Exploring Al-Qur'an & Science

Layers of Darkness in the Ocean's Depths

Waves Beneath Waves, Light at the End of Darkness



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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LAYERS OF DARKNESS IN THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS

Waves Beneath Waves, Light at the End of Darkness

أَوْ كَظُلُمَٰتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَىٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ سَحَابٌ ۚ ظُلُمَٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ

"Or [they are] like darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds — darknesses, some of them upon others…"

SURAH AN-NUR 24:40

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise belongs to Allah, the Light of the heavens and the earth, who brings the believers out of darknesses into the light, and who heard the call of Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ from within darknesses layered upon one another. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who prayed that light be placed in his heart, before him and behind him, above him and below him, and upon his family and Companions.

This eBook is dedicated especially to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

Whenever we find ourselves in darkness — the darkness of night, of trial or of sin — may we remember the supplication of Prophet Yunus: ***"Lā ilāha illā anta, subhānaka, innī kuntu minaz-zālimīn"*** — and may this eBook become *'ilmun yuntafa'u bih*, knowledge that is benefited from.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS EBOOK

The cover of this eBook shows ***a cross-section of a deep ocean***. At the top, ***dark, heavy clouds*** gather over a rough sea surface with ***surface waves***. Beneath the surface, sunlight still pierces the turquoise water.

Further down, the water grows ***darker and darker*** — deep blue, indigo, and finally pitch black. Between the layers of water, ***great curved waves beneath the surface*** can be seen — an image of internal waves. In the darkest depths, a few ***glowing sea creatures*** shine like tiny lanterns. The image symbolises Allah's words: ***"like darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds"*** (24:40).

Note: This image is ***a symbolic illustration*** only, not an actual oceanographic image.

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Colour guide: green box = verse of Al-Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; blue box = scientific finding; blue table = comparison. Narrator names underlined in blue can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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LAYERS OF DARKNESS IN THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS

Have you ever closed your eyes in a pitch-dark room, raised your hand in front of your face — and seen nothing? Al-Qur'an describes a darkness far deeper than that: the darkness ***of a deep sea***, covered by ***waves***, upon which are ***more waves***, over which are ***thick clouds — zulumātun ba'dhuhā fauqa ba'dh***, "darknesses, some of them upon others". In that darkness, ***"when one puts out his hand, he can hardly see it"*** (24:40).

This verse lies in Surah An-Nur, just five verses after the famous ***Verse of Light*** (24:35): ***"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth… Light upon light."*** Al-Qur'an places two opposite images side by side: ***layered light*** for the believer, and ***layered darkness*** for the one to whom Allah has not granted light.

Modern science has found that the ocean is indeed ***dark in layers***: the colours of light vanish one by one with depth, until below about 1,000 metres no sunlight remains at all. Oceanographers have also discovered ***internal waves*** — huge waves travelling beneath the surface, under the waves we see. This eBook explores the verses, authentic Hadith and scientific findings about the darkness of the ocean — honestly, distinguishing between solid harmony and forced interpretation.

THE OCEAN IN NUMBERS

Before exploring the verses of Al-Qur'an, here are a few brief facts that will be explained in this eBook, with their sources:

FACT	FIGURES AND SOURCE
Depth of light sufficient for photosynthesis	Only about ***200 metres***; faint light can be detected down to about ***1,000 metres*** (NOAA).
Deepest point in the ocean (Challenger Deep, Mariana Trench)	About ***10,925 metres*** (Stewart & Jamieson, 2019).
Height of internal waves in the South China Sea	Can exceed ***170 metres*** (Alford et al., 2015).
Sea animals able to produce their own light	About ***76%*** of the animals observed in the water column of Monterey Bay (Martini & Haddock, 2017).
Seafloor mapped in detail	Only about ***27%*** (Seabed 2030, 2025).
Fish biomass in the ocean's twilight zone	Possibly ***ten times*** higher than earlier estimates (Irigoien et al., 2014).

Note: The translation of Al-Qur'an verses in this eBook is Sahih International. The grade of each Hadith is stated in its Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com. Every scientific finding includes a link to its original source.

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THE PARABLE OF LAYERED DARKNESS

To understand verse 24:40, we need to read it in the context of Surah An-Nur. It is part of ***three parables***: light for the believer (24:35), a mirage for the deeds of the disbeliever (24:39), and the darkness of the sea for the state of the disbeliever (24:40).

SURAH AN-NUR 24:35

ٱللَّهُ نُورُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِۦ كَمِشۡكَوٰةٖ فِيهَا مِصۡبَاحٌۖ ٱلۡمِصۡبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍۖ ٱلزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوۡكَبٞ دُرِّيّٞ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٖ مُّبَٰرَكَةٖ زَيۡتُونَةٖ لَّا شَرۡقِيَّةٖ وَلَا غَرۡبِيَّةٖ يَكَادُ زَيۡتُهَا يُضِيٓءُ وَلَوۡ لَمۡ تَمۡسَسۡهُ نَارٞۚ نُّورٌ عَلَىٰ نُورٖۚ يَهۡدِي ٱللَّهُ لِنُورِهِۦ مَن يَشَآءُۚ وَيَضۡرِبُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلۡأَمۡثَٰلَ لِلنَّاسِۗ وَٱللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيۡءٍ عَلِيمُۢ ٣٥

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.

Translation: Sahih International — 24:35

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 24:35 — LIGHT UPON LIGHT

Ibn Kathir explains that the parable in this verse is ***the light of faith in the heart of the believer***: his heart is like clear glass, lit by the oil of natural disposition (fitrah) and revelation, until it becomes ***nūrun ʻalā nūr*** — light upon light. Ubayy bin Kaʻb رضى الله عنه said: the believer moves within five lights — his speech is light, his deeds are light, his entrance is light, his exit is light, and his destination on the Day of Resurrection is light. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 24:35

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SURAH AN-NUR 24:39–40

وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓاْ أَعۡمَٰلُهُمۡ كَسَرَابِۭ بِقِيعَةٖ يَحۡسَبُهُ ٱلظَّمۡـَٔانُ مَآءً حَتَّىٰٓ إِذَا جَآءَهُۥ لَمۡ يَجِدۡهُ شَيۡـٔٗا وَوَجَدَ ٱللَّهَ عِندَهُۥ فَوَفَّىٰهُ حِسَابَهُۥۗ وَٱللَّهُ سَرِيعُ ٱلۡحِسَابِ ٣٩

But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.

أَوۡ كَظُلُمَٰتٖ فِي بَحۡرٖ لُّجِّيّٖ يَغۡشَىٰهُ مَوۡجٞ مِّن فَوۡقِهِۦ مَوۡجٞ مِّن فَوۡقِهِۦ سَحَابٞۚ ظُلُمَٰتُۢ بَعۡضُهَا فَوۡقَ بَعۡضٍ إِذَآ أَخۡرَجَ يَدَهُۥ لَمۡ يَكَدۡ يَرَىٰهَاۗ وَمَن لَّمۡ يَجۡعَلِ ٱللَّهُ لَهُۥ نُورٗا فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن نُّورٍ ٤٠

Or [they are] like darknesses within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds - darknesses, some of them upon others. When one puts out his hand [therein], he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light.

Translation: Sahih International — 24:39-40

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 24:39 — THE MIRAGE

Verse 24:39 depicts the disbeliever who ***thinks his deeds are worth something***, like a thirsty man who sees a mirage in the desert. When he reaches it he finds nothing — except Allah's reckoning awaiting him. Ibn Kathir explains that this parable is for the one who is ***ignorant yet thinks himself knowledgeable*** (compound ignorance).

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 24:40 — DARKNESSES UPON DARKNESSES

Verse 24:40 depicts a person in ***complete ignorance*** — he does not know, and does not know that he does not know. His state is like one within ***bahrin lujjiyy*** — a deep, vast sea whose bottom cannot be reached. Ibn Kathir explains:

- ***Yaghshāhu mauj*** — the sea is covered by waves;
- ***min fauqihi mauj*** — above those waves are more waves;
- ***min fauqihi sahāb*** — and above them are clouds;
- ***zulumātun ba'dhuhā fauqa ba'dh*** — darknesses, some of them upon others;
- ***idhā akhraja yadahu lam yakad yarāhā*** — when he puts out his hand, he can hardly see it.

