

WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT:
COMMENTARY ON A PROPHETIC ALLEGORY

Lukáš Alí Větrovec (vetroveclukas1987@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

In this famous narration (*hadith*) transmitted by the authors of the most authentic hadith collections, Nu'man ibn Thabit heard Allah's Apostle, peace be upon him, making a beautiful allegory of a human society as a boat with travelers on and under its deck. The people in leadership, who are at the rudder and who are entitled to divide the drinking water among all the passengers, should not allow some egoists under the deck to drill a hole inside the boat. If they let them do so, the whole boat will sink, killing all the passengers. We are now living in an interconnected global village. We could take the recent Covid pandemic, which made no discrimination among all the countries of the world, as an apt illustration of this global reality. What lessons can we learn from this narration (*hadith*) and which conclusions we can draw from it? How we can make sure that the rudder will not to be passed into improper hands? And how can upright, spiritually developed people regain command of the rudder again after having lost it? What are the most common mistakes that could occur from the effort to regain control? These are questions addressed by this study, which is based on the classical Islamic interpretative tradition and also from insights gained from contemporary realities.

Keywords: Hadith, Sunnah, social responsibility, parable, allegory, metaphor

INTRODUCTION

In one of his famous allegorical speeches on leadership and governing society, perfectly describable by the phrase of *ḡawāmi' u l-kalim*, or the pithy speech, the Arabic term he himself used to denote his own rhetorical style,¹ Muhammad, peace be upon him, the best of orators, condensed a huge amount of information in very few words and provided useful allegorical illustrations. For example:

“Al-Nuḡmān ibn Bashīr narrated that the Prophet said: “The example of the person abiding by Allah's order and restrictions in comparison to those who violate them is like the example of those persons who drew lots for their seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part, and the others in the lower. When the latter needed water, they had to go up to bring water (and that troubled the others), so they said, “Let us make a hole in our share of the ship (and get water) saving those who are above us from troubling them.” So, if the people in the upper part left the others do what they had suggested, all the people of the ship would be destroyed, but if they prevented them, both parties would be safe.”²

¹ This description is found in numerous narrations, e.g. from Abū Hurayra both in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, nr. 2977; and in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, nr. 523. For hadith quotations, I relied on webpage Sunnah.Com www.sunnah.com. In relating the numbers of hadith I relied on the search engine *al-Bāḥith al-ḥadīthī* available on the website Sunnah.One www.sunnah.one (22.X.2021).

² In Arabic (transliteration): “*Mathalu l-qā'imi calā ḥudūdi 'llāhi wal-wāqici fihā ka-mathali qawmin istahamū calā safīnatin fa-aṣāba bacduhum aclāhā wa bacduhum asfalāhā, fa-kāna 'lladhīna fī asfalihā idhā 'staḡaw mina l-mā'i marrū calā man fawqahum fa-qālū law annā kharaqnā fī naṣībīnā kharqan, wa-lam nu'dhi min qawminā. Fa-in yatrūkūhum wa-mā arādū halakū ḡamīcan, wa-in akhadhū calā aydīhim naḡaw wa naḡaw ḡamīcan.*” Related by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, hadith nr. 2493. For transliteration, I used the English standard one for personal names, titles of works and terms less frequent in English language. In case of more common, standard Islamic vocabulary and well-known toponyms, I opted for already fixed English equivalents.

The *hadith* occurs twice in the second most revered religious scripture of Sunni Islam, in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, first in *Book of partnership* in the chapter “Can one draw lots for divisions and shares” and a second, slightly different version occurs in *Book of testimonies* in the chapter “Drawing lots to solve problems.”

This study deals with its implications for classical theological disciplines and for other areas such as social policy, leadership and management. My aim is to produce a survey in the form of a scientific article that can be used by other Muslim intellectuals and scholars as a reference point in this difficult postmodern period.

