SELECTIONS FROM RAWDAT AL-MUHIBBIN · 4

The Nature of Passion

Selections from Ibn al-Qayyim's Rawdat al-Muhibbin

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah
d. 751 AH

IBN JĀZĪ · FUSTAT SERIES

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Editor's Preface

Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, known as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691–751 AH), was a scholar of Damascus and the student of Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. Among his many works is *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin* (The Garden of the Lovers and the Delight of the Yearning), a book of twenty-nine chapters on love: its names, its causes, its signs, its lawful and unlawful forms, and finally the love of Allah.

This booklet draws on seven of its chapters: Chapter Ten, On Mentioning the Reality of Passionate Love and Its Descriptions and What People Have Said about It; Chapter Eleven, On Passionate Love: Is It a Matter of Necessity, Outside of Choice, or a Matter of Choice? The Differing of People on That, and Mentioning the Correct View on It; Chapter Twelve, On the Intoxication of the Passionate Lovers; Chapter Thirteen, On Pleasure Following Love in Completeness and Deficiency; Chapter Fourteen, On Those Who Praised Passionate Love and Wished for It, and Envied Its Owner for What He Was Given of His Wish; Chapter Fifteen, On Those Who Censured Passionate Love and Grew Weary of It, and What Each Party Argued in Support of the Soundness of Its Position; and Chapter Sixteen, On Judging Between the Two Parties and Settling the Dispute Between the Two Groups.

The reader will find what was said of the nature of passionate love, the question of whether a lover is to blame for it, what intoxication is, the kinds and ranks of pleasure, the case made by those who praised passionate love and by those who censured it, and the author's own judgement between them.

The text is Ibn al-Qayyim's own, abridged by selection. Cuts are shown by "...". The full translation gives the complete text.

◆ *What was said of its reality* ◆

What the physicians hold, all of them, is that it is a disease of obsessive thoughts, similar to melancholia, which a man brings upon himself by letting his thought have power over finding certain forms and traits beautiful. Its cause in the soul is finding beautiful and thought, and its cause in the body is the rising of a bad vapour to the brain from retained semen; and for this reason it most often befalls the unmarried, and frequent intercourse removes it quickly. 210

And Plato said: Passionate love is the movement of an empty soul. And Aristotle said: Passionate love is the blindness of the sense to perceiving the faults of the beloved. 211

Qays ibn al-Mulawwah said:[1] 212

أتاني هواها قبل أن أعرف الهوى ◆ فصادف قلبا خاليا فتمكنا

Her passion came before I knew of passion's ways;
it met an empty heart, and there it stays.

Her passion came to me before I knew passion ◆ and it met an empty heart, and took hold

And al-Jahiz said:[2] Passionate love is a name for what exceeds love, just as extravagance is a name for what exceeds generosity, and miserliness is a name for what exceeds moderation; so every passionate love is called love, and not every love is called passionate love; love is the genus and passionate love a species of it. Do you not see that every love is yearning, and not every yearning is love?

And al-Asma'i said: I asked a bedouin about passionate love and he said: By Allah, it is too exalted to be seen! And it is hidden from the eyes of mankind, for it lies hidden in the breasts as fire lies hidden in stone: if it is struck, it flares, and if it is left, it hides. 213

And it was said: The beginning of passionate love is hardship, its middle is sickness, and its end is killing. 217

1 The verse is by Majnun Layla, in his *Diwan* (p. 282); it is also ascribed to Yazid ibn al-Tathriyyah.

2 Al-Jahiz (d. 255 AH).

◆ *Is it compelled or chosen? Those who said it is compelled* ◆

We say: People differed about passionate love: is it a matter of choice, or a matter of necessity beyond human power? 218

One group said: It is of necessity, not of choice. They said: It is like the thirsty man's love of cold water and the hungry man's love of food, and this is something that is not controlled.

And what indicates that from the Sunnah is what al-Bukhari narrated in his *Sahih* from the story of Barirah: that her husband used to walk behind her after her separation from him, when she had become a stranger to him, with his tears running down his cheeks, and the Prophet ﷺ said: "O Abbas, do you not wonder at the love of Mughith for Barirah, and the hatred of Barirah for Mughith?"[3] Then he said to her: "If only you would take him back." She said: Are you commanding me? He said: "I am only interceding." She said: I have no need of him. And he did not forbid him his passionate love for her in this state, since that is something not controlled and does not fall under choice. 219

They said: Many of the Salaf interpreted His saying تعالى: ﴿رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِۦ﴾ "Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear." [al-Baqarah 2:286] as passionate love. They did not intend to restrict it by this, but only to give an example, and that passionate love is of the burdening with what cannot be borne. 223

And the meaning of burdening here is the burdening by decree, not the burdening by the Sharia, by command.

They said: We have seen a group of passionate lovers go round to those who would supplicate for them that Allah spare them passionate love, and had it been a matter of choice, they would have removed it from their souls.

From here the error of many of those who blame becomes clear, and their blaming in this state is like blaming a sick man for his sickness. ... This blame is fitting only before this disease clings to the heart ...

3 Al-Bukhari (5283), from Ibn Abbas.

◆ *Those who said it is chosen* ◆

Another group said: Rather it is a matter of choice, following the desire of the soul and its will; indeed it is the firm rooting of desire, which Allah praised the one who restrains his soul from, so He said تعالى: ﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ﴾ "But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge." [al-Nazi'at 79:40–41] 224

So it is impossible that a man restrain his soul from what does not fall under his power.