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Ubayy bin Ka'b رضى الله عنه said: the disbeliever ***moves within five darknesses*** — his speech is darkness, his deeds are darkness, his entrance is darkness, his exit is darkness, and his destination on the Day of Resurrection is darkness, namely the Fire. The verse closes with a crucial statement: ***"And he to whom Allah has not granted light — for him there is no light."*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 24:40

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A NOTE ON LANGUAGE — LUJJIYY AND ẒULUMĀT

The word ***lujjiyy*** comes from *lujjah*, the ***deepest and widest*** part of the sea, whose bottom cannot be seen. Al-Qurtubi explains that *bahr lujjiyy* is a sea of abundant, deep water. This differs from the shallow sea near the shore, which is still lit by sunlight. Tafsir al-Qurtubi 24:40

The word ***zulumāt*** is the plural of *zulmah* (darkness). Al-Qur'an almost always mentions ***darkness in the plural*** (*zulumāt*) but ***light in the singular*** (*nūr*) — as in 2:257, 6:1 and 57:9. Scholars point out that ***the path of truth is one***, while the paths of misguidance are many and branching.

REFLECTION — WHY THE SEA?

Al-Qur'an was revealed to an Arab society, most of whom lived in the desert. The parable of the mirage (24:39) was very close to their experience. Yet the second parable takes the image of ***a deep sea***, with waves upon waves and clouds above — an image that requires us to picture ***layer upon layer of darkness***. The science chapter will show that the ocean is indeed dark in layers, and that there are waves moving beneath waves.

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THE DARKNESSES OF LAND AND SEA

Al-Qur'an mentions ***"the darknesses of the land and sea"*** (*zulumāt al-barri wal-bahr*) as states that awaken people to their weakness and to Allah's knowledge, which encompasses everything.

SURAH AL-AN'AM 6:59

۞ وَعِندَهُۥ مَفَاتِحُ ٱلْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ ۚ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِن وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِى ظُلُمَٰتِ ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِى كِتَٰبٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾

And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record.

Translation: Sahih International — 6:59

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 6:59

Allah holds ***the keys of the unseen*** and knows ***what is on the land and in the sea***. Not a leaf falls, and no grain lies ***within the darknesses of the earth***, except that He knows it. Ibn Kathir explains that Allah's knowledge encompasses all creatures — small and great, visible and hidden. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 6:59

Today, humanity has mapped only about ***27%*** of the seafloor in detail. Most of the ocean floor has never been seen by human eyes — yet ***nothing of it is hidden from Allah***.

SURAH AL-AN'AM 6:63–64

قُلْ مَن يُنَجِّيكُم مِّن ظُلُمَٰتِ ٱلْبَرِّ وَٱلْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُۥ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً لَّئِنْ أَنجَىٰنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِۦ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلشَّٰكِرِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

Say, "Who rescues you from the darknesses of the land and sea [when] you call upon Him imploring [aloud] and privately, 'If He should save us from this [crisis], we will surely be among the thankful.'"

قُلِ ٱللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُم مِّنْهَا وَمِن كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "It is Allah who saves you from it and from every distress; then you [still] associate others with Him."

Translation: Sahih International — 6:63-64

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COMMENTARY ON VERSES 6:63–64

Ibn Kathir explains that ***"the darknesses of the land and sea"*** refers to the state of people ***lost in the desert*** and people ***caught in a storm at sea***. In such situations, people — even idolaters — call upon Allah alone ***sincerely***, and promise to be grateful. Yet once they are saved, they return to associating partners with Him. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 6:63

REFLECTION — DARKNESS THAT UNCOVERS THE FITRAH

The darkness of the sea strips away all human arrogance. In the midst of a storm, no position, wealth or power can help — all that remains is ***the fitrah that calls upon Allah***. These verses invite us to ***remember Allah in times of ease*** just as we remember Him in times of hardship.

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A SUPPLICATION FROM WITHIN THREE DARKNESSES

The story of Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ — known as ***Dhun-Nūn*** (the man of the fish) — is the clearest example of a person within layered darkness at sea, who was saved by supplication.

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:87–88

وَذَا ٱلنُّونِ إِذ ذَّهَبَ مُغَٰضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَن لَّن نَّقۡدِرَ عَلَيۡهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ
أَن لَّآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّآ أَنتَ سُبۡحَٰنَكَ إِنِّي كُنتُ مِنَ ٱلظَّٰلِمِينَ ٨٧

And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him. And he called out within the darknesses, "There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers."

فَٱسۡتَجَبۡنَا لَهُۥ وَنَجَّيۡنَٰهُ مِنَ ٱلۡغَمِّۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُنجِي ٱلۡمُؤۡمِنِينَ ٨٨

So We responded to him and saved him from the distress. And thus do We save the believers.

Translation: Sahih International — 21:87-88

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 21:87–88

Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ called out ***"fiz-zulumāt"*** — within the darknesses. Ibn Kathir reports from ***Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas*** and others that these were ***three darknesses***: the darkness of the fish's belly, the darkness of the sea, and the darkness of the night. In that darkness he prayed: ***"Lā ilāha illā anta, subhānaka, innī kuntu minaz-zālimīn."*** Allah answered his prayer and promised: ***"And thus do We save the believers."*** Tafsir Ibn Kathir 21:87

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SURAH AS-SAFFAT 37:139–146

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ ٱلْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers.

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى ٱلْفُلْكِ ٱلْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾

[Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship.

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

And he drew lots and was among the losers.

فَٱلْتَقَمَهُ ٱلْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy.

فَلَوْلَآ أَنَّهُۥ كَانَ مِنَ ٱلْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

And had he not been of those who exalt Allah.

لَلَبِثَ فِى بَطْنِهِۦٓ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected.

۞ فَنَبَذْنَٰهُ بِٱلْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill.

وَأَنۢبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّن يَقْطِينٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾

And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine.

Translation: Sahih International — 37:139-146

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 37:139–146

These verses detail the story of Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: he boarded ***a laden ship***, lots were drawn and he was cast into the sea, and then he was ***swallowed by a great fish***. Verses 37:143–144 state that ***had he not been among those who exalt Allah***, he would have remained in the fish's belly until the Day of Resurrection. Finally he was cast onto the shore while ill, and Allah caused a gourd vine to grow over him to shelter him. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 37:143

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REFLECTION — REMEMBRANCE BEFORE THE DARKNESS

Verse 37:143 carries a subtle lesson: Prophet Yunus was saved because he ***was already accustomed to glorifying Allah before the calamity struck***. Ibn Kathir reports from some of the early generations — among them al-Dahhak, Abu al-'Aliyah and Qatadah — that this refers to the righteous deeds he had done ***in times of ease***. So the provision for facing tomorrow's darkness is ***today's remembrance and worship***.

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FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

The theme of darkness and light recurs throughout Al-Qur'an. Verse 24:40 describes darkness; the following verses show ***the way out*** of it.

SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:257

ٱللَّهُ وَلِيُّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ ۖ وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا۟
أَوْلِيَآؤُهُمُ ٱلطَّٰغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ ٱلنُّورِ إِلَى ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ ۗ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلنَّارِ ۖ
هُمْ فِيهَا خَٰلِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darknesses. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.

Translation: Sahih International — 2:257

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 2:257

Allah is the ***Wali*** (Ally and Protector) of the believers; He ***brings them out from darknesses into the light***. Ibn Kathir explains that *zulumāt* (plural) are the darknesses of disbelief and doubt, while *nūr* (singular) is the one light of truth. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 2:257

SURAH AL-AN'AM 6:122

أَوَمَن كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُۥ نُورًا يَمْشِى بِهِۦ فِى ٱلنَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُۥ
فِى ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَٰفِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing.

Translation: Sahih International — 6:122

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 6:122

This verse compares two people: one whose ***heart was dead and was brought to life with the light of faith***, so that he walks by that light among the people, and another who ***remains in darkness, never to emerge from it***. Ibn Kathir explains that this light is ***Al-Qur'an and Islam***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 6:122

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SURAH AL-HADID 57:9

هُوَ ٱلَّذِى يُنَزِّلُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِۦٓ ءَايَٰتٍۭ بَيِّنَٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ إِلَى ٱلنُّورِ ۚ وَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾

It is He who sends down upon His Servant [Muhammad] verses of clear evidence that He may bring you out from darknesses into the light. And indeed, Allah is to you Kind and Merciful.

Translation: Sahih International — 57:9

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 57:9

Allah sends down ***verses of clear evidence*** upon Prophet Muhammad ﷺ ***to bring people out from darknesses into the light***. This verse explains the ***means*** of leaving darkness: ***Al-Qur'an*** itself. It closes with two attributes of Allah: ***ar-Ra'ūf ar-Rahīm*** — Kind and Merciful.

