

THE RIBAT

The word RIBAT is derived from the Arabic root R-B-T, which means 'to tie, to confirm, to strengthen, to fortify'. It appears in the Qur'an in several ayats. It has an inner dimension and an outward dimension. As regards the inner dimension, it is used to indicate how Allah strengthens the heart of the mumin when he or she is confronted by kufr. Speaking of how Musa's mother felt when she saw her baby son in the hands of Pharaoh's family, Allah says:

Musa's mother felt a great emptiness in her heart
and she almost gave him away;
only We *fortified* her heart so that
she would be one of the muminun. (28: 9)

Speaking of the Companions of the Cave, Allah says:

We *fortified* their hearts when they stood up and said,
'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and we will not call on any god apart from Him.' (18: 14)

As regards the outer dimension, it is used to indicate how inward certainty manifests in outward action. Speaking of how He calmed the hearts of the Muslims before the battle of Badr, Allah says it was:

... to purify you and remove the taint of Shaytan from you,
and to *fortify* your hearts and make your feet firm. (8: 11)

Allah also says in the Qur'an:

You who have iman, be steadfast;
be supreme in steadfastness;
be firm on the battlefield;
and have taqwa of Allah;
so that hopefully you will be successful. (3: 200)

According to Penrice's *Dictionary and Glossary of the Qur'an*, the word RIBAT, which is usually translated as 'a fortress', literally means 'a body of horse, consisting of five or more'. It is used in this sense in the following passage of Qur'an:

Do not imagine that those who are kafir have got ahead.
They are quite powerless.
Arm yourselves against them
with all the firepower and *cavalry* you can muster,
to terrify the enemies of Allah and your enemies,
and others besides them whom you do not know.
Allah knows them.
Anything you spend in the Way of Allah
will be repaid to you in full.
You will not be wronged. (8: 60-61)

Thus the people of the RIBAT, the MURABITUN, are those who withdraw from the world in order to purify and strengthen their hearts so that when they are back in it they may act fearlessly and decisively. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'One rider is a shaytan. Two riders are two shaytans, and three are a riding-party.' (*Al-Muwatta'* of Imam Malik: 54: 14. 35). Once there are five or more riding together, then the cavalry are on the move!