112043 - “The Secret” and “The Law of Attraction”

the question

I heard about a book that is very popular, which is called The Secret. I read it and I found that it is mainly discussing a concept called the “law of attraction”, which states that like is attracted to like, and that whatever happens to a person, good or bad, is the result of his thoughts. What is your opinion of this book, The Secret, and what does Islam say about the law of attraction?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The book The Secret was written by an Australian TV producer called Rhonda Byrne, who belongs to the New Thought movement, whose followers believe in a number of metaphysical principles that have to do with healing and self-development, and how a thought may have an impact on the physical world. This book, The Secret, speaks of these concepts and promotes them according to the principles of this movement. As you said, the book is popular throughout the world and has recently been translated into Arabic. After examining the book and reflecting on its contents, it becomes clear that it contains a number of seriously deviant ideas concerning matters of belief and scientific matters, the most serious of which are the following:

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The book promotes the idea of giving up striving and not paying attention to taking measures to attain goals; rather it suggests relying on wishful thinking and dreams. That is in accordance with the so-called law of attraction, which states that like attracts like, and that whatever happens to you in your life, you are the one who attracted it to your life, and it was attracted to you because of images stored in your mind, namely the things that you were thinking of. Whatever you think of, you will attract it to you. The people who follow this principle believe that the idea in a person’s mind has an impact in and of itself on the person’s environment and surroundings, and that by

means of his abstract thoughts, he may attract to himself whatever he wants of good things, without striving. They claim that thoughts have vibrations, and that these vibrations emanate from a person’s mind to the outside world in the form of electromagnetic waves, and that these thoughts can attract whatever exists in the universe of good and evil that is on the same wavelength. So if you are thinking positively, you are sending out waves with positive vibrations that will attract positive things to you. If you are thinking negative thoughts, then you are sending out waves with negative vibrations that will attract negative things to you. Undoubtedly these ideas are contrary to empirical science and common sense, and believing in them and acting upon them is contrary to Islamic teachings.

As for being contrary to Islamic teachings, that is because Allah, may He be exalted, has commanded us to work and strive in this world, and He has connected provision to taking measures and using available means, not to wishful thinking and illusions. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“He it is, Who has made the earth subservient to you (i.e. easy for you to walk, to live and to do agriculture on it), so walk in the path thereof and eat of His provision”

[al-Mulk 67:15].

With regard to it being contrary to common sense, that is because relying on wishful thinking and dreams will lead to the ruin of the world and to corruption of that which is of benefit to people and in their interests, and it will lead to casting aside all that humanity has achieved throughout the centuries of knowledge, science and civilisation. That is because, according to this theory, the sick person does not need to seek medical treatment, and people do not need engineers, builders and workers. All that the one who needs something has to do is think positive thoughts of what he wants, then ask the universe – Allah forbid – to fulfil his desire without him making any effort.

Those who follow this movement contradict themselves when they tell the sick person who is about to die, “Don’t stop seeking medical treatment.” Otherwise, what their idea implies is that one should stop seeking medical treatment, and hospitals should be shut down, and medical

schools should be turned into meditation centres where people can relax and develop wishful thinking and dreams, or what they call positive thinking – and so on and so forth in all other fields. Thus it becomes clear that this movement is contrary to common sense and contrary to what is visible of real life experience. People cannot build sound lives on the basis of such an idea.

The poet spoke the truth when he said:

If I developed wishful thinking, I could sleep all night happily, but wishful thinking is the capital of the penniless.

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The book goes to extremes in venerating man and bestowing upon him a halo of sanctity and greatness, as it expresses the belief that man possesses unlimited powers and huge energy, to the point that he has the power to create. So everything that happens to man, good or bad, is his own creation. The book says, for example: “Anything we focus our mind on, we can create it” (p. 141). Undoubtedly this is a serious deviation and is ascribing partners to Allah, may He be exalted, in His Lordship. Allah, may He be exalted, spoke the truth (interpretation of the meaning): “Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He Alone has the right to be worshipped)” [al-Baqarah 2:22].

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The book promotes belief in pantheism, which is false, by saying that the Creator and His creation are one and the same, and that that man is God in physical form – exalted be Allah far above that. This idea is reiterated and expressed in many different ways in the book.

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The book supports a number of Eastern beliefs and idolatrous philosophies, such as Buddhism, Hinduism and so on. We have seen how the followers of these religions celebrated this book, The Secret, because it spread and promoted the principles of their religions.

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The book promotes the idea of focusing on the universe in order to achieve one's wants and desires. So if you want something, all you have to do is direct your request to the universe, and the universe will inevitably respond to your request. Islam, on the other hand, calls people to focus on Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, for it is to Him that one should turn and ask for what one needs. Turning to anyone or anything else in matters over which only Allah, may He be glorified, has power constitutes shirk – Allah forbid.

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The book contradicts belief in the divine will and decree, as it denies that God has foreordained the decrees of His creation and that He decided everything before it happens. The book is in harmony with the view of the extreme Qadaris who denied the divine will and decree, as it says that whatever happens in the universe is not part of God's knowledge before it happens, and it is not already written and decreed. Undoubtedly belief in the divine will and decree is one of the pillars of faith, without which a person's faith cannot be valid.

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The book promotes selfishness and egocentricity, and calls people to cast aside all Islamic teachings and moral guidelines, and to pursue the desires and pleasures of the nafs, so the criterion for deciding whether or not to go ahead with something is how much it may bring of joy and pleasure, and how much one likes it. So whatever a person likes, let him do it, and whatever he dislikes, let him avoid it, without paying any attention to morals or religious teachings. Undoubtedly this is contrary to Islamic and moral values, for the Muslim is bound by a religious and moral framework, and cannot go beyond it. What Allah has enjoined is obligatory, what He has forbidden is prohibited, and what He has permitted is permissible. What the Muslim must do is adhere to the rulings of sharee'ah and Islam.

These are some of the deviant ideas contained in this book. Therefore you should avoid it. Anyone who would like to know more details about the reality of this book and the extent of the deviant

ideas that it contains may refer to a research paper entitled Khuraafat as-Sirr: Qiraa’ah Tahleeliyyah li Kitaab as-Sirr wa Qanoon al-Jadhab (The Myth of the Secret: an Analytical Reading of the Book The Secret and the Law of Attraction).

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