



مركز الفطرة  
FITRAH CENTRE

# Envy (Hasad)

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## Translator's Introduction

With the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

It is with great pleasure that Fitrah Centre presents an English translation of this important treatise, originally authored by Sheikh Khālid bin Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad al-Ḥibshī, which explains the phenomena of *ḥasad* (envy)—a subtle yet destructive disease of the heart—one that lurks beneath the surface of human interaction and corrodes both the envier and the envied. The Qur'ān and Sunnah speak clearly about its danger, commanding believers to seek refuge “from the evil of the envier when he envies.” Envy is not merely as a moral flaw, but a spiritual illness requiring careful diagnosis, understanding, and treatment. This book is meant more for the envier than for those who are envied, and almost all of us, at some point, may find ourselves playing the role of the envier.

Our translation approach prioritises clarity and accessibility for English-speaking readers while ensuring that the spirit and essence of the original Arabic text are preserved. While we have not adhered to a strictly literal translation, we have remained faithful to the meanings and depth of the content. Some idiomatic expressions may have been adapted for better comprehension, and in some instances, headings may have been introduced by the translator to help structure and break down the material for easier navigation.

While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, any translation errors or suggestions can be submitted to us via email at [info@fitrahcentre.com](mailto:info@fitrahcentre.com).

This book is made available free of charge. We ask Allah to bless Sheikh Khālid bin Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad al-Ḥibshī and his dedicated team for their efforts in compiling and producing the original work. May Allah accept it as continuous charity (*ṣadaqah jāriyah*) for them and grant them immense reward in this life and the next.

We pray that this book serves as a source of inspiration and means of relief for all who read it, in treating illnesses and relieving hardships originating from envy and evil eye.

May Allah bless and accept our deeds and make this work a means of benefit for the entire ummah.

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# Chapter 1: Envy (Ḥasad)

## Definition

It is the desire for the removal of a blessing from its owner, regardless of what that blessing may be. It is a reprehensible trait because it is one of the characteristics of Satan, the Jews, and the wicked among creation, both in the past and the present. Additionally, it signifies discontent with what Allah Almighty has decreed.

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said in his book, *Amrāḍ al-Qulūb* (Diseases of the Heart), “The reality is that *ḥasad* (envy) is the hatred and resentment towards the good condition of the *maḥsūd* (envied), and it is of two types:

One type is the dislike of a blessing upon someone else in an absolute sense—this is the blameworthy form of envy. If a person resents another’s blessing, they experience pain and distress due to the existence of what they despise, making this a disease of the heart. They find pleasure in the removal of that blessing, even if they themselves gain no direct benefit from its loss. Their only gain is the relief from the inner pain they felt. However, this is only temporary—similar to how a sick person might feel relief from a treatment, even if the condition persists. The blessing that was removed from the envied person may return to them, or they may receive an even greater blessing. Similarly, others may also receive comparable blessings. This is why some scholars define envy as the desire for the removal of a blessing, for whoever dislikes seeing a blessing upon another naturally wishes for it to be taken away.

The second type is the dislike that someone else has a superiority [or virtue] over them and wishes to be equal to or better than them. This is also a form of envy, but it is what is commonly referred to as *ghibṭah* (a form of envy without malice). The Prophet (peace be upon him) referred to it as envy in the agreed-upon hadith narrated by Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both). Ibn Mas‘ūd’s version states, “There is no envy except in two cases: a man whom Allah has granted wisdom, and he judges according to it and teaches it, and a man whom Allah has given wealth, which he spends in the cause of truth.” Ibn ‘Umar’s version states, “A man whom Allah has given the Qur’ān, and he recites it throughout the night and day, and a man whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends from it (in charity).”

*Ḥasad* (envy)—with the letter *sīn* pronounced with *fathah* more commonly than with *sukūn*—is a verbal noun derived from the verb *ḥasada* (to envy).

Linguistically, it refers to the envious person's (*ḥāsīd*) desire for the removal of a blessing from the one who is envied.

The technical<sup>1</sup> (or Islamic) definition does not deviate from its linguistic meaning.

## Related Terms

### Tamannī (Wishing)

Linguistically, the word is derived from *manā*, which means decree or destiny, because the one who wishes for something imagines its occurrence. The noun forms are *maniyyah* and *umniyyah* (wish or desire).

Technically, it refers to the desire for something to happen, whether it is possible or impossible.

The relationship between *tamannī* and *ḥasad* (envy) is that *ḥasad* is a type of *tamannī*, as mentioned by al-Zarkashī in *al-Manthūr*, under *ḥiqd* (resentment).

### Ḥiqd (Resentment)

Linguistically, it refers to harbouring enmity and hatred inwardly. It is derived from the verb *ḥaqada* (following the verbal pattern of *ḍaraba*), and in another dialect, it follows the pattern of *ta`iba*. Its plural form is *aḥqād* (resentments).

Technically, it is the desire for revenge. The essence of resentment is that when anger is suppressed due to an inability to retaliate immediately, it retreats inward and becomes deeply embedded in the heart, turning into *ḥiqd* (resentment). It manifests as ill thoughts toward others due to enmity. Resentment is a result of anger, and *ḥasad* (envy) is a consequence of resentment.

It is mentioned in *al-Iḥyā`* that resentment pushes a person to wish for the removal of blessings from their enemy. They feel sorrow when their adversary receives a blessing and rejoice when misfortune befalls them.

### Shamātah (Rejoicing at Others' Misfortunes)

Linguistically, it refers to feeling joy over the misfortunes that befall others. *Shamātah* and *ḥasad* (envy) are closely connected because an envious person (*ḥāsīd*) rejoices in the misfortunes of others.

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<sup>1</sup> The **linguistic definition** of a term refers to its meaning in general language usage, without any specialized context. It is how the word is understood in everyday speech or its root meaning in Arabic. The **technical (or terminological) definition**, on the other hand, refers to how a term is specifically defined and understood within a particular field, such as Islamic jurisprudence or theology. This definition often builds upon the linguistic meaning but refines it for precise use in scholarly or religious discussions. Scholars differentiate between linguistic and technical meanings to ensure that concepts are properly understood within their intended context, avoiding misinterpretation.