They said: Passionate love is a voluntary movement of the soul towards its beloved, and is not like the involuntary movements that do not fall under the servant's power.

They said: Allah سبحانه وتعالى censured the people of corrupt love who take rivals to love besides Him, and had love been of necessity, they would not have been censured for it.

They said: And because love is a strong will, and the servant is praised and censured for his will, and for this reason the one who wills good is praised even if he does not do it, and the one who wills evil is censured even if he does not do it.

And Allah تعالى censured those who love that lewdness should spread among those who believe, and informed us that they will have a painful punishment.

And had love not been controlled, He would not have threatened them with punishment for what does not fall under their power.

They said: And the people of reason, all of them, agree on blaming one who loves what harms him by his love, and this is a natural disposition upon which Allah created creation; and if he were to excuse himself by saying, I do not control my heart, they would not accept an excuse from him.

◆ *The settlement of the dispute* ◆

The decisive settlement of the dispute between the two parties: that the beginnings of passionate love and its causes are matters of choice that fall under obligation, for looking, thinking, and exposing oneself to love are matters of choice; so when he has brought about the causes, the following of the caused thing upon them is without his choice, as was said:[4] 225

تولع بالعشق حتى عشق ◆ فلما استقل به لم يطق

He toyed with love until in love he fell,
when it took him over, he could not bear it well.

He was fond of passionate love until he fell passionately in love
and when it took him over, he could not bear it

رأى لجة ظنها موجة ◆ فلما تمكن منها غرق

He saw a deep sea, and thought it a wave;
and when deep in it, he found a watery grave.

He saw a deep sea, thinking it a wave ◆ and when he was deep in it, he drowned

And this is like intoxication with the drinking of wine: for taking an intoxicant is by choice, and what is generated from it of intoxication is of necessity; so when the cause occurs by his choice, he is not excused in what is generated from it without his choice; so when the cause is forbidden, the drunkard is not excused.

And there is no doubt that following up the look and prolonging thought are like drinking the intoxicant, so he is blamed for the cause; and for this, when passionate love occurs by a cause that is not forbidden, its owner is not blamed for it, like one who loved his wife or his slave woman passionately, then parted from her, and his passionate love for her stayed with him; he is not blamed for that, as came before in the story of Barirah and Mughith.

And likewise if he looks a sudden glance, then turns his sight away, and passionate love has taken hold of his heart without his choice, though he must resist it and turn it away from his heart by its opposite; and when something comes that overcomes him, then he is not blamed, after exerting effort to repel it. And among what makes clear what we have said: that

4 The verses are unattributed in *Dhamm al-Hawa* and *Diwan al-Sababah*.

the intoxication of passionate love is greater than the intoxication of wine, as Allah تعالى said of the passionate lovers of forms among the people of Lut: ﴿لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ﴾ "By your life, [O Muḥammad], indeed they were, in their intoxication, wandering blindly." [al-Hijr 15:72] 226

And if the lesser of the two intoxications does not excuse its owner when he engages in its causes, how is the owner of the stronger intoxication excused with his engaging in its causes? And since we have reached this point, let us mention a chapter on the intoxication of love and its cause.

◆ *What intoxication is* ◆

Before entering into that, it is necessary to make clear the reality of intoxication, its cause and its generation. We say: Intoxication is a pleasure with which the reason by which speech is known is absent, and with which discrimination occurs. Allah تعالى said: ﴿يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَقۡرَبُواْ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَأَنتُمۡ سُكَـٰرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعۡلَمُواْ مَا تَقُولُونَ﴾ "O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying" [al-Nisa' 4:43]. So He made the limit at which the ruling of intoxication ceases that he knows what he says; so whenever he does not know what he says, he is in intoxication, and when he knows what he says, he is out of its ruling. This is the definition of the drunkard according to the majority of the people of knowledge. 227

So intoxication combines two meanings: the existence of pleasure and the absence of discrimination. And one who seeks intoxication may seek one of them, and may seek both; for the soul has desire and appetites in whose attainment it takes pleasure, and knowledge of the immediate and later corruptions in those pleasures prevents it from taking them ... so when the commanding reason and the revealing knowledge are gone, the soul expands in its desire and finds a wide field.

Allah سبحانه forbade intoxication for two things that He mentioned in His Book in His saying: ﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ ٱلشَّيۡطَـٰنُ أَن يُوقِعَ بَيۡنَكُمُ ٱلۡعَدَٰوَةَ وَٱلۡبَغۡضَآءَ فِي ٱلۡخَمۡرِ وَٱلۡمَيۡسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمۡ عَن ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِ وَعَنِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ فَهَلۡ أَنتُم مُّنتَهُونَ﴾ "Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allāh and from prayer. So will you not desist?" [al-Ma'idah 5:91] So He سبحانه informed us that it brings about the corruption that arises from the soul by means of the going of reason, and prevents the benefit that is not complete except with reason. 228

The point is that intoxication brings pleasure and prevents knowledge; and among it is intoxication with foods and drinks, for the one who has them obtains pleasure and joy from them, which moves him to take them, because they take his reason away from him, so cares, griefs and sorrows are taken away from him at that hour; but he is mistaken in that, for they do not go away, but are only hidden, and when he is sober they return greater and fuller than they were, and their return calls him to return, as

the poet said:[5] 229

وكأس شربت على لذة ◆ وأخرى تداويت منها بها

Many a cup I drank, for pleasure's sake,
and many another, to cure myself, I'd take.