REFLECTION — THE HAND THAT CANNOT BE SEEN

In the darkness of 24:40, a person ***cannot see his own hand***. This is a profound image: in the darkness of disbelief, a person ***cannot even see himself*** — unaware of his sins, his weaknesses and the direction of his life. The light of Al-Qur'an not only illuminates the road ahead; it also ***illuminates our own selves***.

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THE OCEAN: A BLESSING AND A SIGN

The darkness of the ocean is not the only image of the sea in Al-Qur'an. The sea is also mentioned as ***a blessing made subservient*** to humanity, and as ***a measure*** to describe the vastness of Allah's knowledge.

SURAH AN-NAHL 16:14

وَهُوَ ٱلَّذِى سَخَّرَ ٱلْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا۟ مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا۟ مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ۖ وَتَرَى ٱلْفُلْكَ مَوَاخِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا۟ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships plowing through it, and [He subjected it] that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — 16:14

SURAH FATIR 35:12

وَمَا يَسْتَوِى ٱلْبَحْرَانِ هَٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَآئِغٌ شَرَابُهُۥ وَهَٰذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ ۖ وَمِن كُلٍّ تَأْكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ۖ وَتَرَى ٱلْفُلْكَ فِيهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوا۟ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

And not alike are the two bodies of water. One is fresh and sweet, palatable for drinking, and one is salty and bitter. And from each you eat tender meat and extract ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships plowing through [them] that you might seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.

Translation: Sahih International — 35:12

COMMENTARY ON VERSES 16:14 AND 35:12

Allah ***subjected the sea*** so that people may eat ***tender meat*** (fish), extract ***ornaments*** (pearls and coral), and ***sail*** in search of provision. Verse 35:12 mentions two kinds of water — fresh and salty — each with its own benefits. Both verses close with the call: ***"and perhaps you will be grateful."*** (On the two seas that do not mix, see the eBook ***"Two Seas That Do Not Mix"***.)

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SURAH LUQMAN 31:27

وَلَوْ أَنَّمَا فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ مِن شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَٰمٌ وَٱلْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُۥ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِۦ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ
مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَٰتُ ٱللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

Translation: Sahih International — 31:27

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 31:27

If all the trees on earth were pens, and ***the sea were ink***, replenished by seven more seas, ***the words of Allah would not be exhausted***. The ocean, so vast and deep — covering about 71% of the earth's surface — is made a parable for something that ***remains limited*** when compared with Allah's knowledge and wisdom. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 31:27

REFLECTION — BETWEEN FEAR AND GRATITUDE

Al-Qur'an presents two faces of the ocean: ***a frightening darkness*** (24:40; 6:63) and ***an abundant blessing*** (16:14; 35:12). Both serve the same purpose: to bring people to Allah — whether through ***fear*** or through ***gratitude***.

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EVIDENCE FROM THE HADITH

This chapter presents ***nine Hadith*** related to light, darkness and the sea. Each Hadith is shown in full with its Arabic text, a chain of narration linked to the narrators' pages on sunnah.com, a translation and its grade.

HADITH	THEME
Sahih al-Bukhari 6316	The supplication for light: "O Allah, place light in my heart…"
Jami' al-Tirmidhi 3505	The supplication of Prophet Yunus (Dhun-Nun) from the belly of the fish.
Sahih al-Bukhari 3413	"No servant should say: I am better than Yunus bin Matta."
Sahih al-Bukhari 2447	"Oppression will be darknesses on the Day of Resurrection."
Sahih Muslim 2577	Hadith Qudsi: Allah's treasures do not decrease except as a needle decreases the sea.
Sunan Abi Dawud 83	Sea water is pure and purifying; its dead creatures are lawful.
Sahih al-Bukhari 4362	The great fish al-'Anbar: provision Allah brought out of the sea.
Sahih al-Bukhari 2788	Believers sailing the middle of the sea "like kings on thrones".
Sahih Muslim 2858	This world compared to the Hereafter is like water on a finger dipped in the sea.

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FIRST HADITH — THE SUPPLICATION FOR LIGHT

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 6316

حَدَّثَنَا عَلِيُّ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ مَهْدِيٍّ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ، عَنْ سَلَمَةَ، عَنْ كُرَيْبٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ بِتُّ عِنْدَ مَيْمُونَةَ فَقَامَ النَّبِيُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَأَتَى حَاجَتَهُ، غَسَلَ وَجْهَهُ وَيَدَيْهِ، ثُمَّ نَامَ، ثُمَّ قَامَ فَأَتَى الْقِرْبَةَ فَأَطْلَقَ شِنَاقَهَا، ثُمَّ تَوَضَّأَ وُضُوءًا بَيْنَ وُضُوءَيْنِ لَمْ يُكْثِرْ، وَقَدْ أَبْلَغَ، فَصَلَّى، فَقُمْتُ فَتَمَطَّيْتُ كَرَاهِيَةَ أَنْ يَرَى أَنِّي كُنْتُ أَتَّقِيهِ، فَتَوَضَّأْتُ، فَقَامَ يُصَلِّي، فَقُمْتُ عَنْ يَسَارِهِ، فَأَخَذَ بِأُذُنِي فَأَدَارَنِي عَنْ يَمِينِهِ، فَتَتَامَّتْ صَلاَتُهُ ثَلاَثَ عَشْرَةَ رَكْعَةً ثُمَّ اضْطَجَعَ فَنَامَ حَتَّى نَفَخَ ـ وَكَانَ إِذَا نَامَ نَفَخَ ـ فَآذَنَهُ بِلاَلٌ بِالصَّلاَةِ، فَصَلَّى وَلَمْ يَتَوَضَّأْ، وَكَانَ يَقُولُ فِي دُعَائِهِ «اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي قَلْبِي نُورًا، وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا، وَفِي سَمْعِي نُورًا، وَعَنْ يَمِينِي نُورًا، وَعَنْ يَسَارِي نُورًا، وَفَوْقِي نُورًا، وَتَحْتِي نُورًا، وَأَمَامِي نُورًا، وَخَلْفِي نُورًا، وَاجْعَلْ لِي نُورًا». قَالَ كُرَيْبٌ وَسَبْعٌ فِي التَّابُوتِ. فَلَقِيتُ رَجُلاً مِنْ وَلَدِ الْعَبَّاسِ فَحَدَّثَنِي بِهِنَّ، فَذَكَرَ عَصَبِي وَلَحْمِي وَدَمِي وَشَعَرِي وَبَشَرِي، وَذَكَرَ خَصْلَتَيْنِ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn ʻAbbas رضى الله عنهما said: I spent the night at the house of Maimunah. The Prophet ﷺ got up, relieved himself, washed his face and hands, and then slept. Then he got up, went to the water skin, untied its mouth, and performed a moderate ablution — not using much water, yet complete — and then prayed. I got up and stretched, not wanting him to think I had been watching him, and performed ablution. He stood to pray, and I stood on his left. He took hold of my ear and moved me round to his right. His prayer was completed in thirteen rak'ahs. Then he lay down and slept until he breathed audibly — and when he slept he would breathe audibly. Then Bilal informed him of the prayer, and he prayed without performing ablution again.

And he used to say in his supplication: ***"Allāhumma ij'al fī qalbī nūrā, wa fī basarī nūrā, wa fī sam'ī nūrā, wa 'an yamīnī nūrā, wa 'an yasārī nūrā, wa fauqī nūrā, wa tahtī nūrā, wa amāmī nūrā, wa khalfī nūrā, waj'al lī nūrā"*** — O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my sight, light in my hearing, light on my right, light on my left, light above me, light below me, light in front of me, light behind me, and grant me light.

Kuraib said: And seven more (which I have forgotten) are in the "chest" (of memory). Then I met a man from the descendants of al-'Abbas, and he told them to me: my nerves, my flesh, my blood, my hair and my skin — and he mentioned two more things.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Ali bin 'Abdullah (al-Madini), from Ibn Mahdi, from Sufyan al-Thauri, from Salamah bin Kuhail, from Kuraib, from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Invocations, Chapter: The Supplication of One Who Wakes at Night, Hadith No. 6316.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6316

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: This supplication asks for light ***from six directions*** — above, below, right, left, front and behind — and ***within oneself***. It is the complete opposite of the image in 24:40, where darkness ***surrounds from every direction***: waves below, waves above, clouds over them.

Second: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited this supplication ***at night***, when darkness covers the earth.

