

Surah 29. Al-Ankabut

Asad: THE PARABLE of those who take [beings or forces] other than God for their protectors is that of the spider which makes for itself a house: for, behold, the frailest of all houses is the spider's house. Could they but understand this!

Malik: The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of a spider who builds for itself a dwelling, and surely the weakest of all dwellings is the dwelling of a spider, if they but knew it.

Pickthall: The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house, and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew.

Yusuf Ali: The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the Spider who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the Spider's house if they but knew. ^{3466 3467}

Transliteration: Mathalu allatheena ittakhathoo min dooni Allahi awliyaa kamathali alAAankabooti ittakhathat baytan wainna awhana albuyooti labaytu alAAankabooti law kanoo yaAAalamoona
Khattab:

The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of a spider spinning a shelter. And the flimsiest of all shelters is certainly that of a spider, if only they knew.¹

Author Comments

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Externally, the web is too flimsy to protect the spider against rain and strong wind. Internally, the spider's family structure is fragile, since some species are cannibalistic, with the female preying on the male and the young eating their own mother.

3466 - The Spider's house is one of the wonderful Signs of Allah's creation. It is made up of fine silk threads spun out of silk glands in the spider's body. There are many kinds of spiders and many kinds of spider's houses. Two main types of houses may be mentioned. There is the tubular nest or web, a silk-lined house or burrow with one or two trap-doors. This may be called his residential or family mansion. Then there is what is ordinarily called a spider's web, consisting of a central point with radiating threads running in all directions and acting as tie-beams to the quasi-circular concentric threads that form the body of the web. This is his hunting box. The whole structure exemplifies economy in time, material, and strength. If an insect is caught in the net, the vibration set up in the radiating threads is at once communicated to the spider, who can come and kill his prey. In case the prey is powerful, the spider is

furnished with poison glands with which to kill his prey. The spider sits either in the centre of the web or hides on the under-side of a leaf or in some crevice, but he always has a single thread connecting him with his web, to keep him in telephonic communication. The female spider is much bigger than the male, and in Arabic the generic gender of 'Ankabut is feminine.

3467 - Most of the facts in the last note can be read into the Parable. For their thickness the spider's threads are very strong from the point of view of relativity, but in our actual world they are flimsy, especially the threads of the gossamer spider floating in the air. So is the house and strength of the man who relies on material resources however fine or beautiful relatively; before the eternal Reality they are as nothing. The spider's most cunning architecture cannot stand against a wave of a man's hand. His poison glands are like the hidden poison in our beautiful worldly plans which may take various shapes but have seeds of death in them.

[View Page](#)

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