Many a cup I drank for pleasure
and {many} another with which I cured myself of {the first}

And that pleasure is the most bringing of cares and griefs, now and later; so in the pleasure of the remembrance of Allah, turning to Him, and prayer with heart and body is a noble and great benefit, free from corruptions and warding off harms: riches and compensation for the human being - who is a human being - in place of that deficient, limited pleasure that prevents what is more complete than it and brings a pain greater than it. 230

5 The verse is by al-A'sha (Maymun ibn Qays), the pre-Islamic poet, in his *Diwan* (p. 173).

◆ *Love, anger and joy as causes of intoxication* ◆

Among the causes of intoxication is the love of forms, for when love is firmly rooted and grows strong, it intoxicates the lover, and their verses on that are well known and many, especially if intercourse is joined to that love; for its owner's discrimination lessens, or is lost in that state, so that he does not discriminate; and if that intoxication is added to the intoxication of drink, so that the intoxication of passion, the intoxication of wine and the intoxication of the pleasure of intercourse are gathered upon him, that is the utmost of intoxication. And among it is what is caused by the love of wealth and leadership and the strength of anger; for anger, when it grows strong, brings an intoxication close to the intoxication of wine.

And that enters into the closing (الإغلاق) by which the Prophet ﷺ made the occurrence of divorce void, by his saying: "There is no divorce in a closing," which Abu Dawud narrated[6], and he said: I think it is anger.

And of this is the saying of the one who finds his mount after despairing of it and being certain of ruin: O Allah, You are my servant and I am Your lord. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "He erred from the intensity of joy,"[7] and he was not by that a disbeliever, for lack of intention. 231

And the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that to establish the intensity of the joy that led him to that. And these things can bring about intoxication only because the cause of intoxication brings an overpowering pleasure that floods the reason, and the cause of pleasure is reaching the beloved; so when love is strong, and reaching the beloved is strong, and reason is weak, intoxication occurs; but the weakness of reason is at times from the weakness of the lover, and at times from the strength of the cause that arrives; and for this there arises from intoxication, for beginners in attaining leadership, wealth, passionate love and wine, what does not arise for one who is accustomed to that and firmly established in it.

And among the strongest of the causes that bring about intoxication: listening to stirring voices, from two sides: on one side, that in itself it brings a strong pleasure in which reason is submerged; and on the other, that it moves the soul towards its beloved, whatever it be, so that by that

6 Abu Dawud (2193), Ibn Majah (2046) and Ahmad, from Aisha; the Arabic editor calls it hasan. *Ighlaq* is a closing of the mind, by anger or compulsion, so that one cannot judge.

7 Al-Bukhari (6309) and Muslim (2747), from Anas.

movement, yearning and seeking, together with imagining the beloved, bringing his form close to the heart and its taking hold of thought, a great pleasure arises that overpowers reason; so the pleasure of melodies and the pleasure of sorrows gather; and for this those who care for these pleasures often join the hearing of melodies with drink, so that intoxication is completed for them by drink, passionate love and the stirring voice; so they find of the pleasure of union, and its intoxication, in this state what they do not find without it. 232

So wine is the drink of bodies, passionate love is the drink of souls, and melodies are the drink of spirits, especially if they are joined by words in which is mention of the beloved and description of the state of the lover according to the state he is in; so the hearing of pleasant voices and the perception of fitting meanings gather, and that is far stronger than the pleasure obtained from each of them by itself; so the pleasure overpowers the soul, the spirit and the body most completely, and the utmost of intoxication occurs. So how can one who engages in these causes claim an excuse, and say: What is generated from them is of necessity, not of choice? And with Allah is success.

◆ *What pleasure is* ◆

So whenever love grows stronger, pleasure grows stronger in reaching the beloved, and this chapter is among the most weighty chapters of the book and the most beneficial of them, and we mention in it an explanation of the knowledge of pleasure, its kinds and its ranks. We say: As for pleasure, it has been explained as the perception of what is agreeable, just as pain is the perception of what is contrary. 233

Our Shaykh said:[8] The correct view is that it be said: The perception of what is agreeable is the cause of pleasure, and the perception of what is contrary is the cause of pain; so pleasure and pain arise from the perception of the agreeable and the contrary, and perception is the cause of both. And pleasure is clearer than anything by which it is defined, for it is a matter of inner experience, and is known only by its causes and its rulings. And pleasure (اللذة), delight (البهجة), joy (السرور), coolness of the eye (قرة العين), ease of soul (طيب النفس) and bliss (النعيم) are words close in meaning, and it is a matter sought in general; indeed that is the aim of every living being ...

so there must be an object willed, sought, loved for itself; so when the sought, willed, loved object is obtained, the joining of pleasure, bliss, gladness, joy and coolness of the eye with it is according to the strength of his love, his will and his desire for it, and that is a matter of taste and inner finding ... 234

So here are three kinds of names close in meaning:

The first: appetite (الشهوة), will (الإرادة), inclination (الميل), seeking (الطلب), love (المحبة), desire (الرغبة) and the like.

The second: taste (الذوق), finding (الوجد), arrival (الوصول), success (الظفر), perception (الإدراك), obtaining (الحصول), attaining (النيل) and the like.