METHODOLOGY

For correct textual analysis, all available versions of the narration need to be consulted. Conclusions about its meaning and implications for today can be reached only after a thorough research. The explanation of the *hadith* is not possible without seeing it in the light hermeneutics and mutual relations among different scriptures, holy texts and pieces of revealed information. This multi-dimensional approach to interpretation is characteristic of this body of *hadith* texts maybe even more than it is the case in other revealed religions. Several dimensions or levels of this multi-dimensional approach can be mentioned:

- i) Inter-textual – the mutual relation between different texts of Qur'an and Sunna in terms of cross-reference and meaning. A specific subtype is intra-textuality – the mutual relation between multiple parts of the very same text and partial relations of it towards other texts in terms of cross-reference and meaning.
- ii) Contextual – could refer both to the situation in which scripture was revealed and to the occasion of its utterance or could even refer to its literal or metaphorical interpretation.
- iii) Further considerations of a pre-textual and post-textual kind – e.g. the sum of information available before and after the utterance of the narration (*hadith*).
- iv) The textual hierarchy, that is, the study of what preceded or what followed the narration.
- v) Historical situations of a more permanent or repetitive nature at one end of the spectrum and the unique historical situation of one event at the other end of the spectrum.
- vi) Identification of the intended addressee of the narration. The answer to this question will indicate who should follow or obey the message conveyed by the narration.

THE NARRATION AND ITS CONTEXTS

Al-Bukhārī narrates this *hadith* from Abū Nu'aym after Zakarīyā narrated to him, after hearing it from 'Āmir who said he had heard it from Nu'mān.

The literature on *hadith* narrators has information about each of them.

- i) Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ibn Sa'd is a famous companion of Allah's Messenger, born in Medina during the second year of Hijra, a knowledgeable leader and very skilled preacher and orator, judge over Damascus after Faḍāla ibn 'Ubayd, governor of Kufa in Iraq and Ḥoms in Syria. He was killed there during the rule of the caliph Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam in 65 Hijri because of his support of the Meccan Prophet's companion, 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr, against the Umayyads.³
- ii) 'Āmir is Abū 'Amr ibn Shurāḥīl al-Sha'bī, a tābi'ī from Hamadān in Yemen, famous jurist,

³. For more about his life see Ibn Haḡar, Aḡmad b. cAlī al-cAsqalānī. cAbdulmawḡūd, cĀdil Aḡmad. Macūḍ, cAlī Muḡammad (eds.), 1415h., *al-Iṣāba fī tamyiz al-ṣaḡāba*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, 6/440.

poet and exegete of the Qur'an located in Kufa, Iraq. He encountered and studied under about five hundred of the Prophet's companions and died in 104 Hijri.⁴

- iii) Zakariyā is Abū Yahyā ibn Abī Zā'ida Hubayra ibn Khālid of Kufa, Iraq. He was the freed slave of Muḥammad ibn Muntashir al-Hamadānī, one of the most excellent students of al-Sha'bi, reliable transmitter of numerous authentic hadiths and also served in Kufa as a judge. He encountered several companions and belongs to the group of younger tābi'īn. He died in 148 or 149 Hijri.⁵
- iv) Abū Nu'aym is al-Faḍl ibn Dakayn ibn Ḥammād ibn Zuhayr of Kufa, the freed slave of Ṭalḥa ibn 'Ubaydillāh. He was born in 130 Hijri and died in 218 or 219 Hijri and was one of the most appreciated orators of his time. As a ḥāfiẓ of hadith,⁶ he made nearly no mistake and his memory was repeatedly proven as excellent and outstanding. Revered and well-known for his charity and generosity shown by his sale of utensils and his giving the profits to charity. He was also one of the early defenders of the doctrine of the Qur'an as the uncreated Speech of God and the fearsome guardian of public morality, respected more than a ruler even though he himself was very poor.⁷

ALTERNATIVE VERSION

In another al-Bukhārī's version, the narration (hadith) occurs as follows:

“The example of the one who upholds Allah's orders and limits in comparison to the one who do wrong and violate Allah's limits and orders is like the example of people drawing lots for seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part while the others in the lower part; those in the lower part have to pass by those in the upper one to get water, and that troubled the latter. One of those in the lower part took an axe and started making a hole in the bottom of the boat. The people of the upper part came and asked him: “What is wrong with you?” He replied: “You have been troubled much by my coming up to you, and I have to get water.” Now if they prevent him from doing that they will save both him and themselves, but if they let him be, they will destroy both him and themselves.”⁸

The same parable is also narrated by al-Tirmidhī,⁹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal,¹⁰ al-Bayhaqī,¹¹ Ibn al-Mubārak¹² and Ibn Abī al-Dunyā.¹³ This hadith is narrated by numerous authentic chains in multiple, well-

⁴ For more about his life, see Ibn Sa'ad, Muḥammad Al-cAṭṭā', Muḥammad cAbdulqādir (ed. 1990), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, narrator nr. 3494.