Practising it after the night prayer or before leaving for the mosque for Fajr is a beautiful Sunnah.

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SECOND HADITH — THE SUPPLICATION OF YUNUS FROM THE BELLY OF THE FISH

HADITH — JAMI' AL-TIRMIDHI, NO. 3505

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى، حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، حَدَّثَنَا يُونُسُ بْنُ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ سَعْدٍ، قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «دَعْوَةُ ذِي النُّونِ إِذْ دَعَا وَهُوَ فِي بَطْنِ الْحُوتِ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ. فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يَدْعُ بِهَا رَجُلٌ مُسْلِمٌ فِي شَيْءٍ قَطُّ إِلاَّ اسْتَجَابَ اللَّهُ لَهُ». قَالَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَحْيَى قَالَ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ مَرَّةً عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ سَعْدٍ. قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى وَقَدْ رَوَى غَيْرُ وَاحِدٍ هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ عَنْ يُونُسَ بْنِ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ سَعْدٍ، وَلَمْ يَذْكُرُوا فِيهِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ. وَرَوَى بَعْضُهُمْ عَنْ يُونُسَ بْنِ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ، فَقَالُوا عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ سَعْدٍ، وَكَانَ يُونُسُ بْنُ أَبِي إِسْحَاقَ رُبَّمَا ذَكَرَ فِي هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ، وَرُبَّمَا لَمْ يَذْكُرْهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Sa'd (bin Abi Waqqas) رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"The supplication of Dhun-Nun (Prophet Yunus) when he called out from the belly of the fish was: 'Lā ilāha illā anta, subhānaka, innī kuntu minaz-zālimīn' (There is no deity except You; exalted are You; indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers). Indeed, no Muslim man ever supplicates with it for anything except that Allah answers him."***

Muhammad bin Yahya said: Muhammad bin Yusuf once narrated it from Ibrahim bin Muhammad bin Sa'd, from Sa'd (without mentioning "from his father"). Abu 'Isa (al-Tirmidhi) said: Many have narrated this Hadith from Yunus bin Abi Ishaq without mentioning "from his father", and some of them mention it; Yunus bin Abi Ishaq sometimes mentioned it and sometimes did not.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi: from Muhammad bin Yahya, from Muhammad bin Yusuf, from Yunus bin Abi Ishaq, from Ibrahim bin Muhammad bin Sa'd, from his father, Muhammad bin Sa'd, from Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Tirmidhi in Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Book of Supplications, Chapter: The Supplication of Dhun-Nun, Hadith No. 3505.

GRADE: SAHIH — graded sahih (Darussalam), as recorded on sunnah.com.

Source: https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:3505

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: This supplication contains three elements: ***tawhid*** (lā ilāha illā anta), ***glorification*** (subhānaka) and ***confession of sin*** (innī kuntu minaz-zālimīn). This is the "key" out of layered darkness.

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Second: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ promised that this supplication is ***answered for every Muslim*** who calls with it. It is fitting to recite in times of hardship, anxiety or deadlock.

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THIRD HADITH — DO NOT BELITTLE PROPHET YUNUS

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3413

حَدَّثَنَا حَفْصُ بْنُ عُمَرَ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي الْعَالِيَةِ، عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «مَا يَنْبَغِي لِعَبْدٍ أَنْ يَقُولَ إِنِّي خَيْرٌ مِنْ يُونُسَ بْنِ مَتَّى». وَنَسَبَهُ إِلَى أَبِيهِ.

TRANSLATION:

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"It is not fitting for any servant to say: 'I am better than Yunus bin Matta.'"*** And he attributed him to his father (Matta).

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Hafs bin 'Umar, from Shu'bah, from Qatadah, from Abu al-'Aliyah, from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Prophets, Chapter: The Statement of Allah: "And indeed, Yunus was among the messengers", Hadith No. 3413.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3413

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: Someone might think Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ was somehow "lesser" because he left in anger and was swallowed by a fish. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ ***closed the door on that thought***: no servant may claim to be better than a prophet.

Second: Trials and darkness are ***not a sign of disgrace***. Even a prophet was tested with layered darkness — and raised again because of his remembrance and repentance.

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FOURTH HADITH — OPPRESSION IS DARKNESS

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2447

حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ يُونُسَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الْعَزِيزِ الْمَاجِشُونُ، أَخْبَرَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ دِينَارٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عُمَرَ - رضى الله عنهما - عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ «الظُّلْمُ ظُلُمَاتٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah bin 'Umar رضى الله عنهما narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: ***"Oppression will be darknesses on the Day of Resurrection."***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Ahmad bin Yunus, from 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Majishun, from 'Abdullah bin Dinar, from 'Abdullah bin 'Umar رضى الله عنهما.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Oppressions, Chapter: Oppression Will Be Darkness on the Day of Resurrection, Hadith No. 2447.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2447

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: Note the plural form: ***zulumāt*** — "darknesses". Oppression does not produce one darkness, but ***darknesses layered upon one another***, just like the image of 24:40.

Second: This Hadith makes the darkness of verse 24:40 very ***practical***: every time we wrong others — by words, wealth or power — we add one more layer of darkness for ourselves on the Day of Resurrection.

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FIFTH HADITH — LIKE A NEEDLE DIPPED INTO THE SEA

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2577

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ بَهْرَامَ الدَّارِمِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا مَرْوَانُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ الدِّمَشْقِيَّ - حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ، عَنْ رَبِيعَةَ بْنِ يَزِيدَ، عَنْ أَبِي إِدْرِيسَ الْخَوْلَانِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي ذَرٍّ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فِيمَا رَوَى عَنِ اللَّهِ، تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَنَّهُ قَالَ «يَا عِبَادِي إِنِّي حَرَّمْتُ الظُّلْمَ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَجَعَلْتُهُ بَيْنَكُمْ مُحَرَّمًا فَلاَ تَظَالَمُوا يَا عِبَادِي كُلُّكُمْ ضَالٌّ إِلاَّ مَنْ هَدَيْتُهُ فَاسْتَهْدُونِي أَهْدِكُمْ يَا عِبَادِي كُلُّكُمْ جَائِعٌ إِلاَّ مَنْ أَطْعَمْتُهُ فَاسْتَطْعِمُونِي أُطْعِمْكُمْ يَا عِبَادِي كُلُّكُمْ عَارٍ إِلاَّ مَنْ كَسَوْتُهُ فَاسْتَكْسُونِي أَكْسُكُمْ يَا عِبَادِي إِنَّكُمْ تُخْطِئُونَ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَأَنَا أَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا فَاسْتَغْفِرُونِي أَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ يَا عِبَادِي إِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَبْلُغُوا ضُرِّي فَتَضُرُّونِي وَلَنْ تَبْلُغُوا نَفْعِي فَتَنْفَعُونِي يَا عِبَادِي لَوْ أَنَّ أَوَّلَكُمْ وَآخِرَكُمْ وَإِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ كَانُوا عَلَى أَتْقَى قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ مِنْكُمْ مَا زَادَ ذَلِكَ فِي مُلْكِي شَيْئًا يَا عِبَادِي لَوْ أَنَّ أَوَّلَكُمْ وَآخِرَكُمْ وَإِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ كَانُوا عَلَى أَفْجَرِ قَلْبِ رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ مَا نَقَصَ ذَلِكَ مِنْ مُلْكِي شَيْئًا يَا عِبَادِي لَوْ أَنَّ أَوَّلَكُمْ وَآخِرَكُمْ وَإِنْسَكُمْ وَجِنَّكُمْ قَامُوا فِي صَعِيدٍ وَاحِدٍ فَسَأَلُونِي فَأَعْطَيْتُ كُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ مَسْأَلَتَهُ مَا نَقَصَ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا عِنْدِي إِلاَّ كَمَا يَنْقُصُ الْمِخْيَطُ إِذَا أُدْخِلَ الْبَحْرَ يَا عِبَادِي إِنَّمَا هِيَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ أُحْصِيهَا لَكُمْ ثُمَّ أُوَفِّيكُمْ إِيَّاهَا فَمَنْ وَجَدَ خَيْرًا فَلْيَحْمَدِ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ وَجَدَ غَيْرَ ذَلِكَ فَلاَ يَلُومَنَّ إِلاَّ نَفْسَهُ». قَالَ سَعِيدٌ كَانَ أَبُو إِدْرِيسَ الْخَوْلاَنِيُّ إِذَا حَدَّثَ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ جَثَا عَلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ.

