

The Struggle Between Man and Shaytan in Accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah

As-salámu ‘alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!”

“A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.

Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta’eenahu, wanastagh-firuhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana’oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a’maalinaa.

May- Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhoo warasooluh”

In the name of Allah most merciful, most compassionate

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today our subject is the struggle between Man and Shaytan in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. Before the creation of man, (Adem (as)) there were two forms of creation – the angels and the jinn. The Shaytan as we know him or it, belonged to the jinn family. Before the commandment to bow down / prostrate to Adem (as) was given to all the angels and jinn, Shaytan was known as Haris in Arabic or Azazel in Hebrew.

The word Iblis in Arabic means to despair or to give up any hope of good (Khayr); to be regretful or remorseful; or to feel sorrow, annoyance or dejection.

The word Shaytan in Arabic means to remove, deport or distance oneself from mercy (rahmah); another meaning is to burn with rage, wrath, fury; and another is to get into a state of self-destruction.

Both names were given and used in parallel for the devil after the incident of refusal to bow to Adem. In all verses relating to the command of prostration to Adem, the term Iblis is used. However, after his promise to corrupt man and his expulsion from Heaven the term Shaytan is used to describe him.

The purpose of Man's creation

Allah (swt) gives us His reason for creating man in Surah Az-Zariyat (51:56) “And I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve (worship) Me” So our purpose is to know and worship Allah. But in doing so man is also subject to various tests by his Lord or Creator. Allah (swt) states: “Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, “We believe”, and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and God will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.” (Ankebut 1-3)

The objective of tests is to distinguish between the Ebu Bakr's and the Ebu Jahl's of this world. Like any test, they are a method of seeing who is truthful or hardworking and who is deceitful or lazy. Man is tested via two methods: the Shaytan and his own (internal) nafs. However, the very first test that Allah tried with His creation was

given to the angels and jinn, when He asked them to bow down to Adam (as). Man's biggest test, the Shaytan, also failed his own test when confronted with this command.

Allah narrates this event in Surah Al-Ar'af:

“It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels bow down to Adam, and they bowed down; not so Iblis; He refused to be of those who bow down.” (7:11)

“(God) said: “What prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?” He said: “I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay.”” (7:12)

Here Iblis argues his point, that fire is superior to clay making him superior to Adam (as). With this argument of comparing material matter, he is actually limiting the Supremacy of His creator by stating that Allah's capability does not extend beyond matter. Whereas Allah's (swt) purpose in creating man goes deep into the realm of spirituality. He makes man caliph (heir) of this world. With this command Shaytan shows his arrogance and stubbornness. This raises the question that “Why then was Shaytan able to reside in the realm of angels and jinn for such a time without this being known?” According to tafseer scholars, until that day, Allah (swt) had not requested anything of him which would have touched that raw nerve, so to speak. Having touched that nerve, the Shaytan showed his true colours with his outburst of arrogance.

Upon his arrogance Allah states:

“(God) said: “Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures).”” (7:13)

And he banishes Shaytan from Heaven and from his Mercy. At this point instead of repenting and asking for Allah's forgiveness he rebels further and asks Allah(swt) to give him respite (time) until the day of Judgement when the Sur is blown promising to sit on the paths of believers and doing all within his power to lead them astray.

The surah continues:

“He said: “Give me respite till the day they are raised up.”” (7:14)

“(God) said: “Be thou among those who have respite.”” (7:15)

“He said: “Because thou hast thrown me out of the way, lo! I will lie in wait for them on thy straight way.”” (7:16)

Here Satan is threatening to take revenge against Allah for casting him away and boasts that he will attack man with his poisonous arrows from all four sides.

“Then will I assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and their left: and you will not find, in most of them, gratitude (for thy mercies).” (7:17)

“(God) said: “Get out from this, disgraced and expelled. If any of them follow thee,- Hell will I fill with you all.”” (7:18)

So Allah banishes Satan from His presence and Mercy and promises the Hellfire for all those who follow in Satan's path.

Dear Brothers and Sisters

There are a number of methods or ways of salvation against Satan.

Upon witnessing Satan's determination to lead man astray, the angels express their anxiety and ask Allah (swt), "O Lord! How will man escape the poisonous arrows of Satan? Surely he is doomed if he is surrounded on all four sides!" In response Allah (swt) replies, "I have left two doors (escape routes) open for my servant to call upon. Top and bottom. If he holds his hands up in prayer and fixates his gaze up in our direction; and if he places his most cherished organ, his forehead by bowing down to sajdah I will forgive seventy years of his sins.

To summarise, the only way in which we can protect ourselves against Satan is by praying to Allah and pleading for his guidance and Mercy and also, by prostrating before Him in humility (unlike Satan) and asking to be led on the straight path.

Yet, it is important to note that Satan does not have the power or physical capability to make us commit sin. His only weapon is to whisper and sow seeds of doubt. However, Satan's biggest partner in crime is in actual fact our own nafs (self). Man who has been created with free will, has the ability to turn away from these whisperings with his own self-control.

"If anyone withdraws himself (or herself) from remembrance of the All-Merciful, We assign unto him (or her) a devil as a comrade".(43:36)

As narrated by Abu Huraira, our Prophet (pbuh) pointed out: "When the Adhan is pronounced Satan takes to his heels and passes wind with noise during his flight in order not to hear the Adhan. When the Adhan is completed he comes back and again takes to his heels when the Iqama is pronounced and after its completion he returns again till he whispers into the heart of the person (to divert his attention from his prayer) and makes him remember things which he does not recall to his mind before the prayer and that causes him to forget how much he has prayed." (Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 11, Number 582).

May Allah protect us from the arrows and whispers of Satan.

Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil 'Aalameen. Was-salaatu was-salaamu alaa Khayril mursaleen. Muhammadin-nabeey-yil Ummiy-yeen, wa-'alaa aalihee, wa sahabihee, aj-ma'een.

Ammaa ba'ad:

Innalláha wa malaaiikata yusallúna alan nabi. Yá ay yuhal latheena ámanu sallú alayhi wasalli mú tas leema. Allahumma salli alá Muhammad, wa ala áli Muhammad, kama salayta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali Ibrahim. Allahumma barik ala Muhammad, wa alaa áli Muhammad, kama barakta ala Ibrahim, wa ala ali ibrahim. Fil ála meen, innaka hameedun majeed."