⁵ See his biography in al-Dhahabī, Shamsuddīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. Al-Arnāūṭ, Shucayb (ed. 1985), *Siyaru aclām al-nubalā'*, Beirut: Mu'assasa al-Risāla, 6/202-203.

⁶ E.g. person who knows the majority of hadiths by heart, that means to memorize more than half a million of individual narrations.

⁷ More on his biography see in al-Dhahabī's *Siyar*, 10/142-157.

⁸ See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, nr. 2686.

⁹ Recorded by al-Tirmidhī in his *Sunan*, nr. 2173 as ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ. Proven as authentic (Arb. *ṣaḥīḥ*) by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Ġāmic*, nr. 5832.

¹⁰ Recorded Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, nr. 18361; 18370; and 18379. Shucayb al-Arnāūṭ proved all these versions authentic according to conditions of both al-Bukhārī and Muslim in his takhrīġ of Aḥmad's *Musnad*. There is also version with addings “...the parable of three men in the boat, one settles in upper dack and the other two in the lower...” See Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, 4/273.. But this version is inauthentic (ḍa'īf) because of Muġālid ibn Sa'īd. See al-Albānī, Muḥammad Nāṣiruddīn. 1995. *Silsila al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*, Riyadh: Dār al-Macārif, 1/150.

¹¹ See al-Bayhaqī, Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn. Ashraf, Abdulcalī Abdullḥamīd Ḥāmid (ed. 2003), *Shucab al-īmān*, Riyadh: Maktaba al-rushd lil-nashr wal-tawzīc, nr. 7169. He also narrates the same isnad as the first version of al-Bukhārī, only adding several his own shaykhs to it, see Al-Bayhaqī, Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn. Al-cAṭṭā', Muḥammad cAbdulqādir (ed. 2003), *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, nr. 21410. He narrates with his addings to sanad also al-Bukhārī's second version, see *ibid.*, nr. 20188.

¹² See Ibn al-Mubārak, cAbdullāh. Al-Aczamī, Ḥabīburrāḥmān (ed.). n.d. *Al-Zuhd wal-raqā'iq*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, nr. 1349 and 4151.

¹³ Related by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, Abū Bakr cAbdullāh b. Muḥammad. Al-Shalāḥī Ṣāliḥ b. cIyyāḍ (ed 1997), *al-Amr bil-macrūf wan-nahy canil-munkar*, Riyadh: Maktaba al-ghurabā', nr. 68.

established ways according to its meaning,¹⁴ which is both possible and legitimate in hadith disciplines. All of the versions include the parable of the people on the same boat. They are self-explanatory and self-sufficient with no need for further elaboration.¹⁵

THE CONNECTION OF THIS HADITH WITH THE QUR'AN

Many exegetes quote this citation in relation to the hadith we are studying:

“And fear the affliction which affects not only those of you who do wrong, and know that Allah is Severe in punishment.” (8:25)¹⁶

Many hadith scholars found a resemblance between this hadith and the Qur'anic story of Prophet Nūḥ/Noah, peace be upon him, and his Ark.¹⁷ Those who obeyed the Prophets and the code of public morality were saved but those who rejected the Prophets and disobeyed their Lord were drowned.

According to the Prophets, the promotion of everything positive and the suppression of everything negative was the legacy of all good people before us and also the fatherly advice of Luqmān:

“Enjoin all that is good, and forbid all that is evil and bad, and bear with patience whatever befalls you.” (31:17)

This hadith is also connected to the principles of unpleasant consequences of the sins in this world, as in the verses:

“Immorality has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return.” (30:41)

The Qur'an also informs us about destroyed nations of past history. The reason behind their destruction is apparently their inability to stop evil from being committed within their societies.¹⁸

Following the examples set by the Prophets, peace be upon them all, the Muslim community is described as the best nation only because there are among them those who publically condemn immorality and strive to prevent evil to occur among them.