TRANSLATION:

Abu Dharr رضى الله عنه narrated from the Prophet ﷺ, concerning what he reported from Allah, Blessed and Exalted (Hadith Qudsi), that Allah said: ***"O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another.*** O My servants, all of you are astray except those whom I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you. O My servants, all of you are hungry except those whom I have fed, so seek food from Me and I shall feed you. O My servants, all of you are naked except those whom I have clothed, so seek clothing from Me and I shall clothe you. O My servants, you err by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you.

O My servants, you will never be able to harm Me and you will never be able to benefit Me. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as pious as the most pious heart of any one man among you, that would not increase My dominion in anything. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as wicked as the most wicked heart

of any one man, that would not decrease My dominion in anything. ***O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn of you, stood together in one plain and asked of Me, and I gave everyone what he asked, that would not decrease what I have except as much as a needle decreases (the water of) the sea when it is dipped into it.*** O My servants, it is but your deeds that I record for you and then repay you in full. So whoever finds good, let him praise Allah; and whoever finds otherwise, let him blame no one but himself."

Sa'id said: When Abu Idris al-Khaulani narrated this Hadith, he would kneel upon his knees.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from 'Abdullah bin 'Abd al-Rahman al-Darimi, from Marwan bin Muhammad al-Dimashqi, from Sa'id bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, from Rabi'ah bin Yazid, from Abu Idris al-Khaulani, from Abu Dharr رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship, Chapter: The Prohibition of Oppression, Hadith No. 2577.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2577

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: This Hadith Qudsi ***begins with the prohibition of oppression*** — the source of darkness (Bukhari 2447) — and ***is followed by the call to seek guidance***, which is light. It is like a road map out of the darkness of 24:40.

Second: The sea is used as a parable: even if all creation asked and were given, Allah's treasures would not decrease except like ***the water clinging to a needle*** dipped into the sea. The vast ocean becomes a means to understand ***the vastness of Allah's bounty***.

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SIXTH HADITH — SEA WATER IS PURE AND PURIFYING

HADITH — SUNAN ABI DAWUD, NO. 83

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مَسْلَمَةَ، عَنْ مَالِك، عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ سُلَيْمٍ، عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ سَلَمَةَ، - مِنْ آلِ ابْنِ الأَزْرَقِ - أَنَّ الْمُغِيرَةَ بْنَ أَبِي بُرْدَةَ، - وَهُوَ مِنْ بَنِي عَبْدِ الدَّارِ - أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّهُ، سَمِعَ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ، يَقُولُ سَأَلَ رَجُلٌ النَّبِيَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا نَرْكَبُ الْبَحْرَ وَنَحْمِلُ مَعَنَا الْقَلِيلَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ فَإِنْ تَوَضَّأْنَا بِهِ عَطِشْنَا أَفَنَتَوَضَّأُ بِمَاءِ الْبَحْرِ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «هُوَ الطَّهُورُ مَاؤُهُ الْحِلُّ مَيْتَتُهُ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه said: A man asked the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allah, we sail on the sea and carry only a little water with us. If we use it for ablution, we will go thirsty. May we perform ablution with sea water?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"Its water is pure, and its dead are lawful."***

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud: from 'Abdullah bin Maslamah, from Malik bin Anas, from Safwan bin Sulaim, from Sa'id bin Salamah, from al-Mughirah bin Abi Burdah, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Abu Dawud in Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Purification, Chapter: Ablution With Sea Water, Hadith No. 83.

GRADE: SAHIH — graded sahih by al-Albani (as recorded on sunnah.com).

Source: https://sunnah.com/abudawud:83

SEVENTH HADITH — THE GREAT FISH AL-'ANBAR

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 4362

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ، حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى، عَنِ ابْنِ جُرَيْجٍ، قَالَ أَخْبَرَنِي عَمْرٌو، أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرًا - رضى الله عنه - يَقُولُ غَزَوْنَا جَيْشَ الْخَبَطِ وَأَمَّرَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ، فَجُعْنَا جُوعًا شَدِيدًا فَأَلْقَى الْبَحْرُ حُوتًا مَيِّتًا، لَمْ نَرَ مِثْلَهُ، يُقَالُ لَهُ الْعَنْبَرُ، فَأَكَلْنَا مِنْهُ نِصْفَ شَهْرٍ، فَأَخَذَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ عَظْمًا مِنْ عِظَامِهِ فَمَرَّ الرَّاكِبُ تَحْتَهُ. فَأَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو الزُّبَيْرِ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَ جَابِرًا يَقُولُ قَالَ أَبُو عُبَيْدَةَ كُلُوا. فَلَمَّا قَدِمْنَا الْمَدِينَةَ ذَكَرْنَا ذَلِكَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَقَالَ «كُلُوا رِزْقًا أَخْرَجَهُ اللَّهُ، أَطْعِمُونَا إِنْ كَانَ مَعَكُمْ». فَأَتَاهُ بَعْضُهُمْ بِعُضْوٍ فَأَكَلَهُ.

TRANSLATION:

Jabir رضى الله عنه said: We took part in the expedition of al-Khabat, and Abu 'Ubaidah was appointed commander. We suffered severe hunger. ***Then the sea threw out a dead fish the like of which we had never seen, called al-'Anbar. We ate from it for half a month.*** Abu 'Ubaidah took one of its bones, and a rider passed beneath it.

(Ibn Juraij said:) Abu al-Zubair told me that he heard Jabir say: Abu 'Ubaidah said: "Eat." When we arrived in Madinah, we mentioned this to the Prophet ﷺ, and he said: ***"Eat — it is provision that Allah has brought out (for you). Feed us too, if you have some with you."*** So some of them brought him a piece of it, and he ate it.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from Musaddad, from Yahya bin Sa'id al-Qattan, from Ibn Juraij, from 'Amr bin Dinar and Abu al-Zubair, from Jabir bin 'Abdullah رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Military Expeditions, Chapter: The Expedition of Sif al-Bahr (the Sea-Coast), Hadith No. 4362.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:4362

LESSONS FROM THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH HADITH

First: The sea, described as a frightening darkness in 24:40, is also a source of ***purity*** (water for ablution) and ***provision*** (lawful sea life). The great fish al-'Anbar — whose bone was so large that a rider on a camel could pass beneath it — was ***"provision that Allah has brought out"*** from the belly of the ocean.

Second: Scholars mention that al-'Anbar was a kind of large whale. Scientific discoveries about deep-sea life — including sperm whales that dive more than a thousand metres into darkness — add to our wonder at ***the hidden provision*** in the depths of the ocean.

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EIGHTH HADITH — LIKE KINGS ON THRONES

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 2788

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ يُوسُفَ، عَنْ مَالِك، عَنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ ـ رضى الله عنه ـ أَنَّهُ سَمِعَهُ يَقُولُ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَدْخُلُ عَلَى أُمِّ حَرَامٍ بِنْتِ مِلْحَانَ، فَتُطْعِمُهُ، وَكَانَتْ أُمُّ حَرَامٍ تَحْتَ عُبَادَةَ بْنِ الصَّامِتِ، فَدَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم فَأَطْعَمَتْهُ وَجَعَلَتْ تَفْلِي رَأْسَهُ، فَنَامَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم ثُمَّ اسْتَيْقَظَ وَهُوَ يَضْحَكُ. قَالَتْ فَقُلْتُ وَمَا يُضْحِكُكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ «نَاسٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي عُرِضُوا عَلَىَّ، غُزَاةً فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، يَرْكَبُونَ ثَبَجَ هَذَا الْبَحْرِ، مُلُوكًا عَلَى الأَسِرَّةِ، أَوْ مِثْلَ الْمُلُوكِ عَلَى الأَسِرَّةِ». شَكَّ إِسْحَاقُ. قَالَتْ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَنِي مِنْهُمْ. فَدَعَا لَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم ثُمَّ وَضَعَ رَأْسَهُ، ثُمَّ اسْتَيْقَظَ وَهُوَ يَضْحَكُ فَقُلْتُ وَمَا يُضْحِكُكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ «نَاسٌ مِنْ أُمَّتِي عُرِضُوا عَلَىَّ، غُزَاةً فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ». كَمَا قَالَ فِي الأَوَّلِ. قَالَتْ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، ادْعُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يَجْعَلَنِي مِنْهُمْ. قَالَ «أَنْتِ مِنَ الأَوَّلِينَ». فَرَكِبَتِ الْبَحْرَ فِي زَمَانِ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سُفْيَانَ، فَصُرِعَتْ عَنْ دَابَّتِهَا حِينَ خَرَجَتْ مِنَ الْبَحْرِ، فَهَلَكَتْ.