The third: pleasure (اللذة), gladness (الفرح), bliss (النعيم), joy (السرور), ease of soul (طيب النفس), coolness of the eye (قرة العين) and the like.

And these three matters are inseparable.

8 Our Shaykh is Ibn Taymiyyah.

◆ *The pleasure of this world and the pleasure of the next* ◆

And if pleasure is sought for itself, it is censured only when it is followed by a pain greater than it, or prevents a pleasure better than it, and it is praised when it helps towards the lasting, settled pleasure, which is the pleasure of the Hereafter and its bliss, which is the best and most exalted bliss, as Allah تعالى said: ... ﴿بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱلْـَٔاخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰٓ﴾ "But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring." [al-A'la 87:16–17] 235

And when it is known that the pleasures of the world and its bliss are an enjoyment and a means to the pleasures of the Hereafter, and that for this they were created, as the Prophet ﷺ said: "The world is an enjoyment, and the best enjoyment of the world is the righteous woman,"[9] then every pleasure that helps towards the pleasures of the Hereafter is loved and pleasing to the Lord تعالى, so its owner takes pleasure in it from two sides: from the side of his delight and the coolness of his eye through it, and from the side of its bringing him to the pleasure of his Lord, and its leading to a pleasure more complete than it; so this is the pleasure that the man of reason should strive to obtain, not the pleasure that is followed by the utmost pain and makes him miss the greatest of pleasures. 236

9 Muslim (1467), from Abd Allah ibn Amr.

◆ *The reward in lawful pleasure* ◆

And for this the believer is rewarded for everything he takes pleasure in of the permitted things, if he intends by it help towards and a way to the pleasure of the Hereafter and its bliss; so there is no comparison between the pleasure of the forbidden and the pleasure of the owner of a wife, or a beautiful slave woman, whom he loves and whose company cools his eye; for when he is with her, and his heart, his body and his soul take pleasure in union with her, he is rewarded for that pleasure, in contrast to the punishment of the owner of the forbidden pleasure for his pleasure, as the Prophet ﷺ said: "And in the private part of one of you is a reward." They said: O Messenger of Allah! One of us comes to his appetite and has a reward in it?! He said: "Do you see, if he put it in the forbidden, would he bear a burden?" They said: Yes. He said: "So likewise when he puts it in the lawful, he has a reward."[10] 237

And know that this pleasure is multiplied and increased according to what the servant has of turning to Allah, sincerity of action for Him, and desire for the Hereafter; for the appetite and delight divided among forms are gathered for him in one form, and the fear, worry and grief that are in the forbidden pleasure are absent from his pleasure; so if it falls out for him, with this, that there is a beautiful form, and he is granted love of her and she is granted love of him, and the motives of his appetite turn to her, and his sight falls short of looking at anyone else and his soul of reaching out to anyone else, then there is no comparison between his pleasure and the pleasure of the owner of the forbidden form, and this is the sweetest bliss that is obtained in the world, and the Prophet ﷺ made it the third of three by which the good of the world and the Hereafter is obtained, and they are: "a grateful heart, a remembering tongue, and a beautiful wife, who, if he looks at her, she gladdens him, and if he is absent from her, she guards him in herself and his property,"[11] and Allah is the One whose help is sought.

10 Muslim (1006), from Abu Dharr.

11 Ahmad (5/285), al-Tirmidhi (1856) and Ibn Majah (3094), from Thawban; al-Tirmidhi calls it hasan.

◆ *The pain of losing the beloved* ◆

And pain, sadness, worry and grief arise from the absence of knowledge of the beneficial beloved, or from the absence of willing him and preferring him despite knowing him, or from the absence of reaching him and gaining him despite loving him and willing him, and this is among the greatest of pain. 238

And for this a man's pain in the barzakh and in the abode of life, at the loss of his beloved, is greater than his pain at losing it in the world, in three respects:

The first: his knowledge there of the perfection of what he has lost, and its measure.

The second: the intensity of his need for it, and the yearning of his soul for it, while he has been cut off from it, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ﴾ "And prevention will be placed between them and what they desire" [Saba' 34:54].

The third: the arrival of its painful opposite. 239

Let the man of reason consider this place, and let him place himself in the position of one who has lost the greatest and most beneficial beloved, while he is the poorest of things and most in need of it, a loss whose remedy is not hoped for, and the opposite has come to him. How painful a calamity, and how dreadful a state! So where is this state from the state of one who takes pleasure in the world in everything by which he seeks the face of Allah سبحانه وتعالى, of eating, drinking, clothing, marriage, healing the rage by overcoming an enemy, and striving in His way?! Let alone what he takes pleasure in of knowing his Lord, loving Him, His oneness, turning in repentance to Him, relying on Him, turning to Him, sincerity of action for Him, being pleased with Him and from Him, entrusting to Him, and the gladness and joy of the heart in nearness to Him, intimacy with Him, and yearning for meeting Him, as in the hadith that Ibn Hibban and al-Hakim graded sound: "And I ask You for the pleasure of looking at Your face, and the yearning for meeting You."[12]

When he arrives at the abode of bliss, there are kinds of pleasure, delight and joy that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart of man

12 Ibn Hibban (1971) and al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak* (1/524), from Ammar ibn Yasir.

has conceived; so woe and wretchedness to the low, base souls whom yearning for that does not move with delight, whose fire of will does not blaze for it in desire, and which do not keep away from what bars that out of fear ... They go round the privy, when the lofty souls go round the Throne, and they burrow into stones, when the pure souls fly to the highest nests. 240

◆ *False pleasure and vain pleasure* ◆

And every pleasure that is followed by pain, or prevents a pleasure more complete than it, is not a pleasure in reality, though the soul is deceived in taking pleasure in it; for what pleasure is there for one who eats delicious poisoned food that will soon cut his intestines apart?

