

“We placed veils upon their hearts...”

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The Muhaddith of the Era

“We placed veils upon their hearts...”

Source: Kayfa Yajibu 'alaynaa an Nufassir al-Qur'aan - Al-Ibaanah.com

[See Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah (2468)]

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

**The Meaning of Allaah’s statement: “We placed veils upon their hearts so that they understand it not”**

**Question:** Allaah says:

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا

“And We placed veils upon their hearts – so that they understand it not – and deafness in their ears.”<sup>1</sup>

Some people perceive this ayah to contain a sense of coercion in it (on the part of Allaah). So what is your opinion with regards to this?

**Shaykh al-Albaanee** (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) said: This “placing” is an existential (kawnee) type of placing. In order to understand this, we must explain the meaning of Allaah’s Divine Desire (Iraadah). Divine Desire is divided into two categories.

The Shar’ee (Legislative) Desire and the Kawnee (Existential) Desire

The Legislative Desire is everything that Allaah has legislated for His servants and incited them to do, such as acts of worship and obedience, regardless of their rulings, whether obligatory or recommended. Allaah desires and loves these acts of worship and obedience.

As for the Existential Desire, it may at times be something that Allaah did not legislate but yet preordained. This type of Desire is only called “Existential Desire” since its term was derived from Allaah’s statement:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“Verily, His Command – when He desires something – is only that He says to it ‘Be’ and it is.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Soorah Al-An’aam: 25]

<sup>2</sup> [Soorah YaaSeen: 82]

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The word “something” here is an indefinite noun which consists of everything, whether acts of obedience or acts of disobedience. Such things come into existence by Allaah’s saying to it: “**Be.**” Meaning: It occurs through His Will, Ordainment, and Pre- Decree. So if we come to realise this Existential Desire, which includes everything regardless if it is an act of obedience or an act of disobedience, it will definitely lead us back to the subject of Al-Qadaa wal-Qadar (Allaah’s Divine Ordainment and Pre- Decree, since Allaah’s statement: “**Verily, His Command – when He desires something – is only that He says to it ‘Be’ and it is**” means that the thing to which He said “Be” is something He decreed, which will definitely come into existence.

Everything, according to Allaah, is decreed – it either consists of good or it consists of evil. However, that which applies from it to us – the two species of mankind and jinn who have been ordered by Allaah and are accountable for our actions – is that we look at what we do. The things we do either occur purely from our desire and free choice or they occur in spite of what we desire. Acts of obedience or disobedience do not apply to this second category and the end result of it is not Paradise or Hellfire. It is only the first category that the religious laws revolve around. And it is based on this that a person will be rewarded with either Paradise or the Hellfire. This means that whatever a person does based on his own desire and whatever he chases after through His actions and free choice, this is what he will be held accountable for. If it is good, then he will have good and if it is bad, then he will have bad.

The fact that a person has a free choice in a large portion of his actions is a fact that cannot be argued with whether religiously or intellectually.

As for religiously, there are numerous texts from the Qur’aan and Sunnah that confirm that a person may choose to do what he is ordered to do and abandon what he is forbidden from doing. These texts are too numerous to mention.

As for intellectually, it is clear to every person that is void of whims and desires that whenever he speaks or walks or eats or drinks or does anything that involves his free will, he is choosing on his own to do that action and not being forced to do that at all. For example, if I wish to speak right now, there is naturally no one that can force me to do that. However, this speech (of mine) is pre-decreed. What is meant by my speaking these words in spite of it being pre-decreed is that it is pre-ordained along with my free choice of what I will say and talk about. However, I have the ability to remain silent to make clear – to those doubtful about what I’m saying – that I have a free choice in the matter of speaking.

So therefore, the fact that a person has a free choice and a free will is something that cannot be disputed or argued against. And as for one who does argue against such a fact, then this person is only arguing philosophically and casting doubts on self-evident intuitions. And when a person reaches this stage, he can no longer be talked to (logically).

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Therefore, the actions of a human being are divided into two categories:

1. Those that are done out of his choice and free will
2. Those that are done as a result of him being forced and coerced to

We have nothing to say about the actions that are done due to coercion – not from a religious perspective or from a real-life perspective. The religion is only concerned with the matters of free choice and free will. This is the truth of the matter. If we implant this into our minds, we will be able to understand the afore-mentioned ayah: **“And We placed veils upon their hearts.”** This refers to the Existential Placing. We must remember that the afore-mentioned ayah: **“Verily, His Command – when He desires something”** refers to the Existential Desire. However, it is not done against the will and choice of this person whom Allaah has placed veils over his heart.

Here is an example of this from an actual perspective: When a human being is created, he is formed while his flesh is still soft and tender. Then as he gets older and older, his flesh becomes harder and his bones become stronger. However, not all people are the same in this regard. So let's say for example this person is devoted to (learning) some type of study or science. What part of the body will grow strong in this person? His mind will strengthen. His brain will become stronger in the field that he preoccupies it with and applies all of its abilities on. However, from a physical standpoint, his body will not strengthen nor will his muscles develop.

The opposite of this is exactly true as well, for there may be a person that completely applies himself physically. So everyday he engages in sports and physical training – as we say today. Such a person's muscles and body will progress and become strong. And he will acquire an image just like those that we see sometimes in real-life and sometimes in pictures in which for example the bodies of these athletes have become all muscle. Was this person created this way? Or did he earn and acquire for himself this strong physique loaded with muscles? This is something that he has attained based on his own actions and free choice.

This is the same example as someone who lingers in his misguidance, rejection, disbelief and denial and as a result attains this condition of these veils being placed by Allaah over his heart, not because Allaah compelled and forced this upon him but rather due to his actions and free choice.

So this is the existential placing which these disbelieving people have acquired (for themselves). They have gotten themselves to this point, which the ignorant think they were forced into, when in reality, such a fate was not obliged upon them, but rather came about due to what their own hands earned. And Allaah does not oppress His servants.