TRANSLATION:

Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to visit Umm Haram bint Milhan, and she would give him food. Umm Haram was the wife of 'Ubadah bin al-Samit. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ visited her, and she gave him food and began to look through the hair of his head. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ slept, and woke up smiling. She asked: "What makes you smile, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: ***"Some people of my Ummah were shown to me as fighters in the cause of Allah, sailing in the middle of this sea, like kings on thrones"*** — or "like kings on thrones" (Ishaq was unsure).

Umm Haram said: "O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah to make me one of them." So the Messenger of Allah ﷺ prayed for her. Then he laid his head down (and slept), and woke up smiling. I asked: "What makes you smile, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: "Some people of my Ummah were shown to me as fighters in the cause of Allah," as he had said the first time. I said: "O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah to make me one of them." He said: ***"You are among the first ones."*** She sailed on the sea in the time of Mu'awiyah bin Abi Sufyan, and she fell from her mount when she came out of the sea, and died.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Abdullah bin Yusuf, from Malik bin Anas, from Ishaq bin 'Abdullah bin Abi Talhah, from Anas bin Malik رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Jihad, Chapter: Supplicating for Martyrdom, Hadith No. 2788.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:2788

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: This Hadith contains ***news of the unseen*** that truly came to pass: Muslims crossed the sea in the time of Mu'awiyah, and Umm Haram was in that first voyage — just as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ had said.

Second: The frightening sea became ***a field of honour*** for those who sailed in the cause of Allah — "like kings on thrones". Fear of the sea's darkness did not hold the Companions back when their purpose was noble.

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NINTH HADITH — THIS WORLD LIKE WATER ON A FINGERTIP

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2858

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ إِدْرِيسَ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ نُمَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بِشْرٍ، ح وحَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ يَحْيَى، أَخْبَرَنَا مُوسَى بْنُ أَعْيَنَ، ح وحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ رَافِعٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أُسَامَةَ، كُلُّهُمْ عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ أَبِي خَالِدٍ، ح وحَدَّثَنِي مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ حَاتِمٍ - وَاللَّفْظُ لَهُ - حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ، حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، حَدَّثَنَا قَيْسٌ، قَالَ سَمِعْتُ مُسْتَوْرِدًا، أَخَا بَنِي فِهْرٍ يَقُولُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم «وَاللَّهِ مَا الدُّنْيَا فِي الآخِرَةِ إِلاَّ مِثْلُ مَا يَجْعَلُ أَحَدُكُمْ إِصْبَعَهُ هَذِهِ - وَأَشَارَ يَحْيَى بِالسَّبَّابَةِ - فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيَنْظُرْ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ». وَفِي حَدِيثِهِمْ جَمِيعًا غَيْرَ يَحْيَى سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ ذَلِكَ. وَفِي حَدِيثِ أَبِي أُسَامَةَ عَنِ الْمُسْتَوْرِدِ بْنِ شَدَّادٍ أَخِي بَنِي فِهْرٍ وَفِي حَدِيثِهِ أَيْضًا قَالَ وَأَشَارَ إِسْمَاعِيلُ بِالإِبْهَامِ.

TRANSLATION:

Qais said: I heard al-Mustaurid, brother of Banu Fihr, say: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: ***"By Allah, this world compared to the Hereafter is nothing but like one of you dipping this finger of his — (Yahya pointed with his index finger) — into the sea; let him see what it brings back."***

In the narrations of all of them except Yahya (it says): "I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say that." In the narration of Abu Usamah: from al-Mustaurid bin Shaddad, brother of Banu Fihr; and in his narration also: Isma'il pointed with his thumb.

CHAIN Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr bin Abi Shaibah, from 'Abdullah bin Idris, from Isma'il bin Abi Khalid and Muhammad bin Hatim, from Yahya bin Sa'id, from Qais bin Abi Hazim, from al-Mustaurid bin Shaddad رضى الله عنه.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Paradise, Its Description, Its Bounties and Its Inhabitants, Chapter: The Passing Away of This World and the Gathering on the Day of Resurrection, Hadith No. 2858.

GRADE: SAHIH — narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2858

LESSONS FROM THIS HADITH

First: The sea is once again used as ***a measure***: the whole world — with all its wealth and glory — is only like ***a drop of water on a fingertip*** compared with the ocean of the Hereafter.

Second: The one drowning in the darkness of 24:40 is the one who mistakes that drop of water for the ocean. The light of faith helps us see ***the true scale***.

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WHAT MODERN SCIENCE SAYS

This chapter presents scientific findings about ***the darkness of the deep ocean***: how light disappears layer by layer, how waves move beneath the surface, and how deep-sea creatures live in darkness. Each finding is supported by peer-reviewed research or official scientific sources, with links to the original source.

A SIMPLE EXPLANATION — WHY IS THE DEEP SEA DARK?

Sunlight looks white, but it is actually made up of ***many colours*** — red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. When light enters seawater, each colour ***is absorbed at a different depth***. ***Red*** disappears first, within the first dozen or so metres. Then orange, yellow and green. ***Blue*** penetrates the furthest — which is why the sea looks blue (Figure 1a).

As a result, the ocean becomes dark ***in layers***. At a depth of about 200 metres, the light is already too faint for plants to carry out photosynthesis. At about 1,000 metres, ***no sunlight remains*** — only absolute darkness all the way down to the deepest seafloor, almost 11 kilometres below the surface (Figure 1b).

This does not yet account for ***thick clouds*** above the sea and ***waves*** on the surface, which reflect and scatter part of the light before it even enters the water. Every layer — clouds, waves, water — ***adds to the darkness***. ***"Darknesses, some of them upon others"*** (24:40).

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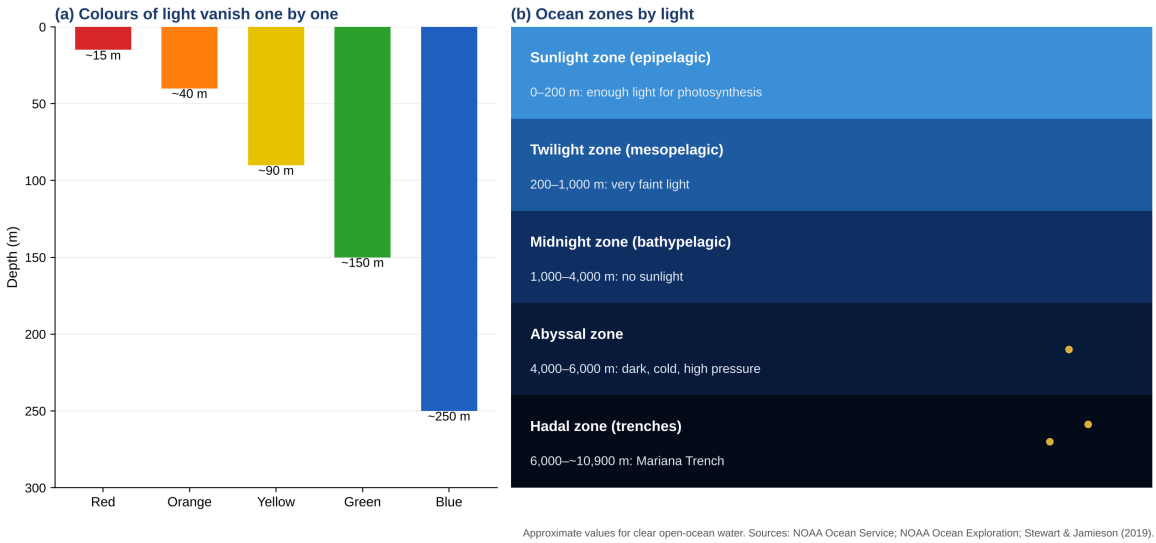


Figure 1: (a) Approximate depth reached by each colour of light in clear seawater; (b) ocean zones by light, down to the deepest trench. Sources: NOAA and Stewart & Jamieson (2019).

LIGHT THAT DISAPPEARS LAYER BY LAYER

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: HOW FAR DOES LIGHT PENETRATE THE OCEAN?

According to NOAA (the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), light ***can be detected down to about 1,000 metres*** in the ocean, but ***there is rarely any significant light beyond 200 metres***. The zone from 200 to 1,000 metres is called the ***twilight zone***, while below 1,000 metres lies the ***midnight zone***, which never receives sunlight.