And these are the pleasures of the disbelievers and the wicked, in their exalting themselves in the earth and their corruption, and their rejoicing in it without right, and their exultation; that is like the pleasure of those who took, besides Allah, protectors whom they love as the love of Allah, so they gained by them affection between them in the life of this world, then that pleasure turned into the greatest and bitterest pain.

As for the pleasure that is not followed by pain in the abode of settlement, and does not lead to a pleasure there, it is a vain pleasure, for there is no benefit in it and no harm, and its time is short, and the soul's enjoyment of it has no worth, and it must occupy one from what is better and more beneficial than it in this world and the next, even if it does not occupy from the root of pleasure in the Hereafter; and this is the kind that the Prophet ﷺ meant by his saying: "Every amusement with which a man amuses himself is vain, except his shooting with his bow, his training his horse, and his playing with his wife, for these are of the truth." Muslim narrated it.[13] 241

And for this the pleasure of playing the tambourine at a wedding was permitted; for it helps towards marriage, as the pleasure of shooting with the bow and training the horse helps towards jihad, and both are loved by Allah. So whatever helps towards the attainment of what He loves is of the truth; and for this a man's playing with his wife was counted as of the truth, for its helping towards the aims of marriage, which Allah سبحانه وتعالى loves; and whatever does not help towards what the Lord تعالى loves is vain, with no benefit in it; but if there is no preponderant harm in it, it is not forbidden and not prohibited; but if it bars from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer, it becomes disliked, hateful to the Lord عز وجل, abhorrent to Him, either in itself, or by going beyond bounds in it. 242

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13 Muslim (1918), from Uqbah ibn Amir, has a different wording. The wording here is in Ahmad (4/144), Abu Dawud (2513) and al-Nasa'i, from Uqbah ibn Amir; the Arabic editor says it is sahih.

And everything that bars from the sought pleasure is a ruin for its owner, for if, when he engaged in it, he had occupied himself with what benefits him and brings him the sought lasting pleasure, it would have been better and more beneficial for him.

◆ *The three kinds of pleasure* ◆

When this is known, the kinds of pleasures are three: bodily pleasure, imaginal fancied pleasure, and intellectual spiritual pleasure. 245

Bodily pleasure is the pleasure of eating, drinking and intercourse, and in this pleasure the dumb animal shares with man, so man's perfection is not in this pleasure, because the lowest of animals shares it with him, and because if it were a perfection, the best of men, the noblest of them and the most perfect of them would be those who eat, drink and have intercourse most; and also: if it were a perfection, the share of the messengers of Allah, His prophets and His friends in it in this abode would be more complete than the share of His enemies. And since the matter is the reverse, it is clear that it is not in itself a perfection, and is a perfection only if it entails help towards the great lasting pleasure, as came before.

As for the fancied imaginal pleasure: it is the pleasure of leadership, of exalting oneself over creatures, of boasting and of lording it over them.

And this pleasure, though those who seek it are nobler in soul than those who seek the first pleasure, its pains and the corruptions and harms that it brings are greater than the soul's taking pleasure in it, for its owner sets himself up as the enemy of everyone who exalted himself and took leadership over him. And it has conditions and obligations that make its owner miss many of his sensory pleasures, and it is not complete except by bearing hardships and pains greater than it. So this is not, in reality, a pleasure, though the soul rejoices in it and is gladdened by obtaining it.

As for the intellectual spiritual pleasure: it is like the pleasure of gnosis, of knowledge, and of being characterised by attributes of perfection: generosity, giving, chastity, courage, patience, forbearance, manliness and others; for taking pleasure in that is among the greatest of pleasures, and it is the pleasure of the virtuous, lofty, noble soul. When the pleasure in that is joined to the pleasure of knowing Allah تعالى, loving Him, worshipping Him alone with no partner, and being pleased with Him in place of everything - and nothing else is taken in exchange for Him - then the owner of this pleasure is in a Garden in this world, whose relation to the pleasures of the world is like the relation of the pleasure of Paradise to the pleasure of the world; for there is nothing more delightful for the heart and spirit, nor sweeter, nor more pleasant, nor more blissful than love of

Allah, turning to Him, worshipping Him alone, the coolness of the eye in Him, and intimacy with His nearness, and yearning for meeting Him and seeing Him; and an atom's weight of this pleasure is not equalled by mountains of the pleasures of the world; and likewise the least atom's weight of faith in Allah and His Messenger delivers one from abiding forever in the abode of pains; so how of the faith that prevents entering it? 246

◆ *The sweetest thing in the world* ◆

Some of the knowers said: Whoever's eye is cooled by Allah, every eye is cooled by him; and whoever's eye is not cooled by Allah, his soul is cut to pieces in regrets over the world. And it suffices for the excellence and nobility of this pleasure that it removes from the heart the pain of regret over what is lost of this world, so that he is pained by the greatest of what its people take pleasure in, and flees from it as they flee from what is painful. And this is a place where the judge is taste, not the mere tongue of knowledge. 247

And another said: The sweetest thing in the world is knowing Him and loving Him, and the most delightful thing in the Hereafter is seeing Him and hearing His speech without an intermediary.

