

Explanation of The Book of Tawheed

Class Notes – Chapter 61

بَابُ مَا جَاءَ فِي الْمُصَوِّرِينَ

What has been mentioned regarding those who make pictures.

- **Relevance of the chapter to the book:** Since depicting a living being is a preliminary step to falling into *shirk*, the author dedicates this chapter to highlighting the prohibition of such an act and narrates the evidences which show the painful consequences reserved for those who commit it.
- (الْمُصَوِّرِينَ) – “Picture makers”. Picture making (*tasweer*) has a number of scenarios, each with a different ruling.
 1. To make a three-dimensional representation of a living being whether it is a carving, casting, sculpture or anything similar. There is consensus amongst the scholars that this is strictly forbidden.
 2. To make a two-dimensional representation of a living being, such as a drawing or an illustration. This has the same ruling as the first scenario and is strictly forbidden.
 3. To take a photograph of a living being. There is a difference of opinion regarding the permissibility.
 - a) The first opinion is that it falls under the generality of the evidences which prohibit the making of pictures and is therefore also prohibited.
 - b) The second opinion is that it is not the work of the *musawir*, rather they merely captured the existing creation of Allah. In this case it is permissible if it is not used for something prohibited.
 4. To make a two-dimensional or three-dimensional representation of non-living being (it has no soul), or to take a photograph of it, such as a mountain, tree, river or even a car. This is permissible if it is not used for something prohibited.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذَهَبَ يَخْلُقُ كَخَلْقِي؟
فَلْيَخْلُقُوا ذَرَّةً، أَوْ لِيَخْلُقُوا حَبَّةً، أَوْ لِيَخْلُقُوا شَعِيرَةً. أَخْرَجَاهُ.

Abu Hurairah narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: Allah said: Who is more unjust than the one who tries to create the likeness of My creation? Let them create a small ant, or let them create a grain of wheat, or let them create a grain of barley. [Bukhari, Muslim]

- (وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ) – “Who is more unjust”. This is a negating question. That is, no one is more unjust than those who try to imitate Allah’s creation.
- (يَخْلُقُ كَخَلْقِي) – “Who tries to create the likeness of My creation”. That is, they try to imitate the living creation of Allah with their drawings and their carvings.

- (فَلْيَخْلُقُوا) – “Let them create”. Allah defies them to create a living being so as to expose their inability. This is a threat from Allah.
- (حَبَّةً) – “Grain of wheat”. Which has the same taste as grain of wheat created by Allah and is able to be planted in the earth to produce more wheat. They are unable to create even this small grain which does not even have a soul.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** In this hadith *Qudsi*, Allah informs us on the tongue of His Prophet ﷺ, that there is none more unjust than those who make pictures of living things, wishing to resemble Allah in His exclusive act of creation.
Allah then challenges them to create even the smallest and most insignificant of His visible, living creations, which is a small ant, or to create the simplest of plant materials such as a grain of wheat or a grain of barley. This challenge of Allah clearly exposes their weakness and inability.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** Allah informs us that none is more unjust than those who attempt to imitate His creation. This is clear proof of the prohibition of making pictures.

وَلَهُمَا عَنِ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ الَّذِينَ يُصَاهِتُونَ بِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ.

A'isha narrated that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: The people who will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection will be those who try to imitate Allah's creation. [Bukhari, Muslim]

- (أَشَدُّ النَّاسِ عَذَابًا) – “The people who will receive the severest punishment”. Meaning that from those who will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Judgement. The severity of their punishment is not exclusive to them. Others may be punished with equal or greater severity, particularly the disbelievers.
- (يُصَاهِتُونَ بِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ) – “Who try to imitate Allah's creation”. With their sculptures, carvings, or drawings. The imitation occurs whether they intended it or not. For example, a person cannot make a sculpture of living being, then claim that they did not intend with it to imitate Allah's creation. They are still threatened with severe punishment, because the imitation has already occurred, regardless of their intention.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ informs us that those who depict living creatures in their drawings, paintings, and carvings, attempting to imitate Allah in His act of creation will face the most severe punishment on the Day of Judgement. They are from the worst of people in respect to Allah and the most wicked in committing evil.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** The fact that those who attempt to imitate the creation of Allah will be from the most severely punished people on the Day of Judgement shows that their attempted imitation is forbidden and is from the major sins.

وَلَهُمَا عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: كُلُّ مُصَوِّرٍ فِي النَّارِ، يُجْعَلُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ صُورَةٍ صَوَّرَهَا نَفْسٌ يُعَذَّبُ بِهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ.

Ibn Abbas narrated: I heard Allah's Messenger ﷺ saying: Every picture maker is in the Hellfire. A soul will be placed in every picture made by him and it will punish him in the Hellfire. [Bukhari, Muslim]

وَلَهُمَا عَنْهُ مَرْفُوعًا: مَنْ صَوَّرَ صُورَةً فِي الدُّنْيَا كَلَّفَ أَنْ يَنْفُخَ فِيهَا الرُّوحَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، وَلَيْسَ بِنَافِخٍ.