Most of the world's ocean — by volume — lies in complete darkness. The average depth of the ocean is about 3,700 metres, far below the limit of sunlight.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

NOAA Ocean Service. How far does light travel in the ocean? https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/light_travel.html
NOAA Ocean Exploration. Light and Color in the Deep Sea (fact sheet). https://origin.oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/edu/materials/light-and-color-fact-sheet.pdf

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE MARIANA TRENCH: THE DARKEST PLACE ON EARTH

Stewart and Jamieson (2019) re-measured the depth of the deepest point in each ocean during the *Five Deeps* expedition. ***Challenger Deep*** in the Mariana Trench was measured at about ***10,925 metres*** — deeper than Mount Everest is tall (8,849 metres).

At this depth, water pressure is more than ***1,000 times*** that at the surface, the temperature is near freezing, and ***not a single ray of sunlight*** reaches it. The first humans reached its floor in 1960, in the bathyscaphe *Trieste*.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

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WAVES BENEATH WAVES

The waves we see at the beach are ***surface waves*** — formed at the boundary between air and water. But the ocean is also layered: the water near the top is usually ***warmer and less dense***, while the water below is ***colder, saltier and denser***. The boundaries between these layers are called the ***thermocline*** and the ***pycnocline***. It is at these boundaries that ***internal waves*** form — waves that travel ***beneath the surface***, often invisible from above (Figure 2).

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: GIANT INTERNAL WAVES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Alford and colleagues (2015) led an international study in ***the Luzon Strait and the South China Sea*** — waters neighbouring Malaysia. They found that internal waves in this region are among ***the largest in the world***, with heights that can ***exceed 170 metres*** — taller than a 40-storey building — yet barely visible at the sea surface.

These internal waves form when ***tidal currents*** flow over ridges on the seafloor, then travel hundreds of kilometres across the sea. They carry great energy, mix the water layers, bring nutrients to the surface, and can affect submarines and oil platforms.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

Alford, M.H. et al. (2015). The formation and fate of internal waves in the South China Sea. Nature, 521(7550), 65–69. https://doi.org/10.1038/nature14399

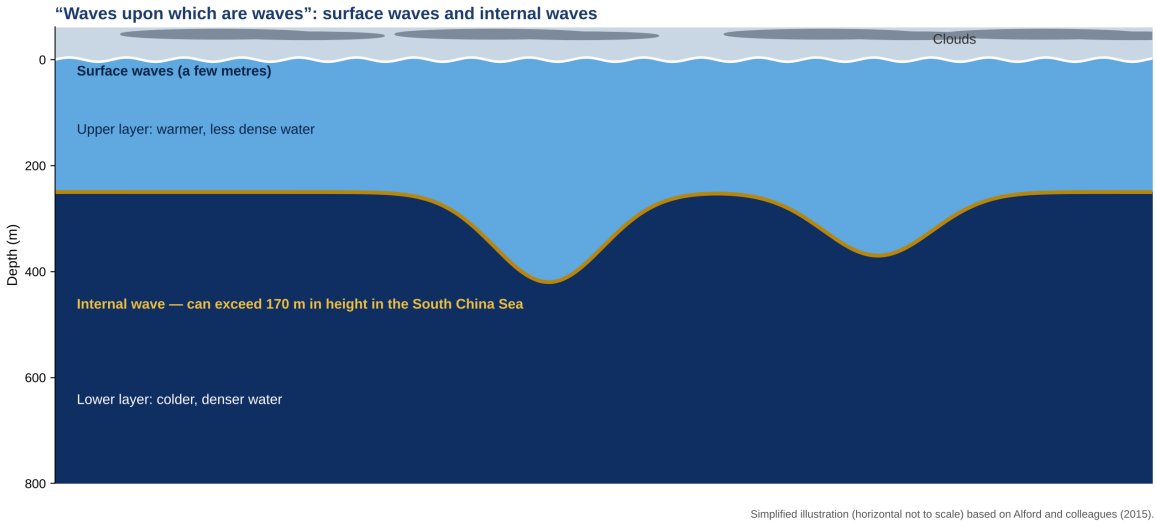


Figure 2: Simplified illustration of surface waves and an internal wave at the boundary between two water layers of different density, with clouds above. Internal waves in the South China Sea can exceed 170 metres in height (Alford and colleagues, 2015).

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SCIENTIFIC FINDING: "DEAD WATER": SHIPS HELD BACK BY HIDDEN WAVES

In 1893, the Norwegian explorer ***Fridtjof Nansen*** reported that his ship, the *Fram*, suddenly ***moved very slowly*** in waters that looked calm — a phenomenon sailors called ***"dead water"***. In 1904, ***Vagn Walfrid Ekman*** showed that the ship was actually ***generating internal waves*** at the boundary between a layer of fresh water above and salt water below, which absorbed the ship's energy.

Mercier, Vasseur and Dauxois (2011) revived this experiment in the laboratory and confirmed the explanation. Internal waves are a phenomenon that is ***hard to see***, and they were only understood scientifically in the twentieth century.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

Mercier, M.J., Vasseur, R. & Dauxois, T. (2011). Resurrecting dead-water phenomenon. Nonlinear Processes in Geophysics, 18, 193–208. https://doi.org/10.5194/npg-18-193-2011

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: INTERNAL WAVES AND DEEP-OCEAN MIXING

Munk and Wunsch (1998) showed that internal waves and tides play an important role in ***mixing the deep ocean water***. Without this mixing, the global ocean circulation — which transports heat and nutrients around the world — could not function as it does today.

These unseen waves, beneath the waves we see, are part of ***a system that balances the earth's climate***.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

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LIGHT WITHIN THE DARKNESS

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: BIOLUMINESCENCE: CREATURES THAT CARRY THEIR OWN LAMPS

In the darkness of the deep sea, many creatures ***produce their own light*** through chemical reactions — a phenomenon called ***bioluminescence***. Haddock, Moline and Case (2010) explain that this light is used ***to find food, attract mates, communicate and confuse predators***.

Martini and Haddock (2017) analysed more than 350,000 video observations in Monterey Bay, California, from the surface down to 3,900 metres. They found that about ***76% of the animals*** observed were able to produce light. Even in the thickest darkness, Allah provides ***light*** for His creatures.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

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SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE TWILIGHT ZONE: HIDDEN PROVISION

Irigoien and colleagues (2014) used acoustic data from the Malaspina circumnavigation expedition and estimated that the biomass of ***mesopelagic fish*** — twilight-zone fish (200–1,000 metres) — may be ***ten times higher*** than earlier estimates.

Every night, many of these creatures ***rise to the surface*** to feed and descend back into the darkness by day — a daily migration considered among ***the largest animal movements on earth***. This provision hidden in the darkness reminds us: ***"And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat"*** (16:14).

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

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SCIENTIFIC FINDING: LIFE WITHOUT SUNLIGHT: HYDROTHERMAL VENTS

In 1977, scientists diving in the submersible *Alvin* on the ***Galápagos Rift*** discovered ***hot springs on the seafloor*** (hydrothermal vents) at a depth of about 2,500 metres. Around them were thriving communities of life — giant tube worms, clams and crabs — living ***without depending on sunlight*** (Corliss et al., 1979).

This life depends on bacteria that produce food from chemicals coming out of the earth (***chemosynthesis***). The discovery changed humanity's understanding of where life can exist.

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

Corliss, J.B. et al. (1979). Submarine thermal springs on the Galápagos Rift. Science, 203(4385), 1073–1083. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.203.4385.1073

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE OCEAN WE DO NOT YET KNOW

The international ***Seabed 2030*** project reported in 2025 that only about ***27.3%*** of the world's ocean floor had been mapped in detail with modern technology. More than two-thirds of the seafloor has still not been mapped at high resolution.

Humanity has mapped the surfaces of the Moon and Mars in more detail than the floor of its own oceans. ***"And He knows what is on the land and in the sea"*** (6:59).

RESEARCH REFERENCE:

The Nippon Foundation (2025). 27.3% of World's Ocean Floor Now Mapped in Seabed 2030 Project. https://tnfsa.nippon-foundation.or.jp/news/2756701

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THE STORY OF A DIVER AND HIS HAND

Imagine a diver slowly descending into the sea. At a depth of ***10 metres***, his red shirt looks grey — the red is already gone. At ***30 metres***, everything looks blue-green. At ***100 metres***, he needs a lamp.

If he could keep descending to ***1,000 metres*** and switch off his lamp, he would feel a darkness ***he has never felt on land*** — no moonlight, no stars, no city glow. He raises his hand in front of his eyes — and ***sees nothing***. Only, now and then, a flicker of blue light from a passing sea creature.