And one of the Salaf said:[14] There is no servant but he has two eyes in his face with which he sees the matter of the world, and two eyes in his heart with which he sees the matter of the Hereafter; so when Allah wills good for a servant, He opens his two eyes that are in his heart, and he sees with them of pleasure and bliss what has no equal, of what was promised by the One whose word is the most truthful; and when He wills otherwise for him, He leaves him as he is. Then he recited: ﴿أَمْ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَآ﴾ "or are there locks upon [their] hearts?" [Muhammad 47:24] And were there no punishment for the heart occupied with love of other than Allah, turning away from His remembrance, except its rust, its hardness, and its idleness from what it was created for, that would suffice as a punishment. 249

And a man said to al-Hasan: O Abu Sa'id, I complain to you of the hardness of my heart! He said: Melt it with remembrance.[15] 250

And the farthest of hearts from Allah is the hard heart, and its hardness is removed only by a disturbing love or an alarming fear.

If it is said: What is the cause for which the lover takes pleasure in his love, even if he does not gain his beloved?

It is said: Love brings about movement of the soul and the intensity of its seeking, and the soul was created moving by nature, like the movement

14 Khalid ibn Ma'dan, the Syrian Successor; the saying is in al-Khara'iti, *I'tilal al-Qulub*.

15 Al-Khara'iti, *I'tilal al-Qulub* (p. 55), and Ibn al-Jawzi, *Dhamm al-Hawa* (p. 69).

of fire; so love is its natural movement; so everyone who loves any thing finds in his love a pleasure and a relief, and if he is entirely empty of love, the soul is idle from its movement, grows heavy and slothful, and the lightness of vigour leaves it.

For this you find the slothful the most of people in worry, grief and sadness, with no gladness and no joy for them, unlike those of vigour and earnestness in work, whatever work it be; and if the vigour is in a work whose good outcomes and sweetness of end they know, their pleasure in loving it and their vigour in it is stronger. And with Allah is success.

◆ *The case of those who praised it* ◆

This is a place in which people were divided into two parties, and perhaps a single person had in it both states together. One party praised passionate love, wished for it, desired it, and claimed that whoever has not tasted its flavour has not tasted the flavour of life. They said: It has been made clear that the completeness of pleasure follows the completeness of love, so the one who takes the greatest pleasure in a thing is the one who loves it most, and its establishment has come before. 251

From Aishah رضي الله عنها, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to divide his time among his wives, and he was just, and he would say: "O Allah, this is my doing in what I possess, so do not blame me in what You possess and I do not possess."[16] He means ﷺ that he is able to be just among them in spending upon them and in dividing his time among them; but as for making them equal in love, it is not in his hands, and he does not possess it. 253

They said: And lawful passionate love is among the things for which passionate lovers are rewarded, as Shurayk ibn Abd Allah[17] said when he was asked about passionate lovers: The most intense of them in love is the greatest of them in reward. And, by Allah, he spoke the truth, when the beloved is one of those whose nearness and union Allah loves for the passionate lover. 257

16 Neither al-Bukhari nor Muslim narrates it. It is in Ahmad (6/144), Abu Dawud (2134), al-Tirmidhi (1140), al-Nasa'i (7/64) and Ibn Majah (1971).

17 Shurayk ibn Abd Allah al-Nakha'i (d. 177 AH), judge of Kufa.

◆ *A report they cited, and the author's verdict on it* ◆

This party said: And the utmost that can be supposed in the matter of passionate love is that it kills its owner, as is known of a group of passionate lovers. ... from Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنهما, from the Prophet ﷺ, that he said: "Whoever falls in passionate love and conceals it, and is chaste, and is patient, and dies, he is a martyr."[18] 266

I say: And this hadith is false against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, certainly; it does not resemble his speech. It is authentically reported from him that he counted the martyrs as six, and did not mention among them one killed by passionate love. And it is not possible that everyone killed by passionate love be a martyr, for a person may fall into a passionate love for which he deserves punishment. The preservers of Islam rejected this hadith from Suwayd, and people have spoken about him. ... And al-Bayhaqi rejected it, and Abu al-Fadl ibn Tahir, and Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi, who put it in his book *al-Mawdu'at* (The Fabricated Reports).[19] 269

18 Through Suwayd ibn Sa'id al-Hadathani; the Arabic editor says the imams agree that the hadith is weak. The author's verdict on it follows.