Ibn Abbas also narrated: Whoever makes a picture in this world will be charged with putting a soul (life) in it on the Day of Resurrection and he will never be able to do so. [Bukhari, Muslim]

- (كُلُّ مُصَوِّرٍ فِي النَّارِ) – “Every picture maker is in the Hellfire”. Those who prohibited the taking of photographs of living beings quote this *hadith* as evidence because (كُلُّ) is from the terms which imply generality.
- (يُجْعَلُ لَهُ بِكُلِّ صُورَةٍ صَوْرَتَهَا نَفْسٌ يُعَذَّبُ بِهَا) – “A soul will be placed in every picture made by him and it will punish him”. The more pictures they make, the more they will be punished by them in the Hellfire. Allah will breathe life into them, and they will punish them as a recompense for their attempted imitation of the creation of Allah.
- (كَلَّفَ) – “Will be charged”. That is, they will be forced by Allah.
- (وَلَيْسَ بِنَافِعٍ) – “And he will never be able to do so”. They will be forced to do something which they are unable to do as a form of punishment. This is an example of the principle: ‘The recompense is in accordance to the deed’.
- **General meaning of the two ahadeeth:** In these two *ahadeeth*, the Prophet ﷺ states that whoever makes a picture or a statue of a living being, then the Hellfire will be their destination. In the Hellfire, there will be a soul for every picture and statue they made in this world, by whom they will be tormented and severely punished. Their punishment will be at the hands of the very things they made. Furthermore, such a person will be charged to breathe souls into the pictures and statues they made which of course they are not able to. This demonstrates their powerlessness and weakness and is a form of punishment for their sin.
- **Relevance of the two ahadeeth to the chapter:** That both *ahadeeth* threaten those who make pictures of living things with punishment in the Hellfire. This shows that their actions are prohibited and are a major sin.

وَلِمُسْلِمٍ عَنِ أَبِي الْهَيَّاجِ، قَالَ: قَالَ لِي عَلِيُّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: أَلَا أْبْعَثُكَ عَلَى مَا بَعَثَنِي عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: أَنْ لَا تَدَعَ صُورَةً إِلَّا طَمَسْتَهَا، وَلَا قَبْرًا مُشْرِفًا إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ.

Abul Hayyaj narrated that Ali said to him: Should I not direct you to the same mission as the Messenger of Allah directed me? Do not leave a picture without obliterating it, nor a high grave without levelling it. [Muslim]

- **Abul Hayyaj:** Hayyan Ibn Husayn al-Asadi. He was from the trustworthy *tabi'een*.
- (إِلَّا طَمَسْتَهَا) – “Without obliterating it”. By colouring over it if it is a picture or removing its head if it is a statue. This defacing should remove its features which distinguish it, such as the eyes and the nose or the head completely. The Prophet ﷺ said:

« الصُّورَةُ فِي الرَّأْسِ فَإِذَا قُطِعَ الرَّأْسُ فَلَا صُورَةَ »

The picture is in the head, so if the head is removed then there is no picture. [al-Bayhaqi - Sahih]

- (إِلَّا سَوَّيْتَهُ) – “Without levelling it”. If the grave is raised more than an arm’s length or it has been built over or decorated, then it should be levelled and returned to the manner prescribed in the *sunnah*.
- **General meaning of the hadith:** Because Islam is careful to block all roads leading to *shirk*, Ali Ibn Abi Talib informs us that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ charged him with the task of defacing all pictures of living things and levelling all the graves which have been overly raised or have gravestones on them. This was to protect from the worship of images and the adoration of the graves because making pictures of living things and building over graves leads to their glorification and reverence besides Allah.
- **Relevance of the hadith to the chapter:** That the Prophet ﷺ ordered all pictures to be obliterated, thus proving the prohibition of picture making.

- **Important issues of the Chapter**

- 1. Intense condemnation of those who make pictures.** As per the *hadith* of A'isha: *'The people who will receive the severest punishment ...'*
- 2. Picture making is condemned because it constitutes not having proper regard for Allah. As in His Statement: 'Who would be more unjust than the one who tries to create the like of my creatures...'** As per the *hadith* of Abu Hurairah. The improper regard for Allah is in attempting to imitate Him in something specific to Him, which is His act of Creation.
- 3. Declaration of the power and ability of Allah and the incapacity and weakness of those who attempt to create. As in His Statement: 'Let them create a small ant or a grain of wheat or a grain of barley'** As per the *hadith* of A'isha. Allah is able to create creations far greater than a small ant or a grain of wheat or barley, yet the picture makers are incapable of creating even these small creations.
- 4. Declaration that they (picture makers) will receive the most severe punishment on the Day of Judgement.** As per the *hadith* of A'isha.
- 5. Allah will create a soul in place of every picture, and the maker of that picture will be punished by it in the Hellfire.** As per the *hadith* of Ibn Abbas. It will be a form of punishment.
- 6. Picture makers will be asked to breathe life into every one of their Images.** As per the *hadith* of Ibn Abbas. Again, it is a form of severe punishment which they will be made to taste in the Hellfire.
- 7. The command to deface all images and pictures of living things when found.** As per the *hadith* of Ali Ibn Abi Talib. This is because it is a pathway which leads to *shirk* and should therefore be removed. This proves that there is no good except that the Prophet ﷺ told us of it, and no evil except that the Prophet ﷺ warned us of it.