## ‘Ayn (Evil Eye)

The term here refers to harm caused by the eye, and the one who afflicts others with it is called ‘ā’in (perpetrator of the evil eye).

It is said, “*ta‘ayyana al-rajulu al-māl*” (a man afflicted wealth with the eye) when he harms it by his gaze, and “*‘anantu ar-rajula*” (I afflicted a man with my eye), meaning, I harmed him through my gaze.

The one affected by the evil eye is called *ma‘yūn*, while the one who casts it is called ‘ā’in.

The *ḥāsīd* (envier) and ‘ā’in (evil eye caster) share the common trait that both of their souls adapt and direct themselves toward the one they wish to harm. However, the harm of the evil eye caster occurs when directly seeing and witnessing the object. On the other hand, the envier’s harm can occur in the presence of the envied person and in their absence. Additionally, the one who casts the evil eye may afflict things that are not typically envied, such as animals or crops, even though this ultimately stems from envy toward their owner.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, “*Ḥasad* (envy) is the root cause of the evil eye. A person may inflict harm upon themselves or others unintentionally, merely by their natural disposition. This is among the worst traits found in human nature.”

## Ghibṭah (Admiration without Malice)

It is metaphorically referred to as *ḥasad* (envy), but it differs in meaning. Linguistically, it signifies a state of well-being and prosperity. It is derived from the verb *ghabaṭa* (following the verbal pattern of *ḍaraba*), meaning to wish for the same blessing someone else has, without desiring its removal from them, due to admiration and appreciation of it.

Technically, it carries the same meaning as in language—it is the wish to have what someone else possesses without wanting them to lose it.

Striving for this is called *munāfasah* (competition). If it is in acts of obedience and righteousness, it is praiseworthy. If it is in sinful matters, it is blameworthy. If it is in permissible matters, it is neutral (allowed).

Sheikh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said, “Among the diseases of the heart is envy (*ḥasad*), as some have defined it as the harm that arises from knowing about the prosperity of the wealthy. A virtuous person cannot be envious (*ḥasūd*), for virtue aligns with beautiful conduct. Some scholars have stated that envy is the desire for the removal of a blessing from the envied person, even if the envious one does not attain it themselves. This is in contrast to *ghibṭah* (admiration), which is the wish to attain a similar blessing without wanting it to be taken away from the one who possesses it (*maghbūṭ*). The most accurate

definition of envy (*hasad*) is that it is hatred and resentment toward the good condition of the envied person.”<sup>2</sup>

### Origin of Envy

The origin and beginning of envy trace back to Iblīs (Satan) towards Adam (peace be upon him). He said, “Shall I prostrate to one whom You created from clay?”<sup>3</sup> Thus, Iblīs envied Adam, and his descendants followed in his footsteps. His forces whisper enmity and envy into the hearts of people. The first manifestation of envy among humans occurred between the two sons of Adam (peace be upon him), leading to the first murder in history, which was caused by envy.

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<sup>2</sup> Diseases of the Hearts, Vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Sūrah Al-Isrā*, verse 61.

## Chapter 2: Causes, Ruling, and Consequences

### Causes of Envy

The root cause of envy is that human nature is inclined toward superiority over others of the same kind. When a person sees another possessing something they do not have, they desire its removal—either so they can attain it themselves and rise above others or simply so they can be equal to them.

Al-Ghazālī, in *al-Ihyā'*, mentioned seven causes of envy:

#### **First Cause: Enmity and Hatred**

This is the strongest cause of envy. When someone harms or opposes another for any reason, the heart naturally harbours bitterness and anger toward them, and [overtime] resentment (*ḥiqd*) takes root in him. Resentment naturally seeks satisfaction and revenge. However, if the individual is unable to retaliate directly, they begin to hope that time and fate will bring misfortune upon their adversary, finding satisfaction in their downfall.

#### **Second Cause: Pride**

This occurs when a person finds it difficult to accept that someone else has risen above them in rank. If one of their peers attains a position of authority, knowledge, or wealth, they fear that this person will become a superior to them. The envious person cannot tolerate their superiority and refuses to endure their pride or boasting. Their objective is not necessarily to become superior themselves but rather to prevent the other from being haughty. They may accept being equal, but they cannot accept being outranked.

#### **Third Cause: Arrogance**

This occurs when a person has an innate tendency to be arrogant over others, belittling them and expecting them to serve and obey him. They anticipate that others will submit to their wishes and follow their directives. It was due to arrogance and self-pride that many disbelievers envied the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). They said how can an orphaned young man surpass us? How can we lower our heads to him? Thus, they objected, “Why was this Qur’ān not sent down to a great man from one of the two cities?”<sup>4</sup>

#### **Fourth Cause: Amazement**

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<sup>4</sup> *Sūrah al-Zukhruf*, verse 31.

As Allah Almighty has informed us about past nations, they said, “You are nothing but human beings like us”<sup>5</sup>, “Should we believe in two men like ourselves?”<sup>6</sup>, “And if you obey a human being like yourselves, then you will surely be losers.”<sup>7</sup> They were astonished that a human like them could attain the rank of prophethood, divine revelation, and closeness to Allah Almighty. This amazement led them to envy and a desire for the removal of prophethood from these individuals, out of distress that someone of their own kind was favoured over them—not due to arrogance, a desire for leadership, enmity, or any other motive.

#### **Fifth Cause: Fear of Losing Personal Interests**

This type of envy occurs specifically between rivals competing for the same goal. Each person envies the other for any advantage that could help them secure their objective alone. Examples of this include the jealousy between co-wives, as they compete for the affection and attention of their husband, or the jealousy between siblings, as they compete for a special place in their parents’ hearts.

#### **Sixth Cause: Love of Leadership and Seeking Prestige**

This type of envy arises from a person’s desire for exclusivity in status or recognition, without necessarily aiming for a specific goal beyond it. For example, a person who wishes to be unmatched in a particular field—if they become excessively attached to praise and admiration, they may feel disturbed upon hearing about someone else excelling in the same domain, even if that person is in a distant part of the world. Such a person may resent their rival’s success, wish for their downfall, or hope for the removal of their blessings.