19 The Arabic editor did not find it in *al-Mawdu'at*. Ibn al-Jawzi gives it in *al-Ilal al-Mutanahiyah* (2/285–286) and says it is not sound from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

◆ *The case of those who censured it* ◆

They said: And when the servant plunges into the sea of passionate love and its waves play with him, he is nearer to destruction than to safety ... 272

They said: And how many a passionate lover has wasted on his beloved his wealth, his honour, and his soul, and has neglected his family and the interests of his religion and his worldly life! 274

They said: And how many heads the fitnah of passionate love has overturned on their noses into the Hellfire, and delivered them to the suffering of painful torment, and made them drink, between the layers of the Fire, cups of boiling water; and how many it has taken out of knowledge and religion, whomever Allah willed, as a hair is drawn out of dough; and how many a blessing it has removed, and how much retribution it has brought down; and how many a mighty man it has brought down from the fortress of his might, so that he is abased among the abased; and how many a noble of high rank and station it has put down, so that he is in the lowest of the low; and how many a private part it has uncovered, and how much alarm it has produced, and followed with pain, and replaced with remorse; and how much it has kindled of the fire of regrets in which the livers were burned, and taken away a standing that the servant had with Allah and in the hearts of the servants; and how much it has brought of the extremity of affliction, the arrival of wretchedness, the evil of decree, and the gloating of enemies. Rarely is it parted from the removal of a blessing, or a sudden retribution, or a change of well-being, or the coming of a trial, or the occurrence of a calamity. 282

◆ *Desire in Surat al-A'raf* ◆

This, by Allah, is some of the offences of passionate love against its owners, if they would use reason, ﴿فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوٓاْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَءَايَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ "So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done. Indeed in that is a sign for people who know." [al-Naml 27:52] And enough for the intelligent as admonition and insight is what Allah سبحانه وتعالى related to him in Surat al-A'raf concerning the people of blameworthy desire, as a warning and a lesson. So He began سبحانه وتعالى with the desire of Iblis, which carried him to arrogance against obedience to Allah عز وجل in His command to prostrate to Adam: the desire of his self and his self-admiration carried him to disobey His command and to be arrogant against obeying Him, and there came of his affair what came. Then He mentioned سبحانه the desire of Adam when he desired eternity in Paradise, and his desire carried him to eat from the tree that he had been forbidden; and what carried him to that was the desire of the self and its love of eternity; so the outcome of that desire and appetite was his expulsion from it to the abode of weariness and toil. 283

Then He mentioned سبحانه وتعالى the story of the people of Nuh, and what desire brought them to of drowning in this world and entering the Fire in the next. 284

Then the story of the people of Salih likewise; then the story of the passionate lovers, the imams of the dissolute, who marry males and leave women, and how He seized them while they were playing in their plunging, and cut off their last remnant while they, in the intoxication of their passionate love, wandered blindly; and how He gathered upon them such punishments as He did not gather upon any of the nations altogether ...

This is the outcome of the sodomites, the passionate lovers of forms; they are the predecessors, and their brothers after them follow in their track. 287

And likewise the people of Fir'awn: desire, appetite, and passionate love of leadership carried them to deny Musa, until their affair came to what it came to. And likewise the people of the Sabbath, who were transformed into apes: they were approached only from the side of love of fish, desire to eat them, and eagerness for them. 288

And the point is: that this surah, from its beginning to its end, is on the state of the people of desire and appetites, and what their affair came to; so passionate love and desire are the origin of every affliction. 289

Usamah ibn Zayd رضي الله عنهما, who said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I have left nothing behind me, upon my nation, more harmful to men than women."[20] 292

They said: And enough of the harm of passionate love is what is well known of the deaths of the passionate lovers, and that exists in every age. 293

This is some of what this party argued for its position. And we shall set aside an independent chapter for judging between the two groups, with the help of Allah تعالى.

20 Al-Bukhari (5096) and Muslim (2740).

◆ *The judgement between the two parties* ◆

So we say: Passionate love is not praised absolutely, and it is not censured absolutely; it is praised or censured only in consideration of what it attaches to. For will follows what is willed, and love follows the beloved; so when the beloved is among what is loved for its own sake, or a means that conveys to what is loved for its own sake, going to the limit in loving it is not censured, but is praised, and the soundness of the lover's state in that is according to the strength of his love. 294

For this reason, the greatest soundness of the servant is that he direct all the powers of his love to Allah تعالى alone, so that he loves Allah with all his heart, his spirit, and his limbs; so he singles out his beloved, and singles out his love. And it will come - if Allah تعالى wills - in the chapter on the singling out of the beloved, that love is not sound except by that. So the singling out of the beloved is that his beloved not be multiple, and the singling out of love is that no remainder of love be left in his heart until he has spent it on Him. This love, even if it is called passionate love, is the utmost of the servant's soundness, his bliss, and the delight of his eye.

And there is no soundness for his heart, and no bliss, except that Allah and His Messenger be more beloved to him than anything besides them, and that his love for other than Allah follow his love for Allah, so that he loves only Allah, as in the sound hadith: "Three things, whoever has them will find the sweetness of faith: that Allah and His Messenger be more beloved to him than anything besides them; that he love a person, loving him only for Allah; and that he hate to return to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it, as he hates to be thrown into the Fire."[21]

So he informed that the servant does not find the sweetness of faith unless Allah is more beloved to him than anything besides Him; and love of His Messenger is part of love of Him; and a person's love for a person, if it is for Allah, is part of love of Allah, and if it is for other than Allah, it is a diminishing of love of Allah, weakening it. And this love is verified by his hatred of the most hated of things to his beloved - which is disbelief - being like his hatred of being thrown into the Fire, or stronger. 295

21 Al-Bukhari (16, 21) and Muslim (43), from Anas.

◆ *The love of Allah and the love of creatures* ◆

And there is no doubt that this is among the greatest love, for a person puts nothing before love of himself and his life; so when he puts love of faith in Allah before himself, such that if he were given a choice between disbelief and being thrown into the Fire he would choose to be thrown into the Fire and not disbelieve, then Allah is more beloved to him than himself. And this love is above what all passionate lovers and lovers find of love of their beloved; indeed there is no like of this love, just as there is no likeness of the One to whom it is attached. It is a love that requires putting the beloved in it before self, wealth, and child, and requires complete abasement, submission, veneration, exaltation, obedience, and compliance, outwardly and inwardly; and this has no like in the love of a creature, whoever the creature may be.