Al-Qur'an uses this state as a parable for ***a heart to which Allah has not granted light***: ***"When one puts out his hand, he can hardly see it. And he to whom Allah has not granted light — for him there is no light"*** (24:40). Science explains the darkness of the ocean; revelation uses it to explain the darkness of the soul.

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BETWEEN HARMONY AND CAUTION

Verse 24:40 is often cited as an example of I'jaz Ilmi. The table below assesses common claims honestly.

POPULAR CLAIMS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

COMMON CLAIM	ASSESSMENT
"Verse 24:40 is a scientific description of the ocean."	***Caution needed.*** The main purpose of this verse is ***a parable*** for the state of the disbelievers and their ignorance (Ibn Kathir; Ubayy bin Ka'b). The accuracy of its image of the ocean is ***a beautiful harmony***, not the verse's main purpose.
"'Waves upon which are waves' refers to internal waves, discovered only in the twentieth century."	***An interesting harmony, not conclusive proof.*** Classical scholars understood it as waves piled upon one another at the surface. Internal waves were indeed only understood scientifically in the twentieth century (Ekman, 1904); this can be ***an additional reflection*** without denying the original meaning.
"The layered darkness in the verse matches the modern ocean zones."	***A general harmony.*** The ocean is indeed dark in layers (NOAA). But the verse mentions layers of ***clouds, waves and waves*** — not specifically the epipelagic, mesopelagic and bathypelagic zones.
"No one in ancient times knew that the deep sea was dark."	***Not entirely accurate.*** Ancient pearl divers and fishermen knew that water grows darker with depth. What was unknown was the ***absolute darkness*** at depths of hundreds and thousands of metres, and internal waves.
"'He can hardly see his hand' proves an exact depth of 200 metres."	***A forced interpretation.*** The verse mentions no numbers. The phrase "he can hardly see it" describes a very thick darkness.
"The story of Prophet Yunus is proven by science through cases of people swallowed by whales."	***Irrelevant.*** The story of Prophet Yunus is ***a miracle***; it needs no scientific proof, and viral stories of people swallowed by whales are mostly unreliable.

REFLECTION — WHY THIS CAUTION MATTERS

The beauty of verse 24:40 does not depend on oceanographic discoveries. It is beautiful because it ***describes the state of the soul*** so precisely: darknesses layered upon one another, until a person cannot see even himself, and there is no light except what Allah grants. When science shows that the ocean is indeed dark in layers and has waves beneath waves, it ***adds to our wonder*** at the precision of Al-Qur'an's language — but our faith rests on revelation, not on the laboratory.

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LESSONS AND CONCLUSION

LESSONS FROM THIS EBOOK

First: Light comes only from Allah. ***"And he to whom Allah has not granted light — for him there is no light"*** (24:40).

Second: Darkness comes in layers. Ignorance, oppression and sin pile upon one another (24:40; Bukhari 2447); so too does the light of faith — light upon light (24:35).

Third: Supplication is the way out. Prophet Yunus emerged from three darknesses through tawhid, glorification and confession of sin (21:87; Tirmidhi 3505).

Fourth: Remember Allah in times of ease. Prophet Yunus was saved because he glorified Allah much before his trial (37:143).

Fifth: Ask for light from every direction. Practise the Prophet's ﷺ supplication for light (Bukhari 6316).

Sixth: The ocean is a blessing and a measure. It gives provision (16:14) and illustrates the vastness of Allah's bounty (Muslim 2577) and the smallness of this world (Muslim 2858).

Seventh: Be honest in I'jaz Ilmi. Understand the original meaning of the verse first, then let science be an additional reflection.

SUMMARY: VERSES, MESSAGES AND SCIENTIFIC REFLECTIONS

THE VERSE AND ITS MESSAGE	REFLECTION FROM MODERN SCIENCE
24:40 — Darkness in a deep sea, layer upon layer.	Light fades with depth; no sunlight below ~1,000 m (NOAA).
24:40 — Waves, upon which are waves.	Internal waves beneath surface waves; >170 m in the South China Sea (Alford et al., 2015).
24:40 — Over which are clouds.	Clouds and surface waves reduce light before it enters the water.
24:35 — Light upon light.	Bioluminescence: 76% of sea animals produce their own light (Martini & Haddock, 2017).
6:59 — Allah knows what is in the sea.	Only ~27% of the seafloor mapped in detail (Seabed 2030, 2025).
16:14 — The sea subjected for provision.	Twilight-zone fish biomass may be 10 times higher (Irigoien et al., 2014).

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

• ***Every night:*** Practise the Prophet's ﷺ supplication for light: "Allāhumma ij'al fī qalbī nūrā…"

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• ***In hardship:*** Recite the supplication of Prophet Yunus: "Lā ilāha illā anta, subhānaka, innī kuntu minaz-zālimīn."

• ***Every day:*** Examine yourself — is there some small injustice adding a "layer of darkness"? Apologise and make amends.

• ***In times of ease:*** Increase your glorification and remembrance as provision for the dark days.

• ***At the seaside:*** Reflect on the ocean — the darkness in its depths, the provision within it, and Allah's bounty, which is vaster still.

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CONCLUSION

Al-Qur'an describes the thickest darkness: in a deep sea, covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds — ***darknesses, some of them upon others***, until a person cannot see his own hand. Scholars understood it as a parable for the soul to which Allah has not granted light. Modern science has found that the ocean is indeed dark in layers, with hidden waves moving beneath the waves we see, and creatures carrying their own light in the darkest depths.

So whenever we feel trapped in darkness — the darkness of trial, deadlock or sin — let us remember Prophet Yunus, who called out from within three darknesses, and Allah heard him. Let us ask for light as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ asked for it: in our hearts, before us and behind us, above us and below us.

"Allah guides to His light whom He wills" (24:35).

Insha'Allah, the Exploring Al-Qur'an & Science series will continue with the title ***"The Shadow That Stretches, the Shadow That Returns"*** — on the shadow that is extended and then drawn back (25:45–46) — using the same method: Al-Qur'an, Hadith and science, with honesty and caution.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	BRIEF MEANING
Bahr lujjiyy	A deep, vast sea whose bottom cannot be seen (24:40).
Ẓulumāt	Darknesses (plural); the opposite of nūr (light).
Nūr	Light; in Al-Qur'an often meaning guidance and faith.
Dhun-Nūn	Title of Prophet Yunus عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ — "the man of the fish".
Hadith Qudsi	A Hadith whose meaning is from Allah and whose wording is from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
Sunlight zone (epipelagic)	The ocean layer from 0–200 m with enough light for photosynthesis.
Twilight zone (mesopelagic)	The ocean layer from 200–1,000 m, very dimly lit.
Midnight zone (bathypelagic)	The ocean layer below 1,000 m, with no sunlight.
Thermocline / pycnocline	A layer of sharp change in temperature / density in the ocean.
Internal wave	A wave travelling at the boundary between water layers of different density, beneath the surface.
Bioluminescence	Light produced by living things through chemical reactions.
Chemosynthesis	Production of food by bacteria using chemical energy rather than light.
Hydrothermal vent	A fissure in the seafloor that releases hot, mineral-rich water.

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Why does Al-Qur'an place the Verse of Light (24:35) and the verse of the ocean's darkness (24:40) so close together? What is the message of this comparison?

• Why is "darkness" mentioned in the plural but "light" in the singular? How does this relate to our daily lives?

• Prophet Yunus was saved because he glorified Allah much before the calamity (37:143). What "provision of remembrance" are we preparing for difficult days?

• How do we distinguish between harmony of a verse with science and forced interpretation? Give one example from this eBook.

• The Hadith "oppression will be darknesses on the Day of Resurrection" links deeds with darkness. What small forms of injustice might we be unaware of?

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Sahih Muslim 2577. https://sunnah.com/muslim:2577

Sunan Abi Dawud 83. https://sunnah.com/abudawud:83

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

From Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who said: "Charity does not decrease wealth. Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

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CHAIN: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining the Ties of Kinship, Chapter: The Encouragement of Forgiveness and Humility, Hadith No. 2588.

ريوايت إمام مسلم دالم صحيح مسلم، كتاب البر والصلة، حديث نومبور ٢٥٨٨

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

From Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: a continuing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

CHAIN: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurairah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills, Chapter: The Reward That Reaches a Person After His Death, Hadith No. 1631.

ريوايت إمام مسلم دالم صحيح مسلم، كتاب الوصية، حديث نومبور ١٦٣١

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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