courtier and the boy. But the act of killing was mentioned in the active voice by the King, **“which he placed in the middle of his head and his head was sawed until it split in half.”** The reason for this is that it is not befitting for high political powers to bargain with the *da'wah* callers, so if they want to strike a bargain they appoint unknown agents to bargain in secret, so that the solemnity of the state is not affected. But acts like killing and torture compliment – and indeed, increase – this solemnity.

But the boy supplicated to Allāh on the mountain top:

“O Allāh, save me from them in any way You please,”

He asked Allāh to save him in any manner that Allāh **يحيي ويميت** wills, and for any reason He chooses. A believer's reliance upon Allāh is not restricted by his experiences of reality, otherwise the boy would not have been able to make this supplication, because he could not have previously thought anything about this reality. But complete reliance in Allāh - in its truest form and purest essence - is an explosion in faith that cannot be restricted by the confines of reality, and it is an emotional boost that does not subside in difficult situations.

When such a state of reliance is achieved then the response will come, with the permission of Allāh...

...the mountain then began to shake and they all fell off it [except the boy]. He then went walking [back] to the King...

He went walking back to the King for the same reason he asked to be saved from the King's men on the mountain top – that the *da'wah* was not yet complete. Life is not an end in itself for which the callers crave, it is merely one of the necessities of *da'wah*, irregardless of whether the actualisation of this necessity means that one should desire to live or desire to die.

Those who interpret the benefit of the *da'wah* with a strong desire for the callers to live hold a deficient outlook that is nothing more than a philosophy of cowardice and renunciation of the Way of Allāh.

Likewise, those who rush towards death fuelled by their personal desires, without considering the benefit of the *da'wah*, are doing nothing more than squandering the *da'wah* efforts and abilities.

And just as the *da'wah*'s benefit is the dividing line between cowardice and courage, it is also the dividing line between courage and impetuosity; cowardice is when one is not prepared to make sacrifices, impetuosity is to make a sacrifice that is not needed and will not bring benefit, and courage is to make a beneficial, necessary sacrifice. Thus, the boy's request to be saved was not a display of cowardice, and his return to the King was not an act of impetuosity; in both situations, he was displaying wisdom and courage.

He then went walking [back] to the King...

His test bore no influence on his methodology...

The usual reaction of some callers who live through one of the dangerous phases of the *da'wah* is that they come out of the danger with a firm resolve to avoid it in all future situations, and this decision becomes an impetus to define a new vision and methodology.

This did not happen to the boy. Instead, he went back to the King while still completely firm in his vision. He went back to the same spot that he was in before, the same position in confrontation of the King. He had been given the means of confrontation, so he could not retreat or even postpone it.

The King asked him, **“What did your Companions do?”** He did not want to attribute the men to himself because they had been defeated by the boy. This would give the impression that the

boy had defeated him, and in turn, it would affect his claim to Lordship, so he said, **“What did your Companions do?”**

He did not say, “What did my companions do?” even though they were actually his men, as is stated in the text, **“So [the King] pushed him towards a group of his men.”**

He said, “Allāh الله و تعال saved me from them.”

We should notice that the boy’s reply to the King after being saved, **“Allāh الله و تعال saved me from them,”**¹ is the same thing that he said before being saved, **“O Allāh, save me from them.”**²

The same word³ that the boy used at the time of imminent danger on top of the mountain was repeated again after the danger had subsided and the mountain had shaken – nothing was added to it and nothing was changed. At times of imminent danger, a person may use words that indicate he is seeking refuge in Allāh and seeking His help, but when the danger subsides his words may change and he may feel a sense of pride in himself and his actions. He may interpret the divine removal of the danger as being a result of his own efforts or actions.

The King then tried to kill him for a second time...

So [the King] pushed him towards a group of his men and said, “Take him in a long boat to the middle of the ocean. If he renounces his religion [then leave him], but if he does not then throw him [into the ocean].” They took him, and he said, “O Allāh, save me from them in any way You please,” [whereupon] the boat overturned and they drowned. [The boy] then went walking [back] to the King, and the King said to him, “What did your Companions do?” He replied, “Allāh الله و تعال saved me from them.”

The King chose to throw the boy into the middle of the ocean, after trying to throw him off a mountain. This is an example of the nature of an absolute existentialist confrontation of the *da’wah*, that exists by the Decree of Allāh Alone.

It is this purely existentialist attitude that blinded the King to the Power of Allāh that was unveiled on the mountain peak, when the mountain shook and everyone fell off other than the boy who returned in safety.

It is this same outlook that led its followers to pursue these absurd methods of killing the boy, resulting from their short-sightedness during the long distance between the mountain and the palace.

What if it was an ocean...

and just as the mountain shook and they fell, what if the boat overturned and they drowned.. and he returned in safety...

Events that originate from a single source, from a Divine Will that prevails alongside the *da’wah*.

The boy was fully aware of this reality, so he went walking back to the King.