In contrast to such people, some of the most perverted among human beings were the fishermen of Eilat according to the story of the Sabbath breakers. They did not forbid the transgression and infidelity of others regarding the Holy Day and, consequently, were turned into pigs and monkeys.¹⁹

Abdullāh Ibn Umar said: “*When there won't be anyone promoting good and forbidding evil, this will happen,*” and quoted the verse: “And when the Word is fulfilled against them, We shall bring out from the earth a beast for them, to speak to them because mankind believed not with certainty in Our signs ...” (27: 82).²⁰

THE CONNECTION OF THIS HADITH WITH SUNNAH

¹⁴ See Shucayb al-Arnāūt's note in *Takhrīḡ* of Aḥmad's *Musnad*, 30/329.

¹⁵ See al-Albānī in *Silsila al-aḥādīth al-ṣaḥīḥa*, 1/151, nr. 69.

¹⁶ For Qur'anic quotations I used the English translation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an by Taqiuddin al-Hilali and Muhsen Khan - *Translation of the Quran meaning into English*, available at The Noble Qur'an, Encyclopaedia, www.quranenc.com (22.X.2021). I altered them for the purpose of this study whenever I found the need for doing so.

¹⁷ Example of such is Mālik b. Anas, see Ibn cAsakīr, cAlī b. Ḥasan. Al-cAmrawī, cAmr b. Gharāma (ed. 1995), *Tārīkh Dimashq*, Beirut: Dār al-fikr, nr. 12275. Cf. *Sura al-A'raf*, :69.

¹⁸ See e.g. *Sura Hud*, 116.

¹⁹ See *Sura al-Maida*, 60.

²⁰ Related by Ibn Abī al-Dunyā in *al-Amr bil-ma'rūf wan-nahy c'amil-munkar*, nr. 31.

There are many hadiths concerned with the issues just mentioned. All of them stress the necessity of public morality, the condemnation of what is evil and the promotion of what is good, the maintenance of social order and its protection of its destruction by internal or external enemies. The narrations below refer to the subject of the hadith we are studying.

Anas ibn Mālik narrated that Allah's Messenger said:

"Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed," One man said: "O Allah's Messenger! I will help him if he is oppressed, but if he is an oppressor, how shall I help him?" The Prophet said: "By preventing him from oppressing (others), for that is how to help him."²¹

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar narrated:

"Allah's Messenger said: "Surely! Every one of you is a guardian (Arabic *rāʿin*, lit. *shepherd*) and is responsible for his charges (Arabic *raʿīya*, lit. *herd*); the Imam (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges."²²

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī heard that Allah's Messenger said:

"Whoever among you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; if he cannot, then with his tongue; if he cannot, then with his heart- and that is the weakest of Faith."²³

THE CONNECTION OF THIS HADITH WITH PIOUS PREDECESSORS

There are many narrations from the pious predecessors of the first three generations of the Muslims pertaining to this topic.

Al-Shaʿbī, one of the narrators of this hadith, warned:

"Beware of the seduction of a sinful scholar and a pious person who is ignorant since both are calamities bringing disaster to everyone."²⁴

It is reported that Khālid ibn Maʿdān preached:

"Whoever seeks praise by whatever means goes against Allah, Allah will turn those praises back on him as blame; and whoever dares to say or do anything concerning that which causes blame but is in conformity with the truth, Allah will turn that blame into praise."²⁵

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdilʿazīz used to say:

"Verily, Allah will not punish the common people for the sins of the elite but whenever evil is done publically, all of them deserve the punishment."²⁶

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

²¹ Related by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6952.

²² Hadith is commonly accepted Arb. *muttafaqun calayh*, recorded by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7138; and Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1829.

²³ Recorded by al-Nasāʾī in his *Sunan*, no. 5023. Authentic according to al-Albānī's *Takhrīḡ*.

²⁴ Related by al-Bayhaqī in his *Shuʿab al-īmān*, no. 1753.

²⁵ Related by Abū Dāwūd, Sulaymān b. Ashcath. Ibrāhīm, Yāsir b. (ed.). 1993. *al-Zuhd*, n.l.: Dār al-Mushakkāh, nr. 494.

²⁶ See *al-Amr bil-macrūf wan-nahy canil-munkar.*, nr. 66.

