
THE FITNAH OF DOUBTS AND DESIRES ¹

By Imaam Ibnul-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (*rahimahullaah*)

Translation by Hishaam Ibn Zayd

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Version 1.1 – January 12th 2004



The Fitnah of Shubuhaat (Doubts)

Fitnah is of two types: the *fitnah* of ‘*shubuhaat*’ (doubts and misunderstandings), this one being the greater *fitnah* of the two, and the *fitnah* of ‘*shahawaat*’ (desires). It is quite possible that (these two *fitan*) can be present in the ‘*abd* (servant) at the same time, or one of them may be within him to the exclusion of the other.

Regarding the *fitnah* of *shubuhaat* (doubts and misunderstandings), this is due to having a weak vision and a lack of knowledge. If this is accompanied by corrupt intentions and the goal of fulfilling one’s desires, then herein lies the greatest of all *fitan*, this is indeed the worst of afflictions. Say what you like about the deviation of evil motives, the dominant factor in such a person is his *hawaa* (desires), and not *huda* (guidance), in addition to his weak vision and his lack of knowledge of that which the Messenger (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) came with. Hence, he is like those whom Allaah describes,

“They follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire, whereas there has surely come to them the Guidance from their Lord!” [Sooratun-Najm, 53:23]

And indeed Allaah has informed us that the following of desires misguides one from the path of Allaah. Allaah the Exalted said,

“O Daawood (David)! Verily! We have placed you as a successor on earth, so judge you between men in truth (and justice) and follow not your desire for it will mislead you from the Path of Allaah. Verily! Those who wander astray from the Path of Allaah (shall) have a severe torment, because they forgot the Day of Reckoning.” [Soorah Sad, 38:26]

¹ An excerpt from Imaam Ibnul-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah's book "*Ighaathatu' Lahfaan fee Masaayidush-Shaytaan*", Vol: 2 (Pg. 239-242).

This is the kind of *fitnah* which leads to *kufir* and *nifaaq* (hypocrisy). This is the *fitnah* of the hypocrites and *ahlul-bidah* (the people of innovation), according to the degree of their *bid'ah*. Thus, the majority of them innovate because of the *fitnah* of *shubuhaat* (doubts and misunderstandings), whereby they confuse the truth with falsehood and guidance with misguidance.

There is no salvation from this kind of *fitnah* except by exclusively following the Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*). By appointing him as the judge in the fine (detailed) matters of the *deen* and its simpler ones, the public aspects of his life and the private ones, his beliefs and his actions, his reality and his legislation, thus he takes from him (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) the reality of *eemaan* (faith) and the legislation of Islaam. He also accepts from him (*'alayhis-salaam*) what all he (*'alayhis-salaam*) has confirmed from Allaah's names, attributes and actions and he does not negate them. In the same manner he accepts from him (*'alayhis-salaam*) the obligation of *salaah*, its time and the number (per day), the percentage of one's wealth on which *zakaat* is due and those who deserve it, the obligation of *wudhoo* and *ghusl* (from sexual impurity), the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadaan etc. He does not see him (*'alayhis-salaam*) only as a Messenger in some aspects of the *deen* to the exclusion of others, but to the contrary he is the Messenger for everything this *ummah* is in need of - be it knowledge or actions. So, he does not accept nor take (anything) except if it is from him (*'alayhis-salaam*), for all guidance stems from his (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) statement and actions. And everything which is outside of his guidance is *dalaal* (deviation). Thus, if this (principle) is embedded within the heart of the servant and he turns away from everything except this (the guidance of the Messenger), whereby whenever he judges in anything he examines it in the light of that which the Messenger (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) came with, if it agrees with what he (*'alayhis-salaam*) came with, then he accepts it. And this is not because that particular person said what he said, but rather (he accepts it) because it agrees with the Sunnah, and if it contradicts the Sunnah then he rejects it, regardless of whoever it came from. And this is what will save a person from the *shubuhaat* (doubts and misunderstandings), and if he misses this (principle) then *fitnah* will afflict him in accordance to the degree he neglects this principle.

This *fitnah* is sometimes as a result of incorrect understanding, misinformation, the truth being confirmed and present, but one was unaware of it so he was not able to get the most out of it, or sometimes it can simply be that a person has evil intentions and is just following his desires, thus he becomes from amongst those who are blinded in their vision and from those who harbour evil in their intentions.

The Fitnah of Shahawaat (Desires)

Allaah has indeed combined in the following *ayah* (verse) the description of those whom the two types of *fitnah* have befallen:

“Like those before you, they were mightier than you in power, and more abundant in wealth and children. They had enjoyed their portion awhile, so enjoy your portion awhile as those before you enjoyed their portion awhile; and you indulged in play and pastime (and in telling lies against Allaah and His Messenger Muhammad, *sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) as they indulged in play and pastime. Such are they whose deeds are in vain in this world and in the Hereafter. Such are they who are the losers”. [Sooratut-Tawbah, 9:69]

So Allaah is pointing out to us here what happens from the corruption of the hearts and the *deen* because of taking pleasures in their portion (of this world) and indulging in (speaking about) falsehood, (and this is so) because corrupting one’s *deen* occurs either by falsehood and engaging in it, or by doing deeds which contradict correct action.

As for the first one; it is *bid’ah* and what results from it. And the second one is sinful actions. The first one (*bid’ah*) is a consequence of *shubuhaat* (doubts), and the second (sinful actions) is an outcome of *shahawaat* (desires). This is why the *salaf* used to say “be aware of two kinds of people: a person of desires (innovator) whose desires have misguided him, and a person of this world (materialistic people) whom this world has blinded him”. They (the *salaf*) also used to say: “be careful of the *fitnah* of the evil scholar and the ignorant worshipper, for indeed their *fitnah* afflicts everyone who is misguided. The source of (all) *fitnah* is a consequence of giving precedence to opinions over what Allaah has legislated, and preference of desires over intelligence. Thus, the basis of the first *fitnah* is *shubuhaat* (doubts) and the basis of the second one is *shahawaat* (desires).

The Cure for These Two Fitn

As for the *fitnah* of *shubuhaat* (doubts), this is prevented and cured by possessing ‘*al-yaqeen*’ (certainty), and the *fitnah* of *shahawaat* (desires) can be fended off and remedied by ‘*as-Sabr*’ (patience). This is why Allaah made these two qualities a necessity for leadership of this *deen*, hence Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic says,

“And We made from among them leaders, giving guidance under Our Command, when they were patient and used to believe with certainty in Our Ayaat.” [Sooratus-Sajdah, 32:24]

Thus this indicates that by having patience and certainty one achieves leadership in this religion. Allaah has also aligned these two characteristics in Sooratul-‘Asr (the Time) wherein Allaah, the Exalted says,

“Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend the truth to each other and recommend one another to patience.” [Sooratul-‘Asr, 103:3]

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Therefore, advising each other in truth repels ‘*shubuhaat*’ (doubts) and recommending patience to each other restrains one from his desires. So by having patience and a sound intellect restrains one from the *fitnah* of ‘*shahawaat*’ (desires), and by possessing a clear vision and certainty (this) repels the *fitnah* of ‘*shubuhaat*’ (doubts) and Allaah’s aid is sought.