For this reason, whoever associates Allah and another in this special love is a polytheist, with a shirk that Allah does not forgive, as Allah تعالى said: ﴿وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ أَندَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ ٱللَّهِ وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ﴾ "And [yet], among the people are those who take other than Allāh as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love Allāh. But those who believe are stronger in love for Allāh." [al-Baqarah 2:165] And the sound view is that the meaning of the verse is: that those who believe are stronger in love of Allah than the people of the equals are in love of their equals, as was explained earlier: that the believers' love for their Lord is matched by no love of any creature at all, just as nothing else matches their Beloved; and every harm in the love of another is bliss in love of Him, and every disliked thing in the love of another is a delight of the eye in love of Him. 296

And whoever draws, for His love, the similitudes that belong to a creature's love for a creature, such as union, abandonment, and wronging without cause from the lover, and the like of that, which Allah تعالى is exalted above with great exaltation, is mistaken with the ugliest and most shameful mistake, and deserves to be driven away and loathed. The affliction is only from his own self and his lack of manners with his Beloved; and Allah تعالى forbade His servants to draw likenesses for Him, for He is not compared to His creation.

◆ *Praised passionate love and its kinds* ◆

And passionate love, when it attaches to what Allah and His Messenger love, is praised passionate love, for which one is rewarded, and it is of kinds:

The first of them: love of the Qur'an, such that listening to it makes one need no listening to anything else, and his heart wanders in its meanings and in what the Speaker سبحانه intends by it. And according to the measure of love of Allah is love of His speech; for whoever loves a beloved loves his talk and talk about him, as was said:[22] 297

إن كنت تزعم حبي ◆ فلم هجرت كتابي؟

If you claim to love me, why
have you passed my book by?

If you claim to love me ◆ why have you abandoned my book?

أما تأملت ما فيه ◆ من لذيذ خطابي؟!

Have you not pondered the delight
of my address in what I write?!

Have you not pondered what is in it ◆ of my delightful address?!

And likewise love of His remembrance سبحانه وتعالى is among the signs of love of Him, for the lover is never sated with the mention of his beloved; rather he does not forget him, so that he needs someone to remind him of him. Likewise one who loves to hear His attributes, His acts, and His rulings; so passionate love of all this is among the most beneficial passionate love, and it is the utmost happiness of the passionate lover. Likewise passionate love of beneficial knowledge, and passionate love of the attributes of perfection: generosity, liberality, chastity, courage, patience, and noble character. For these attributes, if they were given forms, would be among the most beautiful and most radiant of forms; and if knowledge were given a form, it would be more beautiful than the form of the sun and the moon. But passionate love of these attributes suits only noble, pure souls, just as love of Allah, His Messenger, His speech, and His religion suits only the lofty, heavenly, pure spirits, not the earthly, base spirits. So if you

22 The two verses are in Ibn al-Qayyim's own *al-Jawab al-Kafi* (p. 224).

wish to know the worth and measure of a servant, look at his beloved and what he wills, and know that praised passionate love is not affected by any of the afflictions mentioned.

◆ *When the beloved is lost* ◆

Here remains another category, which is praised passionate love, but which results in separation from the beloved, like one who is in passionate love with his wife or his slave woman, and separates from her by death or otherwise; so the beloved goes, and passionate love remains as it was. This is a kind of trial: if its owner is patient and seeks reward from Allah, he obtains the reward of the patient; and if he is angry and impatient, he loses both his beloved and his reward; and if he meets this affliction with contentment and submission, his rank is above the rank of patience. And higher than that is that he meets it with gratitude, looking to Allah's good choice for him; for Allah decrees nothing for the believer but it is good for him. So when he knows that this decree is good for him, that requires his thanking Allah for that good which He decreed for him; and if he does not know it to be good for him, then let him submit to the Truthful, the Believed, in his report, confirmed by an oath, where he says: "By the One in whose hand is my soul, Allah decrees nothing for the believer but it is good for him: if prosperity befalls him, he is grateful, and it is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he is patient, and it is good for him; and that is for no one but the believer."[23] 298

And the servant's faith in His command is that he believe that this decree is good for him, and that requires thanks to the One who decreed and ordained it. And with Allah is success.

23 Muslim (2999), from Suhayb ibn Sinan.

Glossary

barzakh: the interval between death and the Resurrection.

fitnah: trial, temptation.

hadith: a report of the words or deeds of the Prophet ﷺ.

hasan: "good"; a grade of hadith just below sahih.

sahih: "sound"; the highest grade of hadith.

the Salaf: the early Muslims, the Companions and those who followed them.

Sharia: the revealed Law.

shirk: associating partners with Allah.

Sunnah: the way of the Prophet ﷺ, his words and practice.



This booklet is a selection, in Ibn al-Qayyim's own words, from the complete English translation of *Rawdat al-Muhibbin wa-Nuzhat al-Mushtaqin*. Omissions within a passage are shown by "…". The small numbers after the paragraphs give the page of the complete translation, where the full text, its sources and its notes may be found.

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