

Abu Mūsā al-Ash'arī narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 The guidance and knowledge God, Mighty and Exalted, has sent me with is like a rain that has fallen on a certain land.
- 2 A portion of it was fertile: it absorbed the water and produced much vegetation and grass.
- 3 Another portion was hard, retaining the water. God enables people to benefit by it, using the water to drink, give others and cultivate their land.
- 4 The rain fell on yet another portion that is flat and barren. It neither retains the water nor produces vegetation.
- 5 This is comparable to one who acquires good understanding of the divine faith and benefits by the message God has given me: he learns and teaches, contrasted to the one who pays no attention to it, rejecting God's guidance with which I am the Messenger'.<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Bukhari, 79; Muslim, 2282.

### From the Qur'an

- ﴿ Good land brings forth its vegetation in abundance, by its Lord's leave, but from the bad land only poor and scant vegetation comes forth. Thus do We expound Our revelations in various ways for the benefit of those who are grateful. ﴾ (7: 58)
- ﴿ I will turn away from My revelations those who, without any right, behave arrogantly on earth: for, though they may see every sign, they do not believe in it. If they see the path of righteousness, they do not choose to follow it, but if they see the path of error, they choose it for their path; because they disbelieve in Our revelations and pay no heed to them. ﴾ (7: 146)
- ﴿ The case of the two parties is like that of the one who is blind and deaf and the one who sees and hears. Can the two be deemed equal? Will you not take heed? ﴾ (11: 24)
- ﴿ He sends down water from the sky, so that riverbeds flow according to their measure, and the torrent bears a swelling foam. Likewise, from what people smelt in the fire to make ornaments or utensils, rises similar foam. Thus does God illustrate truth and falsehood. The scum is cast away, while that which is of benefit to mankind abides on earth. Thus does God set forth His parables. ﴾ (13: 17)
- ﴿ He who turns away from My message shall have a straitened life and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. (124) 'Lord', he will say, 'why have You raised me up blind, while I was endowed with sight?' (125) He will reply: 'Thus it is: Our revelations were brought to you, but you were oblivious to them. So today shall you be consigned to oblivion'. ﴾ (20: 124-126)
- ﴿ Such are the comparisons We draw for people's benefit, but none will grasp their meaning except the people of knowledge. ﴾ (29: 43)

### The Narrator

In this hadith, the Prophet compares people's different attitudes to the guidance God provided them with through His Messenger (peace be upon him). Some of them grasped it with good understanding and implemented it. Thus they benefited by it and helped others to so benefit. Others learnt it, imparting it to others who might have a better understanding of it. Others still neglected it. They neither acquired its benefit, nor benefited others.

### Summary

Abu Mūsā, 'Abdullāh ibn Qays ibn Salīm ibn Ḥuḍḍār ibn Ḥarb ibn 'Amir ibn al-Ash'ar, was of the Ash'arī tribe. He was a prominent imam and renowned scholar. He was a companion of the Prophet who migrated twice, both to Abyssinia and to Madinah. He was appointed Governor of Basrah during 'Umar's reign. He taught the people of Basrah, helping them to acquire an insight into Islam and taught them the Qur'an and its recitation. His recitation of the Qur'an was considered the most melodious of the Prophet's companions. He died in Year 50 AH, 670 CE.



# Message and Meaning

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) describes people's reception of the knowledge he imparts. He likens it to heavy rain which brings much benefit to people. The Prophet uses the word *ghayth*, which means heavy rain adding connotations of providing emergency supplies to people who are in desperate need. Rain gives life to barren land. Likewise, knowledge brings dormant minds back to life, so as to make them fully active.

