

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: Behold, God does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that.¹⁸ Now, as for those who have attained to faith, they know that it is the truth from their Sustainer - whereas those who are bent on denying the truth say, "What could God mean by this parable?" In this way does He cause many a one to go astray, just as He guides many a one aright: but none does He cause thereby to go astray save the iniquitous,

Malik: Allah does not mind using the similitude of a gnat or an even more insignificant creature to teach a lesson. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Rabb; but the unbelievers say: "What does Allah mean by such a similitude?" By such a similitude Allah confounds many and enlightens many. He confounds none except the transgressors:

Mustafa Khattab:

Surely Allah does not shy away from using the parable of a mosquito or what is even smaller. As for the believers, they know that it is the truth from their Lord. And as for the disbelievers, they argue, "What does Allah mean by such a parable?" Through this ?test?, He leaves many to stray, and guides many. And He leaves none to stray except the rebellious—

Pickthall: Lo! Allah disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of a gnat. Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What doth Allah wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby, and He guideth many thereby; and He misleadeth thereby only miscreants;

Yusuf Ali: Allah disdains not to use the similitude of things lowest as well as highest. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who reject Faith say: "What means Allah by this similitude?" By it He causes many to stray and many He leads into the right path but He causes not to stray except those who forsake (the path).⁴⁵

Transliteration: Inna Allaha la yastahyee an yadriba mathalan ma baAAoodatan fama fawqaha faamma allatheena amanoo fayaAAalamoona annahu alhaqqu min rabbihim waamma allatheena kafaroo fayaqooloona matha arada Allahu bihatha mathalan yudillu bihi katheeran wayahdee bihi katheeran wama yudillu bihi illa alfasiqeena

Author Comments

18 - Lit., "something above it", i.e., relating to the quality of smallness stressed here - as one would say, "such-and-such a person is the lowest of people, and even more than that" (Zamakhshari). The reference to "God's parables", following as it does immediately upon a mention of the gardens of paradise and the suffering through hell-fire in the life to come, is meant to bring out the allegorical nature of this imagery.

45 - The word for "the lowest" in the original Arabic means a gnat, a byword in the Arabic language for the weakest of creatures. In xxix 41, which was revealed before this Sura, the similitude of the Spider was

used, and similarly in xxii 73, there is the similitude of the Fly. For similitudes taken from magnificent forces of nature, expressed in exalted language, see ii. 19 above. To God all His creation has some special meaning appropriate to itself, and some of what we consider the lowest creatures have wonderful aptitudes, e.g., the spider of the fly. Parables like these may be an occasion of stumbling to those "who forsake the path"; in other words those who deliberately shut their eyes to God's Signs, and their Penalty is attributed to God, the Cause of all causes. But lest there should be misunderstanding, it is immediately added that the stumbling and offence only occur as the result of the sinner's own choice of the wrong course. Verses 26 and 27 form one sentence and should be read together. "Forsaking the path" is defined in ii. 27, viz., breaking solemn covenants which the sinner's own soul had ratified, causing division among mankind, who were meant to be one brotherhood, and doing as much mischief as possible in the life on this earth, for the life beyond will be on another plane, where no rope will be given to evil.

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