

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEFINITION, TYPES, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF AMTHĀL

#### A. The Definition of *Amthāl*

*Amthāl* is the plural form of *mathal* means *naẓīrun*, then it was translated into *qawl al-sā'ir*, a popular word represented its proverbial (*maḍrib*) to its source (*mawrid*). *Mathal* is كلمة سوية (synonym word), that be said: هَذَا مِثْلُهُ وَمِثْلُهُ, means *شبهه شبيهه*. Al-Qazwini said that *mathal* means the analogy of something on something, so if it be said *انه مثله* means *يسد مسده* (to change). Ibnu Qayyim said there is the different between *al-mumāthalāh* and *al-musāwah*. It is actually *al-musāwāh* was between the differences and similarities, because it contains the equivalences in a measure. But *al-mumāthalah* it was not except in conformability, as be said *لونه كلونه* and *نحوه كنهوه*<sup>1</sup>. *Mathal* also means, "ما يضرب من الامثال" (to give an example from *al-amthāl*), as the part of *al-*

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<sup>1</sup> Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Amthāl fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 17.

*mumāthālah* and *al-mushābahah*<sup>2</sup>, which *mathal al-shai' bi al-shai'* means “equal with” and “similar with”, make it similar with, on its example.

According to al-Maidaniy, *al-mathal* means “*qawl al-sā'ir yushabbah bihi hāl al-thāniy bi al-awwāl ma'khūdzun min al-mithāl*”, and it is originally *al-tashbīh*. Al-Zamakhshariy also said, “*al-qawl al-sā'ir al-mumaththal maḍribuhu bi mawridihi*”. Al-Rāziy added this statement, “*al-qawl al-mumaththal maḍribuhu bi mawridihi wa sharṭuhu an yakūna qawlan fīhi gharabah min ba'dial-wujūh*.” Al-Ṭusi explained that the rule of *mathal* is it will not change because it turned-like into *alam*. This is what the literaries said to explain the meaning of *mathal*.<sup>3</sup>

*Mathal* was designated as *alam* for every famous word, delivered by tongues and many people used it for example.<sup>4</sup> *Sā'ir* was taken from *sāra*, means *shā'a* (spread<sup>5</sup>, circulate<sup>6</sup>, propagate<sup>7</sup>), as in the sentence *sāra al-kalām wa al-mathal*. Then it is said “*hādhā mathālun sā'irun*”, and somebody was popularize

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<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Jābir Fayyāḍ al-'Ulwāniyy, *Al-Amthāl fī al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawiyy al-Sharīf*, (USA: al-Ma'had al-'Ālimiy li al-Fikr al-Islamiy, 1993), 23

<sup>3</sup> Samīrah 'Adlīy Muhammad Rizq, *Wujūh al-Bayān fī Amthāl al-Qur'ān*, (Jeddah: Jāmi'ah al-Malik 'Abdu al-'Azīz, 1987), 17.

<sup>4</sup> 'Abd Allāh ibnu 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jarbū', *Al-Amthāl al-Qur'āniyah al-Qiyāsīyah al-Maḍrūbah li al-Imān billāh*, volume I (Madinah: al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmīyah, 2003), 46.

<sup>5</sup> Spread: to affect or make something affect, be known by, or used by more and more people.

<sup>6</sup> Circulate: if a story, an idea, information, etc. circulates, or if you circulate it, it spreads or it is passed from one person to another.

<sup>7</sup> Propagate: to spread an idea, a belief, or a piece of information among many people.

*amthā sā'irah* among people<sup>8</sup>. *Al-qawl al-sā'ir* is comparing *madhrib* to *mawrid*.

Al-Rāghib al-Isfahanī said that,

و المثل عبارة عن قول في شئ يشبه قولاً في شئ آخر, بينهما مشابهة, ليعين احدهما  
الآخر و يصورها

*And mathal is the idiom about the saying of something comparing with something other. There is a similarity existed between of them, to explain other and describe it.*

*Mathal* also means *wasf al-shay* (description, characterization of something)', as be interpreted by early scholars who attended to *al-tafsīr* and meanings of *mufradāt al-Qur'ān*. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī said, "this was explaining *mathal* and *mithl*, both expressed *wasf al-shay'i*". Ibnu Jarīr said that the saying of Allāh in Q. S. Al-Ra`d/13:35, "مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ" was explaining about the description and characterization of *jannah* (heaven) that was promised for *al-muttaqūn* (righteous).<sup>9</sup>

Next, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī said in Q. S. Al-Shūrā/42:11, "لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ"

"لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ", *mithl* here means *al-ṣifah* "laysa kaṣifatihi ṣifatun" or "laysa kawaṣfihi

*shay'un*".