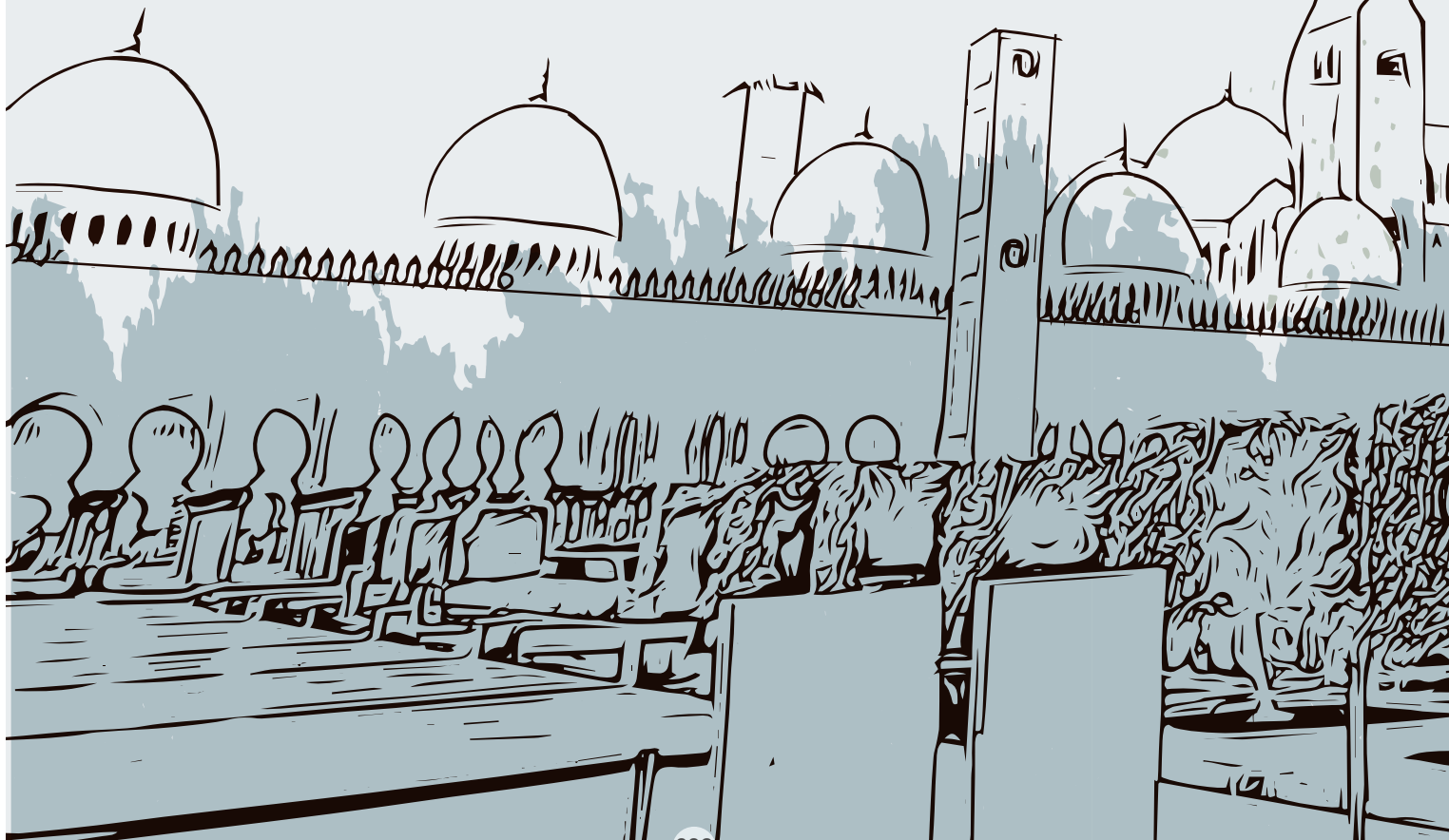
Such rain leaves different effects on different types of land, according to the natural composition of the land where it falls. This is fully described in the hadith.

2

The first type of land is fertile and sound. It is free of pests and suitable for farming. It absorbs rain water and produces vegetation of all types and grass. Thus, the land benefits by rain and becomes alive. Its benefit goes to others when man and beast eat of its produce.