He was confident that the King would not be able to kill him. Even though it was a situation specific to him, it encompassed an absolute doctrinal truth, spoken by the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) to Ibn ‘Abbās in his *hadīth*, “*Know, that if all the people gathered together to benefit you, they would not be able to benefit you with anything other than that which Allāh has decreed it for you, and if they all gathered together to harm you, they would not be able to harm you with anything other than that which Allāh has decreed for you. The pens have been raised and the pages have dried.*”⁴

¹ **Translator’s note:** The phrase in Arabic is *Kafānibim Allāh*.

² **Translator’s note:** The phrase in Arabic is *Allāhumma ikfīnibim*.

³ **Translator’s note:** Both the word *Kafānibim* and *ikfīnibim* come from the same root. The former is the verb used in the past tense, whereas the latter is the verb used as a request (in the imperative mood).

⁴ Authentic, cited by: al-Tirmidhī in ‘The Description of the [Day of] Resurrection’ #2516; Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (2669) through Hanash al-San‘ānī on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, and its chain is authentic. al-Tirmidhī himself also authenticated it, and al-Nawawī affirmed this in *al-Arba‘īn* (The Forty *Hadīth*), *hadīth* #19. Also cited by al-Hākim (2/541) with a chain of narration that includes a narrator who is abandoned (*matruk*) and one concerning whom there is

A *da'wah* movement will not be correct unless it implants this confidence and trust in Allāh that was displayed by the boy, into the conscience of every caller.

He then said to the King, "You will not be able to kill me until you do what I say!"

There are two elements to the boy's words: the affirmation of the King's powerlessness, and the command that he will issue to the King. This could possibly have been the first order the King ever received in his life that he found himself compelled to obey.

With this command the boy is refuting the claim of Lordship that the King made for himself, by establishing that he is helpless and is compelled to carry out an order being issued to him.

The boy was eager to refute this claim at this time, because it was the last situation that would occur between them, so this shocking allegation had to be put to an end.

The boy's command to the King was:

[You should] gather all the people on a single plain...

...so that they witness the events and understand their implications. The boy made this his initial command because he knew that such rulers conceal the truths that will benefit the people and lead them to having faith and recognising the Truth.

This was also what Mūsā intended when he told Fir'wan that he would meet the magicians on the same day that all the people would be gathered together,

The day of the festival, and let the people assemble when the sun has risen.
[Tā-Hā: 59]

The boy then continued to issue commands to the powerless King.

...and tie me to a [tree] trunk...

He had to ensure that the people felt his weakness – a young boy, tied to the trunk of a tree – so that it would be easier for them to transfer these feelings into feelings of faith in the Force that subjugated the King, and that was on the side of that small boy who was tied to a tree trunk - the Force of Allāh, the Lord of the boy.

Then, take an arrow from my quiver...

He stipulated that the arrow should be from his own quiver so that the means of his death came from himself, and to affirm his desire to be killed.

...and place it in the middle of the bow...

It was only natural that the King would place the arrow in the middle of the bow. But the boy made this natural action part of the implementation of his command, so that the King could not make a single move from his own will. He was thereby forced into complete and utter submission to the commands of the boy, that were a representation of the Will of Allāh **بِحُكْمِهِ وَتَدْبِيرِهِ**.

...and say, 'In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy,'

a difference of opinion. The end of the chain is also broken. And all Praises are due to Allāh Alone, by Whose Blessings all righteousness is completed.

Through these words the boy interpreted the situation to the people – his death would be due to his wish and the means of his death would also come from him, as an actualisation of Allāh’s Decree after the King failed to kill him.

The King replied to the commands of the boy like someone weak and compelled. He gathered the people on a single plain, tied him to the trunk of a tree, then took an arrow from the boy’s quiver, placed it in the middle of his bow, and said, “In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy.”

The King obeyed the boy’s commands because he found himself faced with three options:

1) He could leave the boy to continue his *da‘wab* as he pleased. This would end with the people having faith in Allāh.

2) He could continue proving his inability to kill the boy, which would in turn prove the Power of Allāh that protected the boy. This would also end with the people having faith in Allāh.

3) This is the choice that the King chose, which ended with the boy being killed as well as the people having faith. Allāh Willed that the people should believe and that His Word be raised high above all others, and this is what He **يُحْكُمُ وَيُنزِلُ** Decreed to happen – there is none who can repel His Decree, and none who can go back on his judgement. In accordance with this situation, we can understand the statement of Allāh in *Sūrat al-Burūj*:

And Allāh encompasses them from behind
[al-Burūj: 20]

The arrow hit his temple.¹ [The boy] placed his hand on his temple, and then died...

This encompasses an extraordinary fatalistic truth, this being the link between the cause and the outcome, which was the instant between the arrow hitting the boy and his death. The statement says, “so he fired the arrow. **The arrow hit his temple,**” but he did not yet die – the cause was not linked to the end result. “[The boy] placed his hand on his temple,” and only then did he die.

This last fatalistic truth that defined the relationship between the cause and the outcome was preceded by a number of other realities.

