

ALI 309: Knowing God through the Whispered Prayers

Session Two

Whispered Prayer of the Complainers
Munajaat no. 2, Sahifa Sajjadiyyah

Questions for Reflection

- 1) What is the common link between the three enemies Imam complains of in the Munajaat?
- 2) How is the attack of each of these enemies different?

Agenda

- The Shaytan
- Two questions about the Shaytan
- Facts about the Shaytan from Quran
- How does Shaytan work?
- The heart
- Unnatural/Natural states of the heart
- Dua to retain the natural state of the heart

Seeking Mercy through Munajaat

- When supplicating a believer must feel complete dependence, poverty, and insignificance.
- The Munajaat seeks the mercy of Allah through displaying weakness and pleading for assistance.
- The Whispered Prayer of the complainers seeks help against the enemies that distance the human being from God. It shows a weakness in the face of these enemies that can only be overcome with the help of God.

The Shaytan

■ Shaytan is a general term used for any being that is evil and leads astray. The word Shaytan is derived from the roots شطن and شاطن meaning 'impure and base'.

Ash-Shaytan refers to Iblis who disobeyed the order to prostrate and who whispers into the hearts of human beings to lead them astray.

■ Shaytan was guilty of the sins of pride and jealousy. His faith was conditional rather than the unconditional faith which Allah deserves.

■ Shaytan wanted to worship God the way he desired, not the way God desired.

Two Questions

Q - Was the nafs not enough for testing the human being?
Why two inciters towards evil?

A- 1) The human being has two faculties for guidance; the inner fitrat or natural instinct and the outer guidance in the form of Prophets, Imams, and the word of God. In the same way he also has two faculties of misguidance; the inner nafs and the outer Shaytan. By choosing correctly between the two he can achieve perfection.

2) The nafs has whisperings, both from the nafs amaarah and the nafse lawwamah. But both are slightly weak and cannot produce perfection and spiritual growth. To achieve this a stronger challenge was needed.

Q – How do the whisperings of Shaytan differ from the whisperings of the nafse Ammarah.

A:

- 1) It is not internal or naturally instinctive
- 2) It exists independently of the nafs but cannot work independently of the nafs.
- 3) It adds to the whisperings of the nafs through different strategies to encourage the human being to follow the nafs.

Ilham and Waswas

Ilham – noble and good thoughts that lead towards good and virtue.

Waswas – low and negative thoughts that lead towards evil.

The nafs is able to accept both. Which one it accepts depends on its virtue and piety, Dhikr of Allah, and its desires.

Facts about the Shaytan from Quran

- 1) Cannot be seen – 7:27
- 2) Is an enemy of the human being – 35:6
- 3) Plans strategies against us – Sad, 82-83
- 4) Adorns evil and makes it look good – 15:39
- 5) Creates fear and doubt – 3:175
- 6) has no real power over us – 14:22

How does Shaytan work?

(From the Munajaat of the Complainers)

Through;

- tempting thoughts
- negative suggestions
- supports desires against the self
- adorns the love of this world
- prevents obedience and closeness to God

From *Faith and Reason* by Ayatullah Mahdi Hadavi Tehrani

Satan's exerts his influence on man's thoughts. He launches his assaults from various fronts, of which we mention a few:

1. He tries to deter man from worshipping Allah (awj) according to the requirements of revelation by tempting him to act according to his own desires.
2. He influences man's ability to think rationally so that instead of reaching conclusions based on solid reasoning, he accepts fallacies that only seem to be rational.
3. He influences man's ability to understand reality as it is. He skews man's understanding or convinces him to reject the possibility of understanding such reality. In this way, Satan first corrupts one's perception of reality, then his ability to comprehend reality, and finally his actions.

The Qur`an and ahadith indicate that Satan and his cohorts only have influence over people who have surrendered their devotion to Allah (awj) and who—in a fit of heedlessness—have fallen into a stupor of self-conceit. Of his own admission, he has no influence over Allah's (awj) true servants.

The Heart

The heart according to the Quran and teachings of Islam controls the degree of human-ness within a human being.

According to Ayatullah Ibrahim Amini in his book *Self Building* the heart is the seat of faith, hypocrisy, understanding, acceptance of truth, guidance, deviation, sin, intention, purification, corruption, love, negligence, fear, anger, doubt, conflict, mercy, cruelty . . . Etc.

The heart can be alive or dead, sick or healthy, hard or soft . . . depending on its spiritual state.

Unnatural states of the heart

(From the Munajaat of the Complainers)

- Hard
- Keeps turning due to conflicting thoughts
- Covered with rust
- Sealed
- Prevents the eye from weeping
- Eager for pleasures

How the heart becomes unnatural

كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ ۖ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

Nay! what they used to do
has become like rust upon their hearts.

Al Mutaffifin, 83:14

Dua to retain natural state of the heart

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ
رَحْمَةً ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

Our Lord! make not our hearts to deviate
after You have guided us
and grant us mercy from You
surely You are the Giver of bounties without
measure

Sura Aale Imran, 3:8