3

A second type is hard land, unsuitable for cultivation. It does not absorb rain water, but is able to retain it. Thus, it cannot support plant life, but will benefit people, forming a reservoir of water for people and animals to drink from, and which can also be put to other uses including manual watering of cultivated land.

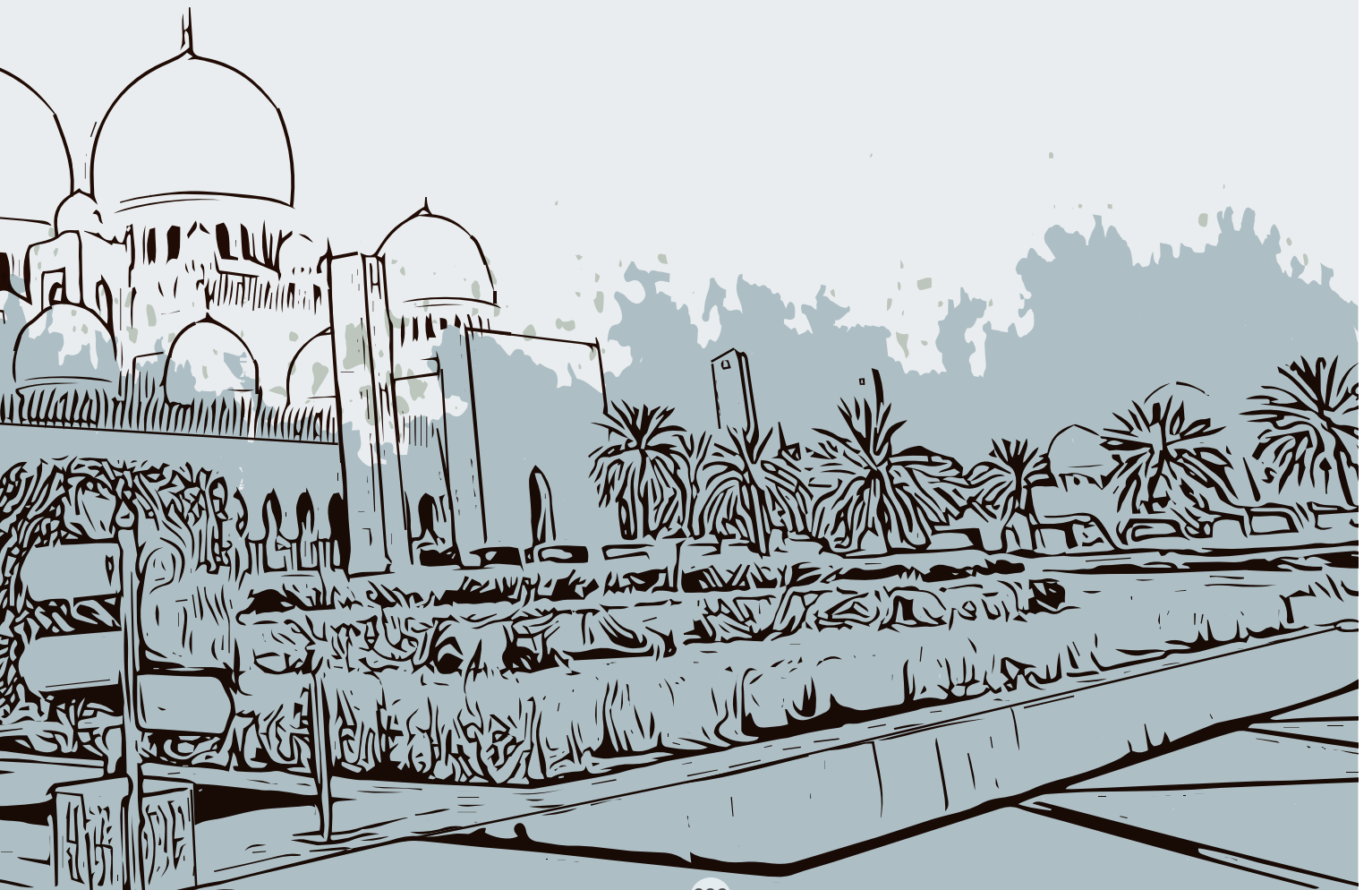


4

A third type of land is flat and smooth. It neither supports agriculture nor holds water. Thus, it neither benefits from the rain water, nor generates benefit through enabling people to use it.