According to al-Bayhaqī, this hadith is connected with the collective obligation to judge and to promote the good and to prevent bad social behaviour.²⁷ This understanding is also favored by al-Baghawī.²⁸ Ibn al-Mubārak mentioned it with reference to the remembrance of God and alms.²⁹ This hadith is mentioned also by al-Rūdānī in context of the application of prescribed punishments.³⁰ Al-Mundhirī sees a connection between this narration and the nature of Allah's limits and the promotion of the good and the censoring of evil.³¹

Ibn Ḥaḡar al-^cAsqalānī explained the hadith we are studying by saying that the words “they troubled the others with it” mean that in the parable they annoy the people in the upper deck with repeatedly ascending to it and asking for water. So, one of them took an axe and started to dig a hole into the ship's bottom. If the rest of the passengers take his hand, e.g. stop him from doing so, all of them will be saved and if they do not, all of them will drown. All of them, as a collective, both those who were stopped and those who were stopping them will be saved. This taking one's hand and preventing him in committing evil in this parable refers to the fulfilment of the prescribed punishments set by Allah's Law in the real world. So, the prescribed sanctions are in fact helping those who apply it and those on whom they are applied. If the sanction does not come and society remains silent, they agree with the sin being committed.

Al-Muhallab and others say that this hadith speaks about collective punishment for the sins of few people. Then, if such punishment comes in this worldly life, it will remove the punishment from the punished in the afterlife if he deserves so or even can raise the status of righteous people in the hereafter.

Differing from other exegetes, Ibn ^cAllān concentrates on the perspective of the subversive element of those who wish the destruction of the common ship – the transgressors themselves – those who oppose them are those who maintain the order, while those who keep silent are their fellows in crime. Like in the ship analogy, everyone has his place and occupation within the society. If someone transgress the divine limitations, he undermines the whole social order like that one who drills a hole in the common boat and those who do not prevent him are his partners in his evil.³² He defines the evil that is to be avoided in broader sense as whatever Allah forbids and in a narrower sense as a limit set by fixed punishment. While the last is authority of a ruler, the former is to be conducted either by public institutions or in some cases even by knowledgeable individuals.³³

CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARIES

Al-Mubārakfūrī comments al-Tirmidhī's version and warns against negligence and the courteous conformity with evil. The difference between prohibited courteousness and lawful conformity lies in that the first occurs when you see an evil act being done while you are able to stop it but you disregard

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 10/156. See also *Shucab al-īmān*, 10/65.

²⁸ See al-Baghawī, Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn. Al-Arnāūt, Shucayb (ed. 143h.), *Sharḥ al-Sunna*, Damascus: Maktab al-Islāmī, 14/341.

²⁹ See *az-Zuhd*, 1/75; and 1/225.

³⁰ See al-Rūdānī, Muḥammad. Ibn Durayc, Sulaymān (ed. 1998), *Ġamc al-fawā'id min ġāmic al-uṣūl wa maġmūc az-zawā'id*, Kuwait: Maktaba Ibn Kathīr, 2/296.

³¹ See al-Mundhirī, Zakīyuddīn cAbdulcazīm. Shamsuddīn, Ibrāhīm. 1417h. *al-Tarḡīb wal-tarḥīb*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, 3/159, nr. 3484.

³² See Ibn cAllān, Muḥammad cAlī. 2004. *Dalīl al-fāliḥīn*, Beirut: Dār al-macrifa, 2/472-474.

³³ See *Dalīl al-fāliḥīn*, 2/474.

it because you are afraid to change the evil or you lack the religious zeal. The other means letting it be because of preventing graver evil directly harming human life³⁴ or human dignity.³⁵

Al-Kashmīrī reflects:

“The whole world is in fact like one common ship and we – all of us – are passengers on it, both Muslims and disbelievers or the obedient and the sinners. Whenever some vice spreads in the world and the good will not stop the bad from doing it, they are prone to destruction all without difference.”³⁶

Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn sees in this hadith an encouragement for using parables while preaching in order to be understood better and to provide tangible picture.³⁷

ʿAbdulʿazīz b. ʿAbdullāh b. Bāz identified the limitations with the crimes punished by prescribed fixed sanctions, quoting this as explanation of ʿAbdurrahmān ibn ʿAwf.³⁸ In longer article on this topic, presented in the late Shaikh’s personal website, he connected the hadith thematically to the issue of enjoining desirable and preventing undesirable behaviour and danger in being negligent in it. According to him, people remain on the good path provided they keep this principle, they are safe from Divine Wrath but when they leave it, they enter into serious danger.³⁹

In the boat parable, the common interest of all the passengers is to stop them before they do it. Similarly, the common interest and duty of all believers and their leaders is to sanction the disobedient and fulfill the duty of enjoining right and forbidding the wrong as much as possible. The practical condemning includes destruction of prohibited items or dispersion of sinful meetings etc. from those in authority.⁴⁰