<sup>8</sup> Ibnu Manzūr, *Lisān al-`Arab*, volume IV (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1993), 390.

<sup>9</sup> `Abd Allāh ibnu `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jarbū, *Al-Amthāl al-Qur'āniyah al-Qiyāsīyah al-Madrūbah li al-Imān billāh*, volume I, 50.

Or in the ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, in kitāb tafsīr al-Qur’ān in the chapter of *yawma yunfakhu fi al-ṣūr fata’tūna afwājan, al-Naba’:18,*

حَدَّثَنَا آدَمُ، حَدَّثَنَا شُعْبَةُ، حَدَّثَنَا قَتَادَةُ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ زُرَّارَةَ بْنَ أَوْفَى، يُحَدِّثُ عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ هِشَامٍ، عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: «مَثَلُ الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ، وَهُوَ حَافِظٌ لَهُ مَعَ السَّفَرَةِ الْكِرَامِ الْبَرَّةِ، وَمَثَلُ الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ، وَهُوَ يَتَعَاهَدُهُ، وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِ شَدِيدٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ»

*Ādam narrated to us from Shu`bah, from Qatādah, he said: I heard Zurārah ibnu Awfā, narrated from Sa`d ibnu Hishām, from `Ā`ishah, from al-Nabī ṣallā Allāhu `alayhi wasallam, he said, "Such a person as recites the Qur`ān and masters it by heart, will be with the noble righteous scribes (in Heaven). And such a person exerts himself to learn the Qur`ān by heart, and he recites it with great difficulty, will have a double reward.*

*Mathal* also means *al-naẓīr* (equal), and it was said *mathal*, *mithl*, and *mathīl* as same as *shabah*, *shibh*, and *shabīh*. It was taken from *al-mumāthalah* means *al-mushābahah*. The original of this meaning was based on *tashbīh shay` bi shay`* in order to represent the element of similarity between both of them. It was like in Q. S. Al-Baqarah/2:17,<sup>10</sup> "مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا"

Also in the ḥadīth in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in *kitāb al-buyū`* in the chapter of *al-`aṭṭār wa bay`u al-misk,*

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَرْدَةَ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا بَرْدَةَ بْنَ أَبِي مُوسَى، عَنْ أَبِيهِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ وَالْجَلِيسِ السَّوِّءِ، كَمَثَلِ

<sup>10</sup> `Abd Allāh ibnu `Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jarbū`, *Al-Amthāl al-Qur`ānīyah al-Qiyāsīyah al-Madrūbah li al-Imān billāh*, volume I, 66.

صَاحِبِ الْمِسْكِ وَكَبِيرِ الْحَدَّادِ، لَا يَعْدَمُكَ مِنْ صَاحِبِ الْمِسْكِ إِذَا تَشْتَرِيهِ، أَوْ تَجِدُ رِيحَهُ، وَكَبِيرِ  
الْحَدَّادِ يَحْرِقُ بَدَنَكَ، أَوْ ثَوْبَكَ، أَوْ تَجِدُ مِنْهُ رِيحًا خَبِيثَةً»

*Abū Burdah ibnu `Abd Allāh narrated to us, he said: I heard Abū Burdah ibnu Abū Mūsā, from his father, from Rasūl Allāh, he said, "The example of a good comparison (who sits with you), in comparison with a bad one, is like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace): from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell there.*

Ibnu Qayyim said that,

تشبيه شيء بشيء في حكمه، وتقريب المعقول من المحسوس، أو أحد المحسوسين  
من الآخر واعتبار أحدهما بالآخر

*Comparison of something with other in its clause, approximation of the abstract with the concrete, or one of two concrete things with other, considering one of them with other.*

