

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 14: The Scope of Shaytan's Authority

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ
يَتَوَكَّلُونَ إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ

When you recite the Quran, seek refuge in Allah from the outcast Satan. Indeed he does not have any authority over those who have faith and put their trust in their Lord. His authority is only over those who befriend him and those who make him a partner [of Allah]. (Naḥl 16:98-100)

Reflections:

“The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.” There is a truth to this popular statement because when people stop talking about Shayṭān and when he vanishes from their discourse, they let down their guard and become susceptible to his whisperings. In the Qur'ān, Allah (swt) mentions Shayṭān multiple times, warning humanity about his sworn enmity against them and informing them to take him as an enemy. We find that the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) also made mention of him, and Imam Sajjād devoted one whole *du‘ā* in his *Ṣaḥīfah* seeking refuge in Allah from him.

Shayṭān has sworn to misguide humanity, but he particularly targets those who attempt to get close to Allah (swt): “I will surely lie in wait for them *on Your straight path*.”¹ This is a warning for us to always be on guard, but especially when we engage in acts that are outwardly pleasing to God, for these same acts can be hijacked by Shayṭān: “Woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer, who show off but deny aid.”²

Hence, we have the recommendation in the verses above to begin the recitation of the Qur'ān with the *isti‘āḍah* (seeking refuge in God) since reading the Qur'ān is one of the clear manifestations of traversing on the straight path. But this seeking refuge is not just a precursor to reading the Qur'ān or any noble act; rather, it is meant to be sustained during the entire duration of the noble act. Moreover, it is not just a verbal utterance of “I seek refuge in Allah from the outcast Shayṭān”; rather, it is meant to be a lifestyle reflected in our words, our actions, and our hearts of a continues seeking refuge in the Oneness of God. When we seek refuge in the fortress of God's Oneness, Shayṭān no longer has authority over us.

So how do we seek refuge? The Qur'ān tells us: (1) by nurturing our faith; and (2) by putting our trust in God. Putting our trust in God (*tawakkul*) is to rely on God more than ourselves or the things around us. It is to take God as our attorney (*wakīl*) against Shayṭān. When God becomes our attorney, we are in his protective custody, and Shayṭān has no access to us.

So who does Shayṭān have access to? The Qur'ān mentions two groups: (1) those who reject the Oneness of God and attribute partners to Him; and (2) those who befriend Shayṭān. Befriending Shayṭān is to take on his qualities. One of the most prominent qualities he manifested was his pride. To be proud, then, is to open oneself to the whisperings of Shayṭān. For this reason, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) says, “You should therefore put out the fires of tribalism and the flames of *jāhiliyyah* that are hidden in your hearts ... Resolve to adorn your head with modesty, trample self-glory beneath your feet, and cast the yoke of arrogance from your necks. Make humility the weapon that stands between you and your enemy, Shayṭān, and his armies.”³ May Allah increase our humbleness during this blessed month.

To ponder: How does our reliance and trust in Allah (swt) show itself in our lives?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*

¹ 7:16

² 107:4-7

³ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 192