#### **Seventh Cause: Malice and Stinginess of the Soul Toward Allah’s Blessings on Others**

This occurs when a person harbours an inherently wicked nature and resents the well-being of others, even when they have no personal ambitions for leadership, wealth, or superiority. Such a person feels distressed upon hearing about someone else’s success or blessings. However, if they hear about people’s hardships, failures, or struggles, they feel delighted. They constantly wish for the downfall of others and begrudge Allah’s blessings upon His servants, as if those receiving the blessings are taking them from their own personal wealth and treasures.

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<sup>5</sup> *Sūrah Yāsīn*, verse 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Sūrah al-Mu`minūn*, verse 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Sūrah al-Mu`minūn*, verse 34.

## Ruling on Envy

If the envy involves the actual desire for the removal of someone else's blessing, then it is forbidden by the consensus of the Ummah.

This is because it constitutes an objection to Allah's decree, a challenge to His wisdom, an attempt to undo what He has ordained, a wish to strip someone of the blessings that Allah has rightfully granted them.

The prohibition of this type of envy is established through the Qur'ān, the Sunnah, and rational evidence.

As for the evidence from the Qur'ān, it is found in Allah's statement, "And from the evil of the envier when he envies."<sup>8</sup> In this verse, Allah commands us to seek refuge from the harm of the envier, whose evil is abundant and varied. Some of that harm is involuntary, such as afflicting others with the evil eye, while other forms are intentional—like striving to prevent good from reaching the envied person, belittling them in front of others, making supplications against them, or even physically harming them. The scholars of interpretation differed regarding the exact meaning of the envier mentioned in the verse.

Qatādah stated that what is meant is the evil of the envier's eye and inner self.

Others have said, "Rather, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was commanded in this verse to seek refuge from the evil of the Jews who envied him." However, the view most correct, as stated by al-Ṭabarī, is that "The Prophet (peace be upon him) was commanded to seek refuge from the evil of every envier when they envy." This is the most accurate interpretation because Allah, the Almighty, did not specify any particular envier in His words, "And from the evil of the envier when he envies"—rather, His command was general, including all enviers. Therefore, it should be understood in its broadest and most inclusive sense. As al-Qurṭubī said, "The envier is an enemy of Allah's blessings."

Some of the wise men said that the envier openly challenges his Lord in five ways:

1. He hates every blessing that appears upon someone else.
2. He is discontent with Allah's decree, as if to say, "Why did You distribute things this way?"
3. He opposes the action of Allah, for Allah gives His favour to whomever He wills, while the envier begrudges that favour.
4. He has abandoned the allies of Allah, or wishes for their downfall and the removal of blessings from them.

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<sup>8</sup> *Sūrah al-Falaq*, verse 5.

5. He has aided his enemy, Iblīs (Satan).

As for the Sunnah, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “Beware of envy, for envy consumes good deeds just as fire consumes wood or dry grass.”

As for rational evidence, the envier is blameworthy. It has been said, “The envier gains nothing in gatherings but regret, nothing before the angels but curse and hatred, nothing in solitude but anxiety and grief, nothing in the Hereafter but sorrow and punishment, and nothing from Allah except distance and wrath.”

An exception to the prohibition of envy is when the envied blessing is possessed by a disbeliever or a corrupt person (*fāsiq*) who uses it to commit sins against Allah—wishing for the removal of such a blessing is not blameworthy.

As for figurative envy (*ḥasad majāzī*), meaning *ghibṭah* (admiration without malice), then it is praiseworthy when related to acts of obedience, blameworthy when related to acts of disobedience, permissible when related to neutral (permissible) matters. This is reflected in the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) saying, “There is no envy except in two cases: a man whom Allah has given the Qur’ān, and he recites it by night and by day; and a man whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it by night and by day.” Meaning: there is no greater or more virtuous form of blameworthy than in these two matters.

### **The Excused Degree of Envy, Its Opposite, and What Is Disputed**

Al-Ghazālī stated that a person cannot completely banish envy from his heart; rather, he will always remain in conflict with his heart, because some envy of his rivals is bound to remain within him. He stated in this regard that a person has three states regarding his enemies:

1. A person naturally feels pleased at the their misfortune, but with their intellect and faith, they disapprove of that feeling, despise themselves for it, and wish they could remove it from their heart. This state is clearly excused, because it is not within one’s control, or no more than what is humanly possible to control.
2. A person loves their misfortune and expresses joy either verbally or through actions. This is undoubtedly the prohibited type of envy.

Between the two: a person feels envy inwardly, but does not condemn themselves for it, nor do they disapprove of what is in their heart. However, they refrain from acting upon it through words or actions. This case is subject to scholarly disagreement. The apparent view is that it is not free from sin, and the degree of sin depends on the strength or weakness of the love for the other’s misfortune.

## Chapter 3: Types and Levels of Envy

### Types of Envy

Imam al-Nawawī mentioned in his explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* that envy is of two types:

1. Real Envy (*Ḥasad Ḥaqīqī*). This is when a person wishes for the removal of a blessing from its owner.
2. Figurative Envy (*Ḥasad Majāzī*). This is when a person wishes to have a similar blessing to what someone else has, without wishing for it to be taken away—and this is what is known as *ghibṭah* (admiration without malice).

### Levels of Envy

There are four levels of envy:

1. The envier wishes for the removal of the blessing from the envied person, even if that blessing does not transfer to him. This is the worst and most malicious form of envy.
2. The envier wishes for the blessing to be removed from the one who has it because he desires that blessing for himself—such as a longing for a nice house, a beautiful wife, a powerful position, or wealth that someone else has attained. His goal is for that specific blessing to become his, not merely for it to disappear. However, while he desires the blessing, he is also bothered by the fact that someone else is enjoying it, and he dislikes that anyone else should benefit from it besides himself.
3. The envier does not desire the exact same blessing, but rather wants something equal to it. If he is unable to attain something similar, he then wishes for the other’s blessing to be removed, so no visible disparity remains between them.
4. The person desires a similar blessing for themselves, and if they are unable to attain it, they do not wish for the other to lose it (*ghibṭah*).

