

## Sūrat Saba Verses 20-21

وَلَقَدْ صَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِبْلِيسُ ظَنَّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Q34:20 Certainly Iblis had his assumption come true about them. So, they followed him—all except a part of the faithful

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ ۚ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ

Q34:21 He had no authority over them, but that We may distinguish those who believe in the Hereafter from those who are in doubt about it, and your Lord is the Preserver of all things.

### Questions for Reflection

- 1) What assumption did Iblis have about the people?
- 2) How were the true believers able to resist Iblis?
- 3) What is the test being referred to in verse 21? (being tested by being given free will to obey or disobey)

### Commentary

These two verses are a conclusion of the story of the people of Saba. After narrating how their ingratitude and heedlessness destroyed them, the Quran points out the reason for their downfall. They were not able to fight the whisperings of their souls and of Iblis.

Iblis knows that human beings will be victims of his temptations. Most of them will not be determined enough to do what they know deep down is right. He declared that right at the beginning when he told Allah - *He said, 'By Your might, I will surely make them live an evil life, all except Your exclusive servants among them* (Q38:82-83). Although this was just an assumption at that time, it became true as more and more people followed him and disobeyed God. He knew the weaknesses of the human being. They would not be strong in their faith and would lack determination to stand firmly on the right path.

It was only a small group of staunch believers that refused to follow him. The groups on truth are always small, because it is a hard journey. Most human beings prefer to give in to their whims and be comfortable. But it is the small group that are noble and have value.

Imam Ali (a) says about this small group of strong believers;

*But the earth is never devoid of those who maintain Allah's plea either openly and reputedly or, being afraid, as hidden in order that Allah's pleas and proofs should not be rebutted. How many are they and where are they? By Allah, they are few in number, but they are great in esteem before Allah. Through them Allah guards His pleas and proofs till they entrust them to others like themselves and sow the seeds thereof in the hearts of those who are similar to them. Knowledge has led them to real understanding and so they have associated themselves with the spirit of conviction. They*

*take easy what the easygoing regard as hard. They endear what the ignorant take as strange. They live in this world with their bodies here but their spirits rest in the high above. They are the vicegerents of Allah on His earth and callers to His religion. Oh, oh, how I yearn to see them.* (Nahjul Balagha, Hadith no.147)

In verse 21 Allah points out that Shaytan does not have any authority over people. It is they who allow him to influence them. Shaytan himself also will declare that on the Day of Judgment. The Quran says; *And the Shaytan shall say after the affair is decided: Surely Allah promised you the promise of truth, and I gave you promises, then failed to keep them to you, and I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me, therefore do not blame me but blame yourselves; I cannot be your helper now nor can you be my helpers; surely I disbelieved in your associating me with Allah before; surely it is the unjust that shall have the painful punishment.* (Q14:22).

The reason for allowing Shaytan to influence human beings is outlined in verse 21 – so that people may be sifted out. The true believers are distinguished from those who are weak in faith and have doubts. Although Allah knows the groups, their actions will make that knowledge manifest. It becomes a knowledge that is open and visible. People cannot be rewarded or punished solely on the basis of Allah's knowledge. Their actions have to materialize and then they receive the consequences.

The verse ends by saying that Allah preserves everything. Any small deed, good or evil, is recorded and preserved. Nothing escapes Allah.

#### Connecting verses

Iblis/Shaytan – 2:268, 2:208, 7:201, 17:53

#### Connecting Topic

Difference between Iblis and Shaytan.

<http://en.wikishia.net/view/Iblis>