Fajṣal al-Mubārak stresses the importance of verbal condemnation. The parable identifies with those who uphold the public morality and those who undermine it. If there is no public condemnation of evil acts, the whole society is in danger:

“Who is not able to confront the evil with his acting or speaking is obligated to condemn it internally. If he condemns it internally, he is free from taking part in that evil. Otherwise he shows he is content with the evil being done and follows the wrong path along with the wrongdoers. In this hadith, there is evidence for the duty to hate the evil according to one’s possibilities.”⁴¹

According to Aḥmad al-Raysūnī, the mentality of the corrupted is depicted by their inclination to quick solution and recklessness, like those who want the water only for themselves on the expense of the whole boat. They forget they are part of some bigger unit. The hadith also proves that good intention is not enough for the deed to be good as the path towards Hellfire is often paved with good intentions. The

³⁴ E.g. for instance, when his life is threatened and he is afraid that if he publically condemn the other, he will be lynched even if his sin does not require capital punishment. Cf. *Mirkāt al-mafātīḥ*, 8/3211.

³⁵ See Al-Mubārakfūrī, Muḥammad ʿAbdurrahmān. n.d. *Tuḥfa al-aḥwadhī*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, 6/328-329.

³⁶ See al-Kashmīrī, Muḥammad Anwar Shāh. Mirtuhī, Muḥammad Badru l-cālam (ed. 2005), *Fayḍ al-Bārī*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, 4/6.

³⁷ As an example, cUthaymīn mentions the narration on a bedouin asking the Prophet, peace be upon him, about a dark-complexioned child of fair skinned him, born to his fair complexioned wife. The Prophet used his own camels to illustrate him that some traits could be inherited from more remoted predecessors also in humans, precisely like in the case of camels. See al-cUthaymīn, Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ. 1426h. *Sharḥ Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*, Riyadh: Dār al-watan, 2/431-434. The narration occurs in al-Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, nr. 5305; and in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, nr. 1500.

³⁸ See Ibn Bāz, cAbdulcazīz b. cAbdullāh. 2007. *Ḥilal al-ibrīzīya*, Dār al-Tadmurīya, 2/352.

³⁹ Cf. *Sura al-Tawba*, 71.

⁴⁰ See Ibn Bāz, cAbdulcazīz b. cAbdullāh. *Min ḥadīth mathal al-qā’im calā ḥudūd Allāh wal-wāqic fihā ka-mathal qawm istahamū calā safīna*. <https://binbaz.org.sa/audios/2220/71->

⁴¹ See al-Mubārak, Fajṣal. 2002. *Taṭrīzu Riyāḍ al-ṣāliḥīn*, Riyadh: Dār al-cāṣima, 1/150.

hadith also indicates the bad behaviour occurs not only out of inner sinfulness but sometimes out of impossibility to find lawful substituent for such behaviour. Those who strive to prevent social vices need to focus on providing lawful and viable alternatives leading to satisfying one's needs.⁴²

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The hadith we are studying mentions two secondary sources of legislative rulings in the sharī'a and both of them have tremendous significance and are frequently used by the science of Islamic jurisprudence (Arabic, *uṣūl al-fiqh*) of all majors schools of Sunnī juristic reasoning: 1. supporting the collective good, e.g. the principle of the common good (Arabic, *al-maṣlaḥa*, *al-mursala*) and 2. preventing evil, e.g. principle of preventive sanctioning (Arabic, *sadd al-dharā'i'*).

The common good is defined as achieving the collective benefit and preventing collective harm, or sometimes limited only to its positive side. Those interests could be explicit or implicit.

Preventive action is primarily related to the negative consequences of certain acts and refers to behaviour which is not prohibited in itself but leads directly to forbidden acts.⁴³ According to some jurists like Ibn al-Qayyim, this principle consists of about one quarter of Islamic law.⁴⁴ The cases pertaining to this rule are generally divided into those that always lead to harm, like digging a hole on a highway. These actions should be prevented.

Other actions are not inevitably connected to harmful consequences, like planting a vineyard. The benefit of grapes as fruit overrides its harm as wine. This kind of action should not be prohibited. A third kind of action often lead to harm, like the selling of weapons in times of crisis. Jurists differ concerning this group of action – *mālikīs* and *ḥanbalīs* prohibit them, while *shāfi'īs* and *ḥanafīs* allow them. A fourth kind of action refers to the situation where certain permissible activity leads to circumvention of the prohibited such as fake business transactions covering interest-based ones.