This fourth level is excused when related to worldly matters, and recommended when it concerns religious matters.

The third level can be either blameworthy or not [depending on the intent]. The second level is less severe than the third. The first level is entirely blameworthy.

Referring to the fourth level as “envy” is tolerable. It is not blameworthy, as Allah says, “And do not wish for that by which Allah has favoured some of you over others.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Sūrah al-Nisā’*, verse 32.

Wishing for something similar is not blameworthy, but wishing for the exact blessing [to be removed or transferred from another] is.

## Chapter 4: Difference Between Evil Eye and Envy

The one who gives the evil eye (*‘ā’in*) and the envier (*ḥāsīd*) share some similarities and differ in other ways.

They are similar in that both experience a certain inner state that forms within them and becomes directed toward the one they intend to harm.

For the *‘ā’in*, this inner state forms upon seeing and directly observing the person or thing they affect.

For the *ḥāsīd*, this state can occur whether the envied person is present or absent.

They differ in that the *‘ā’in* may harm things he does not necessarily envy, such as inanimate objects, animals, crops, or wealth—even though he is usually not free from some degree of envy toward the owner. In fact, a person’s evil eye may even affect themselves, as merely seeing something with astonishment and intense focus, while their soul is in that harmful state, can have an impact on the object seen.

“The evil eye is considered a part of envy which is broader in scope. Therefore, seeking refuge from the envier includes seeking refuge from the evil eye as well.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Zād al-Ma‘ād*, Vol. 4, p. 149.

## Chapter 5: Areas of Influence

### Potency of Envy

Envy is more potent than evil eye. While the evil eye may come from mere admiration, or it may come from an envious gaze, envy itself is greater because it is more comprehensive in its nature.

### Areas of Influence

Envy can affect all areas of life, whether religious or worldly, and whether tangible or intangible. Some of its effects can be summarised as follows:

- **Mind.** Such as intelligence, memory, concentration, comprehension, and academic performance.
- **Livelihood.** Including wealth, means of earning, job opportunities, and status.
- **Physical beauty.** Such as hair, facial features, skin tone and complexion, and body shape.
- **Religion.** Including one's relationship with the Qur'ān, acts of worship, spiritual presence, and uprightness.
- **Character.** Such as modesty, honesty, manners, noble traits, humility, and kindness.
- **Marital and family life.** General family happiness, marital harmony, issues related to pregnancy and miscarriage, and children's upbringing and obedience.
- **Lifespan.** In terms of longevity or how age appears physically—some sayings even describe envy as strong enough to “put a man in his grave.”
- **Body.** Including strength, energy, speed, overall health and well-being, and skills (e.g., cooking).
- **Animals.** Camels may collapse into pots (a metaphor for sudden death), birds may fall, and animals may become ill or die.
- **Plants, trees, and fruits.** Causing them to decay, burn, wither, or die.

- **Inanimate objects.** Such as cars, devices of all types, and women's adornments (like jewellery and accessories).

## Chapter 6: Symptoms of Being Affected by Envy

There are certain symptoms that appear in those afflicted by [envy and] evil eye, and the one who recognises them most accurately is often the experienced healer, due to the many cases they have seen and heard. These symptoms become consistent and recognisable in cases of evil eye or envy.

Some ignorant people deny this, as Imam Ibn al-Qayyim said, “This is knowledge known to a few. Those who are spiritually veiled deny it. The impact and connection of envy is only recognised by those who have experienced it to some degree.”<sup>11</sup>

Some symptoms that a healer may rely on when questioning a patient include the following. However, this does not mean that everyone who experiences some of these symptoms is necessarily afflicted by evil eye or envy. These symptoms may include:

- Frequent yawning without tiredness.
- Excessive burping without eating, which increases during Qur’ān recitation.
- Itching.
- Frequent spitting.
- Appearance of pimples or boils.
- Marks on the body resembling an eye shape.
- Unexplained sensations of heat or cold.
- Tightness in the chest.
- Lethargy, laziness, and insomnia.
- Satanic whispers.
- Swelling or obesity despite eating little.
- Some types of cancer.
- Some psychological conditions such as madness, delusions, and fear.
- Forgetfulness and drowsiness when studying, reading the Qur’ān, going to school, or during exams, often accompanied by headaches.
- Nasal allergies and sinus issues.
- Frequent sneezing without a cold, especially related to specific situations.
- Hair loss.
- Dark circles under the eyes and pale face without physical fatigue.
- Persistent headaches.
- Bruise-like spots under the skin, brown or blue in colour, especially on the thighs or arms.
- Unexplained stomach pain near the upper abdomen that doctors cannot diagnose.
- Irritable bowel syndrome issues.

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<sup>11</sup> *Badā’i al-Fawā’id*, Vol. 2, p. 367.

- Sudden skin peeling in the armpits and private areas.
- Desire to leave the house and aversion to staying in it.
- Feelings of death or hopelessness.
- Severe, shifting illnesses that cannot be diagnosed by medicine and test results appear normal despite the presence of pain.
- The body's failure to respond to treatment for a physical illness, even with increased doses.
- Sudden appearance of ants—more accurately, small black insects (*dharr*)—in the home, without visible entry points, in unusual and noticeable numbers.
- Frequent crying in children.

Some of the signs that a healer may infer from a patient's dreams are those that have been frequently reported by practitioners of *ruqyah*, and are also known from the reports of those who came before us. Among them are seeing:

- Cats.
- Insects.
- Scorpions.
- Dogs.
- Jinn staring.
- Geckos (house lizards).
- Ants or small black insects.
- Seeing an eye in a dream or veiled women.
- Seeing certain people—acquaintances or relatives suspected of giving the evil eye—looking at him with hateful stares, hearing them speak ill of him, or seeing their eyes in a disturbing way.
- Graves and the dead.
- Hearing in the dream that it is the evil eye.
- Seeing someone suspected of being envious.
- Verses (from the Qur'ān) related to the evil eye, envy, or both.