The story includes an outcome that was actualised contrary to the means intended by man: Allāh wanted the same boy that the people wanted to be a caller to evil, to be a caller to the Truth. And on the same road that boy took to the magician, he met the monk, sat with him, listened to him, and was impressed by his speech.

The story includes a great outcome by virtue of simple cause: the boy killed the beast that blocked the path using a small stone. This is also the lesson we can learn from the King being defeated, and that what he feared to happen, happened due to this young boy.

The story also includes a variety of outcomes that happen by virtue of a single cause: when the boy and the King’s men were on the mountain and the mountain shook causing them all to fall off, the boy went walking back to the King. Similarly, when the boy and the King’s men were on the boat and it capsized causing them all to drown, and the boy again went walking back to the King.

From the sum of these truths, we can understand the saying of Allāh **يُحْكُمُ وَيُنزِلُ**,

He does what He Desires
[al-Burūj: 16]

because this verse is the Truth of all truths.

¹ The *sadgh* (translated as temple) of a person is the area between his eye and his earlobe.

The last words the boy uttered was his command to the King, that he should say, **“In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy,”** and with these words the boy opened the doors of faith for the people. They knew that he loved them and strove to be at their service and cure them of their illnesses, so the only thing that was left was to let them know that the boy had a Lord Who guided him to love them and permitted him to cure them.

In the Name of this Lord, the King was rendered unable to kill the boy, and in His Name the boy would die of his own desire for the sake of their faith. We can feel the extent to which the King felt defeated and subdued, for after making claims of his own Lordship, and torturing and killing all those who did not affirm his claims, he himself said at the end of it all, **“In the Name of Allāh, the Lord of the boy.”**

For this reason, the boy did not feel fear that the people would view him differently after seeing him being killed by the King, for everyone would realise the King’s subjugation at that moment in time.

Likewise, the boy was not scared because he was able to arouse feelings of sympathy for him in the hearts of these people due to how he had dealt with them previously, as well as the circumstances of his death itself. The way he died clearly emphasised the difference between him – a young boy tied to the trunk of a tree – and between the oppressive King.

When the people stopped fearing the subjugated King and began feeling sympathy for the young boy, the correct feelings towards the situation set in their hearts.

A young boy who loved the people and would serve and benefit them with acts of kindness, dying of his own will for their sake after proving that the King was unable to kill him, and all so they could believe in Allāh, the Lord of the boy.

The people responded. They fearlessly burst forth from every angle, repeating their cry of faith:

“We believe in the Lord of the boy”

At the moment they are freed from the chains of delusion and ignorance...
and at the moment of their glory, after humiliation and defeat...
and at the moment of their strength, after weakness and powerlessness...the people will believe.

The King was then told, “Do you see what you feared? By Allāh, that which you feared has happened!”

The peoples’ demeanor suddenly changed and the crowds stopped supporting the deceptive ruler. So someone came to the King, swearing to Allāh that he had now become helpless and defeated, and said to him, *“By Allāh, that which you feared has happened!”*

So [the King] ordered for ditches [to be dug] at the junctions of all the roads. When they were dug, fires were lit in them...

Despite this, the people did not stop rushing forward from every road and path, and continued to do so until they reached the ditches of fire.

But the King continued to oppose the crowds and said,

“Whoever does not renounce his religion, then throw him in [the fire], or tell them to jump into it.”

Every person needs to fight the love of life in his own soul, for the slightest amount of weakness is sufficient to cause hesitation. This was the last crafty idea that occurred to this defeated King, but the faith of the people extinguished any possible effects. The cumulative power of rushing to their deaths cured any weaknesses that may have been concealed in their souls.

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) then left us with a scene of how their faith treated their feelings of attachment to this life.

...a woman came carrying a baby, and she hesitated to jump into the fire, so her child said to her, "O Mother! Have patience, for you are upon the Truth!"

The child's mother was holding on to him until the very end; the horrors of what was happening did not separate them from one another. When she reached the edge of the pit, the feelings of motherhood and hatred of death re-ignited within her soul, causing her to hesitate in taking her child into the fire. But the child removed his mother's fear of the fire and encouraged her to throw herself into it, and save herself from her own weakness.

The words of this baby positioned at the edge of ditches of fire, were also the last words of the story...a story of the victory of the Truth.

The scenes of torture and the ditches of fire, with their rising sparks and flames, continue to burn within the pure bodies of the believers. The effects of that fire continue to burn as flames in the heart of every Muslim whenever a martyr is slain in the cause of this *da'wah*, to establish it upon this earth.

It is in this regard that Allāh ﷻ revealed,

By the heaven holding the big stars, and by the Promised Day, and by the witness and the witnessed; cursed were the owners of the ditch, of the fuel-fed fire, when they sat by [the fire] and they witnessed what they were doing to the believers. They had nothing against [the believers], except that they believed in Allāh, the All-Powerful, Worthy of all Praise!

[al-Burūj: 1-8]