For *mālikīs* and *ḥanbalīs*, preventive action is a stronger argument than the rule of general permissiveness (e.g. things are permitted as long as there is no evidence of prohibition), while *ḥanafīs* and *shāfi'īs* follow the opposite logic.⁴⁵ As for the legal validity of independent evidence, *mālikīs* and *ḥanbalīs* view preventive action as valid and independent evidence, while *ḥanafīs*, *shāfi'īs* and *zāhirīs* prefer the basic norm. The first opinion is to be preferred since it is supported by clear evidences from the Qur'an and the Sunna and numerous examples from rulings of Islamic legislation.⁴⁶

It could be concluded that all these issues and examples are either about aims or the means leading to certain aims. The conclusion is that whatever leads to good is itself good and whatever leads to evil is itself evil. Whatever leads to prohibition is also prohibited and whatever leads to obligation is also obligated and whatever leads to permissible aims is also permissible.

This corresponds to the main aim of Divine Legislation, which is the means for attaining the good and preventing what is harmful both in this world and in the hereafter, as al-Shāṭibī noted.⁴⁷ According to the *ḥanafī* jurist al-^cIzz b. ^cAbdussalām, “*the whole sharī'a is built on interests embodied in achieving what is good and preventing what is harmful.*”⁴⁸

⁴² See al-Raysūnī, Aḥmad. *Mas'ūliyya al-ḡamāciyya wal-maṣīr al-mushtarik khilāl ḥadīth al-safīna*. <https://islamonline.net> (24.X.2021).

⁴³ Štulanović 2007, 64-65.

⁴⁴ Štulanović 2007, 66.

⁴⁵ Topoljak 2006, 257-258.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 259-260.

⁴⁷ See al-Shāṭibī, Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā. Āli Salmān, Mashhūr b. Hasan (ed. 1997), *al-Muwāfaqāt*, n.l.: Dār Ibn cAffān, 2/37.

⁴⁸ See Ibn cAbdissalām, Muḥammad al-^cIzz. 1991. *Qawācid al-aḥkām*, Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-cilmīya, 1/9.

CIVILIZATIONAL REFLECTIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

Society itself provides a certain amount of social pressure to attain positive values. Using the power and establishing certain clear sanctions is the responsibility of the ruler, the state institutions, and the legal system. It is the responsibility of scholars to clarify these matters. Those whose responsibility it is to warn against negative consequences should be patient, cautious, and benevolent towards others.⁴⁹

°Alī al-Māwardī contemplates the obligation of establishing coercive powers as required by reason and by religious duty. The responsibility of the ruler can be described in seven main ways:

- i) guarding the religion from corruptive changes, working for its promotion and preventing its neglect;
- ii) guarding the integrity of Islam and Muslims;
- iii). maintaining and managing resources for the well-being and comfort of all;
- iv). responsible management of common property and the taxes collected from the believers;
- v). establishing justice and protection of peoples' rights and promoting peaceful relations throughout the nation;
- vi). sanctioning by prescribed punishments without excess or relaxation;
- vii). nominating and appointing suitable and qualified people as state functionaries.⁵⁰

In order to promote positive values and to suppress destructive forces at the state level, Islamic empires in history developed the institution of *al-ḥisba*, which was financed by the state. The person responsible for this public function was called *muḥtasib*. The institution had four pillars:

- i) the controller or inspector;
- ii) the controlled or inspected regarding their competence;
- iii) the object or sphere of control or inspection; and
- iv) the process of controlling or inspecting.

A *muḥtasib* should be a religiously competent Muslim who is able to fulfill his responsibilities as the inspector of morality. He needs to be just, morally upright and accountable. Females could be *muḥtasibs* because the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his second caliph, °Umar, nominated women for this office. The concern of the *muḥtasib* was mainly economical criminality, disturbing the peace and other less severe forms of criminality and the application of fixed and even capital punishment. In the latter case, a *muḥtasib* served as the first instance of the court system. He was not entitled to investigate people's privacy or to search in court files.