## Chapter 7: Harms and Evils of Envy

- Envy is a reprehensible trait that harms the body and corrupts one's religion.
- There is no limit to the reach of the envier's envy—it can affect both those near and far.
- They do not spare anyone, and even their own self is not safe from their envy. It has been said, “A person's admiration of themselves is one of the envious forces against their own intellect.”
- Envy melts the soul and strips it of its virtues.
- The envier opposes Allah, His blessings, and His divine wisdom.
- Envy leads to hatred and often results in conflict and fighting.
- Envy is a gateway to misery. Ibn 'Abbās, may Allah be pleased with them, was asked, “Which is worse: envy or misery?” He replied, “Envy is what leads to misery. Iblis envied Adam, and his envy became the cause of his misery—he became cursed after having been honoured.”
- Envy gives rise to corruption in acts of worship, and leads to sins and evil deeds.

## Chapter 8: Envy Is a Natural Tendency—So Correct It

I saw that people strongly condemn the envier, going to great lengths, saying, “Only a wicked person envies—someone who opposes Allah’s blessings, is displeased with His decree, and begrudges his Muslim brother.”

So I reflected on this and didn’t find it to be exactly as they claim. The truth is that a human being naturally does not like others to surpass them. When someone sees a friend rise above them, they feel affected by it and dislike being outdone. They may wish that their friend had not attained such success—or that they themselves could attain the same—so that they would not be overshadowed. This is something mixed into human nature, and there is no blame in merely feeling this way. The blame lies in acting upon it—through words or deeds.

I used to think this insight came from my own reflection and introspection, until I came across a statement by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī that had already expressed this.

He said: “There is no descendant of Adam except that envy was created along with him.”

And he continued, “Isolation from people is a means to a peaceful life. But some level of interaction is necessary. So be cautious with your enemy and treat him lightly—for he may plot against you and destroy you. Be good to those who wrong you, and seek help in your affairs through secrecy. Let people be mere acquaintances to you—but as for close friends, have none.”

For the rarest thing to find is a friend—because a friend must be someone of equal standing. If you find someone common and unrefined, you won’t benefit from them due to their bad character, lack of knowledge, and poor manners. And if you find someone who is your equal or close to it, they may envy you.

If you are observant, you’ll detect signs of envy in their words and actions. Allah said, “You will surely recognise them by the tone of their speech.”<sup>12</sup> If you want to confirm it, have someone you trust speak about you to them—their response will reveal what’s truly in their heart.

If you want to live peacefully, stay away from the envious person—for he sees your blessing, and may even strike it with the evil eye.

If you are forced to interact with him:

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<sup>12</sup> *Sūrah Muhammad*, verse 30.

- Do not reveal your secrets.
- Do not consult him.
- Do not be deceived by his flattery.
- Do not be fooled by his outward display of religiosity and worship.

For envy can overpower religion.

You know that Qābīl (Cain) was driven by envy to commit murder. The brothers of Yūsuf (Joseph) sold him for a petty price out of envy. Abū ‘Āmir, the Monk, who was a devout and wise worshipper, and ‘Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, a tribal leader—both were driven by envy of the Prophet (peace be upon him) into hypocrisy and misguidance.

You should not seek any punishment for the envier greater than the torment he already suffers—for he is in a constant, unbearable state that brings him no peace except through the removal of your blessing. And the more your blessings grow, the more his torment increases. The people of Paradise only found joy once envy and hatred were removed from their hearts. If it hadn’t been removed, they would have envied one another and their joy would have been spoiled. So whoever [unoblingly] harbours envy in their heart but does not act on it through word or deed, then it will not be counted against them.

When the virtues of Adam (peace be upon him) became apparent to all creation—through the angels prostrating to him, through his knowledge of the names of all things, and through him informing the angels of them while they listened as students listen to their teacher—they acknowledged their inability to match his knowledge and admitted his superiority. Then he and his wife were made to dwell in Paradise. At that point, envy appeared from Iblīs, and he began plotting harm. And to this day, whenever virtues appear, they are envied:

*May your enviers not die, but rather live on forever. So they can witness from you what fills their hearts with grief.*

*May you always be envied for the blessings you possess. For truly, only the complete and worthy are envied.*

So he (Iblīs) continued plotting against Adam until he caused him to be expelled from Paradise. But the fool (Iblīs) did not realise that Adam’s virtues were only perfected by that, for when he left Paradise, he returned to it in a state better than before. What destroyed Iblīs was his self-conceit, as he said, “I am better than him.” Whereas Adam’s virtues were perfected by his admission of fault, as he said, “Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves.”

Every time Iblīs kindled the fire of envy against Adam, the fragrance of Adam’s goodness spread—and Iblīs burned in his own flame:

*And when Allah wills to reveal a virtue that was hidden. He allows the tongue of an envier to uncover it.*

*If fire did not burn what it touches. The sweet scent of aloeswood would never be known.*

## Chapter 9: Prevalence of Envy Among Peers and Siblings

Envy is most prevalent among people who share the causes we have previously mentioned, and it grows stronger among those in whom multiple causes of envy come together and reinforce one another. A single person may envy another for various reasons: because they reject being looked down upon, because they themselves are arrogant, because they are an enemy, or due to other motives. These causes are more frequent among people who are closely connected by social ties—those who regularly sit together, interact, and pursue similar goals. So, when one of them opposes another in a particular objective, natural aversion arises, leading to hatred and resentment. At that point, one may try to belittle the other, assert superiority, or retaliate for that opposition. He also begins to resent the blessings that allow the other to achieve his aims. And all this occurs together in succession. By contrast, two people living in distant towns, or in separate neighbourhoods, are unlikely to envy one another—there is no shared space or rivalry between them. But if they live near each other—in the same home, market, school, or mosque—their goals may overlap and conflict, and from this contradiction arise hostility and hatred, which in turn fuel further causes of envy. That’s why you’ll find a scholar envies another scholar, not a worshipper; a worshipper envies another worshipper, not a scholar; a merchant envies another merchant; and even a cobbler envies another cobbler, but not a fabric seller—unless there is some other shared factor like proximity or competition; and a person may envy his own brother or cousin more than he envies strangers.