5

The Prophet (peace be upon him) then explains his example, stating that the first type is comparable to scholars who learn and understand what God and His Messenger have given. They implement it and teach it to people. The second type are those who act as the means to spread knowledge, although they themselves are not considered as scholars. The third type of people are those who do not accept what the Prophet (peace be upon him) has taught. They neither learn and spread such knowledge, nor understand and implement it. These are the unbelievers and transgressors who turn away from God's message.



# Implementation

1

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the best of teachers, expressing his thoughts with the utmost lucidity. He was very keen to give people clear guidance. He utilized all methods to deliver God's message and make it easily understood. In this case, he gives tangible examples in order to make people grasp concepts and help them understand. It behoves every advocate of the divine message to use the ways and methods that enable people to understand and implement Islamic teachings.

2

People's need for knowledge is similar, or even greater, than land's need for rain. Let the first help that you give people for their benefit be their education in God's message.

3

Knowledge flourishes in good hearts in the same way as vegetation grows in good and fertile land. A person who seeks knowledge should purge his heart of the evil of disbelief, envy and stinginess, seeking God's help to achieve that. Ibn Taymiyyah said: 'A soft and receptive heart will easily grasp knowledge. Such knowledge will establish itself in it and become effective. By contrast, a hard and bitter heart will find knowledge difficult to understand. In addition, the first type of heart should be clear, sound and pure so that the knowledge it acquires will be pure and yield fine fruits. Knowledge received by an impure and unsound heart shall be corrupted by such impurity, which will act like a pest attacking plants. If such a pest does not stop grains from growing, it will spoil its quality. This is very clear to people of insight'.<sup>(1)</sup>

4

The highest position belongs to one who combines knowledge and implementation with imparting education. Such a person is like the fertile land which absorbs rain water and lets plants grow to benefit others. Such people have different grades, according to the efforts they make. We need to try to be among those who achieve it fully.

5

If one cannot become a scholar, one may be able to transmit knowledge gained from scholars. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Transmit [knowledge] from me, even if it be one verse [of the Qur'an]'.<sup>(2)</sup> This may be better than the transmitter's own understanding and learning. The Prophet says: 'Let those who are present report what I have said to those who are not present. The one who thus learns may have a better understanding than the one who heard it'.<sup>(3)</sup> Both the listener and the recipient will share the same reward.

1 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, Vol. 9, pp. 316-315.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3461.

3 Related by al-Bukhari, 1741.



6

If you feel uneasy about something you learn of the guidance given by God and His Messenger and you mentally consider counter arguments, you should reflect and purge yourself of conceit and prejudice. Make sure that you are not one of those described in the following Qur'anic verse: 'I will turn away from My revelations those who, without any right, behave arrogantly on earth: for, though they may see every sign, they do not believe in it. If they see the path of righteousness, they do not choose to follow it, but if they see the path of error, they choose it for their path; because they disbelieve in Our revelations and pay no heed to them'. (7: 146)

7

True honour is due to scholars, as they are the ones who provide guidance to whoever seeks it. A person's worth is what that person has learnt well. Hence, the ignorant are hostile to those who pursue knowledge. Seek knowledge and do not seek anything in preference to it. People generally are dead, but scholars are the living ones.

8

Be keen to be the one who is a scholar, a student pursuing knowledge, or a listener to it. Knowledge imparts honour. Learn something from every branch of knowledge. The person who fathoms secrets is one who is worthy.