On the other hand, he could use limited force when needed. The order followed in his method was:

- i) to explain the unlawfulness of the deed;
- ii) to advise the one who committed it;
- iii) to reprehend the culprit;
- iv) to annul the occupation and seize the tools used to perform the deed;
- v) to punish by incarceration, exposition to public shame, physical punishment, armed intervention or banishment from a particular region.

⁴⁹. See Muzejjen, Ejmen Ahmed. Skejić, Sabahudin (trans. 2016), *Enciklopedija islamskog ponašanja*, Novi Pazar: El-Kelimeh, pp.164-166.

⁵⁰. See al-Māwardī, °Alī, 1986, *Adab al-dunyā wal-dīn*, n.l.: Dār al-maktaba al-ḥayā, pp. 146-147.

A *muhtasib* served also as an inspector of religious services (e.g. the function of mosques, monitoring sects, debunking spiritual fraud and suppressing religious innovation etc.) and public services (pipelines, sewerages, drains, roads) as well as inspector for occupational relations between employers and employees. The last domain was public morality as far as it involved Islamic norms in the relation between the sexes and denominations in the public arena. A *muhtasib* also had responsibility to see that justice was done in the marketplace, in schools and in educational institutions, as well as to supervise the fulfilment of obligations, the execution of prohibitions and the control of particular professions concerning with the setting of standards of quality and the measurement of instruments. A *muhtasib*'s task also included special care for animals and the environment.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

When the truth is trampled underfoot and moral laws are mocked, humanity faces crisis and disaster. When evil is not rejected, it begins to dominate human life. To speak up against evil is our religious and moral duty, which, if not fulfilled, will result in severe punishment from above. This is the moral of the boat story.

The profound lesson of Prophetic eloquence that we have studied in this article deals with the principle of enjoining good and forbidding evil. This is the Heavenly Order which prevents the ship of humanity from sinking into the abyss of chaos. If the wise and knowledgeable prevent those who are ignorant and foolish, everyone will be safe. But if they fail to do so, all humanity will be annihilated.

Today, mankind is in desperate need of rightly guided and responsible helmsmen in leading positions of governance and management, those who will steer the human boat from the dangerous seas of global crisis towards the silent oceans of prosperity. Understanding this allegory enables humanity to sail on one and the same boat through the storms of secular modernity to the safe haven of physical, psychical, material and spiritual well-being in this world and salvation and deliverance in the gardens of Paradise in the hereafter.

The true meaning of liberty is no longer intelligible when rights are separated from duties and benefits from responsibilities. People do not have solitary lives but are parts of an interconnected structure called society. This has always been a reality but today, in our global village, it applies even more. The narration (*hadith*) studied in this article offers a beautiful parable about all this. The parable also shows the importance of education and pedagogy and because it uses the best possible, most catching, and effective method to convey its meaning. This particular parable has not lost its power and influence over many human generations but has reformed and rectified societies.

The unprecedented and historically unparalleled luxury in which humankind lives in post-modern society has blurred the previously clear distinctions between right and wrong – true and false. But these should never merge into one. In the age of human liberty, when the world is facing life-threatening environmental crises, such philosophical debauchery could doom the entire humanity to extinction.

Today we are witnessing the ultimate conflict of altruism and egoism, masked as false tolerance. The meaning of the term ‘tolerance’ swings from its true meaning to its false meaning in the form of negligence towards evil and cowardly compassion and irresponsible lenience towards the wrongdoer.⁵²

According to the game theory, a methodological tool popular in the economy, mathematics, psychology and sociology, genuine cooperation between individuals is not possible when there is no guarantee that

⁵¹ See “Hisba” in Alibašić, Ahmed. Mujić, Munir. 2013. *Institucije islamske civilizacije*, Sarajevo: CNS, pp. 362-367.

⁵² Qur’an rebukes such humaneness out of its place when speaking about punishment for unmarried adulterers: “Let not pity (Arb. *ra’fa*) withhold you in their case” (24:2)

the wrongdoer will be punished. Today we have a need not only for altruist sharers but also for altruist punishers, those who are ready to stand up and condemn those who receive benefits at the expense of others, even if it will cost them their reputation or access to resources. This is the principle expressed by Ibrāhīm al-Nakhī, one of the pious predecessors, who said: “The altruism of some people disperses the tyranny and injustice of the other.”⁵³

⁵³ Related by al-Bayhaqī in his *Shucab al-īmān*, 3/283.