A woman envies her co-wife or her husband’s concubine more than she envies her mother-in-law or his daughter; the interests of a cloth merchant are not the same as those of a cobbler—they do not compete over the same goals. The cloth merchant’s goal is wealth, and he achieves that through many customers. The only real competitor in that is another cloth merchant, because the customer seeking cloth won’t go to the cobbler—but to another cloth seller. Moreover, the cloth merchant next door is a greater rival than one further away in the market, and so it follows that his envy of his neighbouring competitor is greater. Likewise, a brave man envies another brave man, not a scholar—because his aim is to be known and recognised for bravery, to stand out in this quality, and the scholar does not compete with him in that field. Similarly, a scholar envies another scholar, not a warrior. And a preacher envies another preacher more than he envies a jurist or a doctor—because they are competing for the same audience and influence, making their rivalry more direct and specific. The root of all envy is hostility, and the root of hostility is competition over a shared goal. A single goal does not typically gather distantly different people, but rather those who are similar or closely aligned—which is why envy is more common among them. Yes, there are some people whose

desire for fame is so intense, who crave to be praised throughout the entire world for a certain trait—such a person may envy everyone across the globe who shares in that trait, no matter how far away they are.

The root of all this is love for the worldly life, for the world is limited and thus creates conflict and competition among those who strive for it. As for the Hereafter, there is no limitation or scarcity. A worldly example of something like the Hereafter is the blessing of knowledge. This is why someone who loves the knowledge of Allah, His attributes, His angels, His prophets, and the unseen realms of the heavens and earth, does not envy another who has come to know these things as well—because knowledge is not restricted among those who possess it. A single piece of knowledge can be known and taught to millions of scholars, and all of them rejoice in that knowledge and delight in it. One person's joy is not diminished by another's, rather the more people who share in it, the greater the sense of companionship, benefit, and exchange. For this reason, there is no envy among true scholars of religion, because their goal is to know Allah, and that is a vast ocean with no limits. Their aspiration is status with Allah, and there is no shortage in what Allah possesses—His highest reward is the delight of His closeness, and there is no competition or crowding in that. One person's vision of Him does not restrict another's; rather, the joy increases with the number of people sharing in it. However, if scholars pursue knowledge for the sake of wealth or fame, then envy arises—because wealth consists of tangible items: if something is in one person's hand, it is absent from another's. And status (social recognition) means holding influence over hearts—when a heart is filled with reverence for one scholar, it inevitably lessens in its reverence for another. This becomes a cause of envy. But when a heart is filled with joy through knowledge of Allah, it does not prevent other hearts from being filled with the same joy as well. The difference between knowledge and wealth is that wealth cannot be in one hand without leaving another, while knowledge remains in the heart of the scholar and can also settle in the hearts of others through teaching—without leaving the first heart. Wealth is made up of physical objects and has a limit. If a person were to own everything on earth, there would be nothing left for anyone else.

Wealth can be possessed by others, but knowledge has no end and cannot be fully contained. Whoever trains their soul to reflect on the majesty and greatness of Allah, and the wonders of His dominion in the heavens and the earth, will find greater delight in that than in any worldly pleasure. They will not be deprived of it, nor will others compete with them for it. Thus, there will be no envy in their heart toward any of creation, because if others come to know what they know, it does not reduce their joy—in fact, their delight increases through companionship. The pleasure of such people in constantly contemplating the wonders of the unseen is greater than the pleasure of those who gaze upon the trees and gardens of Paradise with their physical eyes. The bliss of the knower (*'ārif*) and his Paradise lies in his knowledge, which is tied to the very nature of his being. He is safe from losing it and constantly reaps its fruits. With his soul and heart, he is

nourished by the fruits of his knowledge—fruits that are never cut off, never forbidden, but always within reach. Even if his physical eyes were closed, his spirit is ever roaming in lofty gardens and radiant meadows. And even if many others were added to the ranks of the knowers, they would not envy one another. Instead, they would be like those described by the Lord of the Worlds, “And We will remove whatever is in their hearts of resentment, [so they will be] brothers, on thrones facing one another.” This is their state even while still in this world—so what do you think their condition will be when the veil is lifted and they behold the Beloved in the Hereafter? Therefore, it is impossible that there be envy in Paradise, nor between the people of this world who are destined for Paradise—because Paradise involves no scarcity, no rivalry, and is attained through knowledge of Allah, which itself has no competition, even in this world. Thus, the people of Paradise are by necessity free of envy—both in this world and the next. Indeed, envy is a trait of those distanced from the spacious heights of *‘Ilīyyīn* and cast into the narrow depths of *Sijjīn*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Vol. 3.

## Chapter 10: Advice for the Envier

Envy is one of the major diseases of the heart, and the diseases of the heart can only be cured through knowledge and action.

The beneficial knowledge for treating the disease of envy is to truly understand that envy is harmful to you alone—in both your worldly life and your religion—while it does not harm the envied person in either. In fact, they may even benefit from it in both realms.

If you come to this realisation with clarity and insight, and you are not an enemy to yourself or a friend to your enemy, then you will undoubtedly abandon envy.

As for how envy harms you in your religion, it is because through envy:

- You have shown displeasure with Allah’s decree.
- You have detested His blessings that He has distributed among His servants.
- You have rejected His justice, which He established in His kingdom through His hidden wisdom.

You have objected to this and viewed it as detestable—this is a wound to the core of your belief (*tawhīd*) and a blemish in the eye of your faith. That alone is a serious offense against your religion.

On top of that, you have:

- Betrayed a fellow believer.
- Failed to offer sincere counsel.
- Opposed the allies of Allah and His prophets, who love good for His servants/
- And you have aligned yourself with Iblīs and the disbelievers, who wish for calamity and the loss of blessings for the believers.

These are vile diseases of the heart that consume its good deeds just as fire consumes wood, and erase them as day wipes out night.