According to al-Hakīm al-Tirmidzīy, al-amthāl means *namūdzejāt al-hikmah*, when it missed from the listening and sight, to guide the person with something that can be realized by the eyes. Al-amthāl on his opinion as the medium of explanation, empowers the people that being covered by the hesitancy from hidden things, and affirms the thoughts inside the minds. So amthāl is *namūdzej hasiyyāh* for the abstract things.<sup>11</sup>

Al-Zamakhsharī said in al-Kashshāf that there are three meanings of *mathal* expressed for:

<sup>11</sup> Muḥammad Jābir Fayyāḍ al-`Ulwāniy, *Al-Amthāl fī al-Hadīth al-Nabawīy al-Sharīf*,

1. Originally means *al-mithlu* and *al-naẓīru*, or proverbs, analogy, or similarity,
2. Colloquial expression that was compared its proverbial to its source,
3. Condition, attribute, or story if it was a peculiarity condition or status.<sup>12</sup>

As the definition of *mathal* that was uncovered by the linguists that its meaning is the attribute, as His saying, ” مثلهم كمثل الذي استوقد ناراً” (Their example is that of one who kindled a fire), or ”مثل الجنة” (The example of Paradise) but this verses was not required any peculiarity condition as the contrary on what other linguists said. What some of linguists said is that the meaning of *al-mathal* and *al-mithl* desired is considered to *al-syabah*. And then, Ibnu `Arabī said that *al-mithlu* equivalent to abstract similarity, whereas *al-mathalu* equivalent to concrete similarity.

Other linguists has said of the incompatibility meanings between *al-mathal* and *al-mithl*. If so, will be a contradiction among His saying, ” ليس كمثلته ش” with the verse, ”ولله المثل الأعلى”. The negation of the first is truly opposite of the

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<sup>12</sup> Mannā` al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith fī `Ulūm al-Qur`ān*, (Qahirah: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), 275.

corroborant of the second.<sup>13</sup> Concerned with the subject, Dr. Al-Jarju` has summarized about this, that *mathal* and *mithl* as desired in language means *al-wasfu*. *Al-wasfu* is the origin meanings of *tamthil*. And this meaning was referred in Qur'an and al-Sunnah. And the closest interpretation with it (*al-wasf*) if it was joined with *kāf al-tasybīh*.<sup>14</sup>

## B. Types of Amthāl

In general, amthāl was divided into 3 types:

### 1. *Al-mathal al-sā'ir*

This type grows among people practicing without any affectation<sup>15</sup>, either it is *syabihi* that be expressed without having seriousness, compliance of *qawā'id al-naḥwi*. Or it is *kitābihi* that published by high educated people like *al-shu'arā'* and *al-khuṭabā'*, as their word, "rubba `ajlatin tahubbu raythan (sometimes rushing suddenly makes delay), or a word, "ka al-mustajir min al-ramḍā' bi al-nār (like a refugee who takes cover in fire from scorching heat)". Also in a hadith, "inna min al-bayān lasihran (indeed, the explanation contains magic).

<sup>13</sup> Muḥammad Ibnu `Abd Allāh al-Zarkashi, *Al-Burhān fī `Ulūm al-Qur`ān*, volume I (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, n. y.)490.

<sup>14</sup> `Abd al-Rahmān al-Jarju`, *Mu`jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, (Madinah al-Munawwarah: AL-Jāmi`ah al-Munawwarah, 2003), vol. 1, 62.

<sup>15</sup> Samī `Āṭif al-Zain, *Al-Amthāl wa al-Mithl wa al-Tamaththul wa al-Mathulāt fī al-Qur`ān al-Karīm*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnāniy, 2000), 27.

## 2. *Al-mathal al-qiyāsiy*

A narration based on the characteristic, story, or description to explain the specific thought in the way of *al-tashbīh* and *al-tamthīl*. *Al-balāghiyūn* (rhetoricians) called it as *al-tamthīl al-murakkab* or *al-tashbīh al-muta`addid*.<sup>16</sup> This type aims to compare something with something else, in order to bring something abstract closer to the something concrete. Or to bring one of two concrete things closer to another thing.

