

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Story of Mughīth and Barīrah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا)

By Abū al-Ḥasan Mālik al-Akhḍar

WHEN THE COMPANION Barīrah *mawlāt* ‘A’ishah (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا) was freed from servitude, she was given the choice to remain with her husband Mughīth (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ), who was still in bondage, or to separate from him. She chose to separate. Afterward, the noble *Ṣaḥābī* ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا) reported that he saw Mughīth walking around behind Barīrah in the streets of al-Madīnah crying, the tears streaming into his beard, wetting his cheeks. He strove to convince her to return to him, but she refused.¹ The Prophet’s uncle ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ) then asked Allah’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) to speak to Barīrah on behalf of Mughīth. Witnessing this, the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said, “O ‘Abbās, are you not amazed at Mughīth’s love for Barīrah, and her dislike for him?” The Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) then went to Barīrah and said, “Will you take him back? For he is the father of your child.”²

“Are you commanding me to do so, O Messenger of Allah?” said Barīrah.

“I am merely interceding on his behalf,” he said.

“I have no need of him,” she said.³

This account of unrequited love during the time of Revelation contains profound lessons. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (رَحِمَهُ اللهُ) cites this narration as evidence that love is truly an affair of the heart. He states, “The Messenger of Allah did not prohibit [Mughīth] from loving [Barīrah] under these circumstances⁴, as this was something out of his control, and not a matter of choice.”⁵ This is the reason he did not admonish him for expressing the pain of losing his beloved wife.

Yet, this astonished the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), as seen in the statement to his uncle: “O ‘Abbās, are you not amazed at Mughīth’s love for Barīrah, and her dislike for him?” Regarding this, the author of *Mirqāh al-Mafātīḥ* explains that his amazement was due to “[Mughīth’s] great love for her,” because “in most cases, the one who loves is loved in return.”⁶ Similarly, al-Sindī mentions that this contradicts the norm, as love is oft-times mutual.⁷

¹ Ibn Ḥajr, Aḥmad, *Fath al-Bārī* vol. 9 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma’rifah, 1379 AH), 409.

² See *Sunan Ibn Majah* (no. 2075); this narration is authenticated by *Imām* al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Majah* (no. 1688).

³ See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (no. 4979)

⁴ Ibn Qayyim states, “If this love is the result of what is permissible, then the person is not blameworthy, like the one who loves his wife or *jāriyah* then separates from her, but love for her remains; he is not chided for this, as has preceded in the story of Barīrah and Mughīth.” See *Rawḍah al-Muḥibbīn* (p. 147).

⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim, Muḥammad, *Rawḍah al-Muḥibbīn* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1403 AH), 143.

⁶ Al-Qārī, ‘Alī, *Mirqāh al-Mafātīḥ* vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1422 AH), 2096.

⁷ ‘Abd al-Hādī, Muḥammad *Ḥāshiyah al-Sindī* vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr), 640.

In addition, we see the Prophet's (ﷺ) concern for his Companions, interceding on behalf of Mughīth. Ibn al-Qayyim states:

This intercession is from the leader of those who intercede, on behalf of one who was in love; and this is from the best kinds of intercession and the greatest in reward with Allah, for it includes joining two people together upon what Allah and His Messenger love. Consequently, what is most beloved to Iblīs and his troops is to separate between these two loved ones.⁸

The last statement of Ibn al-Qayyim alludes to the narration collected by *Imām* Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in which Iblīs, whose throne is over the waters, deploys his troops among mankind, bringing the one who creates the most dissension nearest to him. The first of them returns and says, “I did not leave so-and-so until he said such and such,” but Iblīs says to him, “You have not done a thing.” Then another returns and says, “I did not leave him until I was able to separate him from his wife.” So Iblīs brings him close to him and says, “You are the best.”⁹ So, just as the one who strives to separate two loving spouses treads a Satanic path, the one who intercedes on their behalf, to strengthen their bond and increase their love, is from the best of those who intercede. Moreover, the one who intervenes should point to what he or she thinks will be most persuasive, as the Messenger of Allah said to Barīrah, “Will you take him back? For he is the father of your child.”

Finally, this narration exemplifies the devoutness of the Companions and their readiness to hear and obey. For when the Prophet (ﷺ) asked Barīrah if she would take back Mughīth, she immediately asked if this was a command. Once she learned that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was only interceding and that the choice was hers, she declined; so firm in her decision, she states, as found in another wording, she would not stay with him “even if he was to give me such and such.”¹⁰

The story of Mughīth and Barīrah is a moving account of love-lost; one that exemplifies the Prophet's (ﷺ) great care and compassion. He did not rebuke his Companion for displaying his pain; instead, he attempted to intercede on his behalf. And although Barīrah had no desire to return to her former husband, she demonstrated devout obedience to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ). Hence, this story teaches us sympathy for the feelings of others, as well as readiness to hear and obey our Lord's Command.



⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim, Muḥammad, *Rawḍah al-Muḥibbīn* (Beirut: *Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah*, 1403 AH), 377.

⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (no. 2813)

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥajr, Aḥmad, *Fath al-Bārī* vol. 9 (Beirut: *Dar al-Ma‘rifah*, 1379 AH), 409.