As for how envy harms you in your worldly life:

You suffer pain and torment through your envy. You are constantly in grief and misery, because your enemies are never without blessings from Allah. You continue to suffer at every blessing you see them enjoy, and feel anguish at every hardship that is removed from them. Thus, you live in distress, deprived, your heart scattered and your chest tight. What you wished upon your enemies has, in fact, befallen you—you wished for them to suffer, yet you are the one suffering now, in real time. And despite all that, your envy will not remove a single blessing from the one you envy.

Even if you did not believe in resurrection or accountability in the Hereafter, sheer worldly wisdom and intelligence would still tell you to avoid envy, given its harm to your heart and its unpleasant effects, with no benefit in return. So how much worse is it when you know that envy brings severe punishment in the Hereafter? How strange it is that a rational person would bring upon themselves Allah's wrath without gaining any benefit—only harm, pain, and misery—thereby ruining both their religion and their worldly life, for no reason and with no gain.

As for the idea that envy harms the envied person in their religion or worldly life:

This is clearly not as one may think. Your envy [alone] does not remove blessings from the envied. What Allah has decreed of favour and success must continue until the unseen appointed time set by Him [and by the causes He enabled]. There is no way to prevent it, as everything is set in measure, and every term is written to occur. This is why a prophet once complained to Allah about a tyrannical woman who had power over people. Allah revealed to him, "Retreat from her until her appointed days pass." Meaning: What We decreed in pre-eternity cannot be changed—be patient until the time of her prosperity ends as was predestined. So long as envy does not remove the blessing, the envied person suffers no harm in this world, and carries no sin in the next.

And you might say, "If only my envy actually did remove the blessing from the envied..."

This is the height of ignorance—for it is a calamity that you first wish upon yourself. You too are not free from enemies who envy you. If blessings were truly removed by envy [alone], then no one would retain any blessing from Allah, including yourself—not even the blessing of faith, for the disbelievers envy the believers for their faith. Allah says, "Many of the People of the Book wish to turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy from within themselves."<sup>14</sup> What the envier desires does not [necessarily] come to pass.

Yes, an envier may go astray because of their desire to mislead others—and if they desire disbelief, they may fall into it themselves. So if you wish that a blessing be taken away from someone due to your envy, [then by extension] it is as if you are wishing for faith to be stripped away from the believers due to the envy of the disbelievers. The same applies to all other blessings. And if you wish that blessings be removed from others because of your envy, yet not removed from you due to someone else's envy—then this is the peak of ignorance and foolishness. Every one of the foolish enviers wants this special privilege for themselves—but you are no more entitled to it than they are. The fact that Allah's blessing upon you remains despite the envy of others is something you should be grateful for, yet due to your ignorance, you resent it. As for the fact that the envied person benefits—both in religion and in worldly matters—that is clearly evident.

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<sup>14</sup> *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse 109.

As for the benefit to the envied person in religion (i.e., how the envied benefits from the envy of the envier):

He is considered oppressed by you—especially if your envy leads you to speak or act against him, such as through backbiting, slandering, or exposing his faults. These are like gifts you are sending him—meaning, you are transferring your good deeds to him, so that when you meet him on the Day of Judgment, you will be bankrupt, deprived of your rewards, just as you were deprived of blessings in this world. It is as if you wanted the removal of a blessing from him, yet his blessings were not removed—and Allah still had favour upon him. On the contrary, you were made a means for him to gain more good deeds, while you added misery upon misery to yourself.

As for the benefit to the envied person in this world:

One of the main desires of people is to see their enemies in pain, sorrow, and misery—to see them tormented and distressed. And there is no torment worse than what you are experiencing through the pain of envy. The greatest wish of your enemies is that they remain in blessing while you suffer in grief and regret because of them—and you have done to yourself exactly what they wish. This is why your enemy does not wish for your death, but rather hopes that your life is prolonged, so that you continue to suffer in the torment of envy, watching Allah’s blessings upon him while your heart tears itself apart with jealousy.

And for this reason, it has been said:

*May your enviers not die, but rather live on forever. So they can witness from you what fills their hearts with grief.*

*May you always be envied for the blessings you possess. For truly, only the complete and worthy are envied.*

Your enemy takes more joy in your grief and envy than in his own blessings. If he knew that you had been freed from the pain and torment of envy, that would be the greatest calamity and misfortune to him. So, in your constant sorrow from envy, you are exactly as your enemy wishes you to be. If you reflect on this, you will realise that you have become an enemy to yourself and a friend to your enemy—for you have chosen a path that harms you in both this world and the next, while your enemy benefits from it in both realms. As a result, you are blameworthy before both the Creator and creation, and miserable in both your present state and your ultimate end. And the blessing of the one you envy—whether you like it or not—remains and endures. But you did not stop at fulfilling your enemy’s wishes. You went even further, bringing the greatest joy to Iblis, your fiercest and most dangerous enemy. When Iblis saw you deprived of blessings—whether in knowledge, piety, status, or wealth—blessings that your rival was granted, he feared that you might love those blessings for your rival, and thereby share in their reward. For whoever loves

good for the believers becomes a partner in their reward, even if he cannot reach their status in this life. So Iblīs feared that you might love the goodness Allah bestowed upon His servant—in his religion and his worldly life—and thus earn reward through your love. So he made you hate it, so that you would not join him in reward through love, just as you failed to join him in action.

A Bedouin once said to the Prophet (peace be upon him), “O Messenger of Allah, a man loves a people but has not reached their level (in deeds)?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “A person is with those whom he loves.” And in another narration of the same hadith, “He is with those whom he loves.”<sup>15</sup>

From the hadith of Ibn Mas‘ūd wherein a Bedouin stood up while the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) was delivering a sermon and said, “O Messenger of Allah, when is the Hour (the Day of Judgment)?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “What have you prepared for it?” He said, “I haven’t prepared much in the way of prayer or fasting, but I love Allah and His Messenger.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “You are with those whom you love.”<sup>16</sup>

From the hadith of Anas (may Allah be pleased with him), he said, “The Muslims never rejoiced after embracing Islam with anything greater than their joy on that day,”—referring to the moment when they heard the Prophet's response. This indicates that their greatest desire was the love of Allah and His Messenger. Anas also said, “We love the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), and Abū Bakr, and ‘Umar, even though we do not perform deeds like theirs, yet we hope to be with them.” And Abū Mūsā (may Allah be pleased with him) said, “I said, O Messenger of Allah, a man loves those who pray, yet he does not pray; he loves those who fast, yet he does not fast”—and he mentioned other acts as well. The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “He is with those whom he loves.”