## 3. *Al-mathal al-khurāfiy*

It is the meaningful story based on non-human tongue, for educational or comical purpose and so on<sup>17</sup>, by attributing human action to the animal, bird or an extraordinary creature. This type comes as a fictional story, fairy tale, or fantasy, like what can be seen in *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* by Ibnu al-Muqaffa`.<sup>18</sup>

### C. The Importance of Amthāl

Al-amthāl highlights the abstract in a form of the concrete that can be sensed by human being, so the mind can accept it, because the abstract cannot be

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<sup>16</sup> Samī` `Āṭif al-Zain, *Al-Amthāl wa al-Mithl wa al-Tamaththul wa al-Mathulāt fī al-Qur`ān al-Karīm*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Amthāl fī al-Qur`ān al-Karīm*, 17

<sup>18</sup> Samī` `Āṭif al-Zain, *Al-Amthāl wa al-Mithl wa al-Tamaththul wa al-Mathulāt fī al-Qur`ān al-Karīm*, 29.



received unless if it is formed as the concrete, make closer to understanding. As Allāh set an example of *al-munfiq ribā'*, where he cannot obtain any reward for his deed. So Allāh said in Q. S. Al-Baqarah/02:264,

فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا (٢٦٤)

*So his parable is as the parable of a smooth rock with earth upon it, then a heavy rain falls upon it, so it leaves it bare; they shall not be able to gain anything of what they have earned...*

Amthāl reveals the truths, and shows the mysterious in attendance, as Allah said in Q. S. Al-Baqarah/02:275,

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ... (٢٧٥)

*Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom Shaitan has prostrated by (his) touch does rise*

Amthāl also gathers the wonderful meaning in a brief expression, like *amthāl kāminah* and *amthāl mursalah*. It also be explained for encouragement in representation, where this is been what people wants, as what Allāh explained the parable for *al-munfiq fi sabīl Allāh*, where the expenditure (*infāq*) returns to him with many goodness. This can be seen in Q. S. Al-Baqarah/02:261,

مَثَلٌ مِثْلَ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سَنَابِلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢٦١)

*The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and*

*Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing.* (Al-Baqarah: 261)

Amthāl was explained for denying, where the representation is what people hate, as in the prohibition on gossip in Q. S. Al-Ḥujurāt/49:12,

وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا أَيُّحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ

*Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it.*

Amthāl also be explained to praise the representation as in Allāh saying to *shahabah* Q. S. Al-Fath/48:29,

... ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزَّارِعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۚ

*That is their description in the Taurat and their description in the Injeel; like as seed-produce that puts forth its sprout, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers that He may enrage the unbelievers on account of them...*

Also the condition of *shahābah* when still have few people in first commandment, then grew and developed until their commandment became perfect.<sup>19</sup> Sometime *amthāl* was explained in order to express the characteristic that be condemned by human being. This can be seen when Allah set an example of someone who got a message from Allāh, then he devoted himself to way of

<sup>19</sup> Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥits fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 2000), 281-282.

good deed, but he fell and be immersed in secular, as Allāh said in Q. S al-A`rāf/07:175-176,

وَأَتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانْسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ۗ وَلَوْ  
شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلَ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ أَوْ  
تَرَكَهُ يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ۗ

*And recite to them the narrative of him to whom We give Our communications, but he withdraws himself from them, so the Shaitan overtakes him, so he is of those who go astray. And if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby; but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire, so his parable is as the parable of the dog; if you attack him he lolls out his tongue; and if you leave him alone he lolls out his tongue; this is the parable of the people who reject Our communications; therefore relate the narrative that they may reflect.*

And then, amthāl was plunged into the soul, conveyed as a preachment, forceful as a rebuke. Allāh increased amthāl for reminder and lesson in the Qur`ān. Allah said in Q. S. Al-Zumar/39:27,

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۗ

*And certainly We have set forth to men in this Quran similitudes of every sort that they may mind.*

And in other verse Q. S. Al-`Ankabūt/29:43,

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ لَضَرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ۗ

*And (as for) these examples, We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned.*

Al-Nabiy *ṣallā Allāhu `alaihi wasallam* explain amthāl in his hadīth. It helped *dā`īy* in every era for the truth advocacy and building *hujjah* (argument). Also, the teachers was assisted and applied the amthāl as the medium of explanation and motivation, and the medium of education of affection or disaffection, in praise or dispraise.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhith fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 281-282.