From a hadith in a shorter version, “A man loves a people but has not reached their level?” The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, “A person is with those whom he loves.” And a man once said to ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, “It used to be said: If you can be a scholar, then be a scholar. If you cannot be a scholar, then be a student. If you cannot be a student, then love them. And if you cannot do that—at least, do not hate them.” He responded, “Glory be to Allah, who has made for us a way out!” Now look at how Iblīs envied you and caused you to lose the reward of love—and not only that, he did not stop until he made you hate your brother, and pushed you toward resentment until you fell into sin. How could it be otherwise, when you might envy a person of knowledge and even wish for him to err in the religion of Allah, hoping that his mistake would be exposed so he would be humiliated? You may wish for his tongue to fall silent so he can no longer speak, or for him to fall ill so he can no longer teach or learn. What greater sin could there be than this?

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<sup>15</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

If only, when you failed to reach his level and felt sorrow over it, you had at least been spared from sin and the punishment of the Hereafter.

It is reported in a hadith from the Prophet (peace be upon him), “The people of Paradise are three: the doer of good, the one who loves him, and the one who refrains from harming him.” This hadith, however, I did not find an authentic source for it.

The phrase “the one who refrains” refers to the person who refrains from causing harm, envy, hatred, or resentment toward the doer of good.

So observe how Iblīs distanced you from all three paths to Paradise—so that you are not counted among any of those people at all. The envy of Iblīs has taken full effect upon you, while your own envy has had no effect on your enemy—rather, it has turned against yourself. If your reality were exposed to you—whether in wakefulness or in a dream—you, O envier, would see yourself like a man firing arrows at his enemy, hoping to strike him fatally, yet the arrow misses and returns to strike your own right eye, blinding it and increasing your rage. So you shoot again, with even more intensity, and it strikes your other eye, blinding you completely and intensifying your fury. Then the arrow returns to strike your head and wound it—while your enemy remains unharmed, and your arrows keep coming back to hurt only you, while your enemies surround you, laughing and rejoicing. This is the state of the envier and the mockery of the devil toward him. In fact, your state is even worse, because the returning arrow only cost you your eyes—eyes that would have eventually been lost to death anyway. But envy leads to sin, and sin does not end with death. On the contrary, it may drive you to Allah’s wrath and the Hellfire. Losing your eyesight in this world would be far better than entering Hell with those same eyes, only for the flames to burn them away. See how Allah punishes the envier—when he seeks to remove a blessing from the envied, the blessing remains, but the envier loses his own. For being free of sin is a blessing, and being free of sorrow and grief is a blessing—both of which are taken away from the envier—as confirmation of Allah’s words, “But evil plotting only engulfs those who do it.”<sup>17</sup> And it may be that Allah afflicts the envier with the very thing he wished upon his enemy. Rarely does someone rejoice in another’s misfortune without eventually being tested with something similar. ‘Ā’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) once said, “I never wished anything upon ‘Uthmān except that I was tested with the same. Even if I had wished for his death, I might have been killed.” This is just the sin of envy itself—so what then of what envy leads to: disputes, denial of the truth, slander, physical and verbal abuse, and the pursuit of vengeance against enemies? It is a disease that destroyed past nations. These are the intellectual remedies. If a person reflects on them with a clear mind and a present heart, the fire of envy will be extinguished within them. They will realise that they are destroying themselves, pleasing their enemy, incurring the wrath of their Lord, and poisoning their own life. As for the practical treatment, it is to go against what envy demands. If envy pushes you to speak ill of the

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<sup>17</sup> *Sūrah al-Fāṭir*, verse 43.

envied, force your tongue to praise them and speak well of them. If envy leads you to act arrogantly toward them, compel yourself to be humble and apologise. If envy urges you to withhold kindness, make yourself increase your generosity toward them. This is how you train the soul and cure the heart.

Whenever a person does this—even if at first it is forced—and the one envied becomes aware of it, his heart softens, and he begins to love the envier. And as soon as love from the envied appears, the envier in turn begins to love him, and this mutual affection gives rise to harmony, which cuts off the root of envy altogether. For humility, praise, kind words, and showing joy over someone’s blessings attract the heart of the one who receives them, captivate it, win it over, and move it to respond with kindness. That kindness then returns to the first person, softening his heart as well. In time, what was once done with effort and difficulty becomes natural and genuine. And he should not be deterred from this by the whisper of the devil who tells him otherwise.

If you were to humble yourself and praise the one you envy, the devil would whisper to you that your enemy will think it’s a sign of weakness, or hypocrisy, or fear—that it is a form of humiliation and disgrace. But that is nothing more than the devil’s deception and trickery. In reality, courtesy and kindness, whether done sincerely or with effort, break the intensity of hostility from both sides. It diminishes what the other desires (victory, superiority), and gradually teaches the hearts to reconcile and love. By doing so, the heart is freed from the pain of envy and the grief of hatred. These are the remedies for envy, and they are very effective—but they are also bitter upon the heart. Yet, healing lies in bitter medicine. Whoever cannot endure the bitterness of the cure will never taste the sweetness of recovery. What makes the bitterness of this cure—humbling oneself before one’s enemies, and approaching them with praise and goodwill—more bearable is:

- Strong knowledge of the realities we’ve mentioned.
- A deep desire for the reward that comes from being content with Allah’s decree.
- A noble soul that rises above the foolishness of demanding that the world conform to its desires.

For insisting that everything match one’s personal will is ignorance, since what one desires will not always come to pass. And when what is desired is missed, it results in humiliation and misery. The only way to escape this kind of humiliation is through one of two paths: either you can make what you want come to be, or you can want what already is.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Maw‘izah al-Mu‘minin min Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din* by Sheikh Muhammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī.