

## **IBLIS: THE ARCH-DECEIVER JINN**

*Being familiar with your enemy is the very first step in fighting him. How Iblis works, who works for him or with him, how he approaches humans, how to deal with his temptations and insinuations..., are all topics which should be on the top of everyone's list of priorities.*

- Let us, first of all, explain the meaning of the word "Iblis". Like "Satan", it is an Arabic word. Consulting the famous lexicon Lisan al-Arab by Abu al-Fadl Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzour, we find the following on P. 29, Vol. 6 (Dar Sadir, Beirut, Lebanon, 1300 A.H./1883 A.D.):
- Root word: *balasa* or *ablasa* (both past tense verbs) from the mercy of Allah: he lost all hope for the mercy of Allah, and he regretted, hence Iblis, a name attached to Azazel (his original name).
- Azazel is the name of Iblis in the Old Testament. "Iblis" is a noun used as a descriptive adjective. Consulting a good English-English dictionary such as The Random House College Dictionary (Random House, Inc., New York, 1975) Azazel is described as "the scapegoat released on the [Jewish] Day of Atonement, or its destination, hell, "and as one of the "fallen angels."

*"Satan" is an adjective used as a noun. Its Arabic origin is shaytan, someone irate, enraged, angry, furious, burning with the fire of wrath; shiyat means burning.*

*In Greek, his name is Phosphorus.*

*In Latin mythology, he is referred to as Lucifer, "the light-bearing." This same Latin word also describes planet Venus, the morning star.*

*In Isaiah 14:12, Lucifer is said to be king of Babylon. This must have been used metaphorically, for certainly most of Babylon's kings were devilish, very evil, proud and arrogant.*

- Moreover, there is no such name among all those who ruled not only the city capital Babylon but all of the kingdom of Babylonia. Like the Pharaohs of Egypt, for many centuries contemporaries of the kings of Babylon, these kings demanded their subjects to worship them as their gods. The story of Prophet Abraham and Nemrud is an example.
- Azazel is mentioned in traditions transmitted by renown traditionalist such as Tawus al-Yamani (d. about 106 A.H./724 A.D.) and Mujahid ibn Jabr, Abu al-Hajjaj who both say that:

Before committing his sin, Iblis used to be one of the angels named Azazel. He was one of the residents of the earth, and he belonged to a group of angels known as the jinns. None among the angels was more diligent or more knowledgeable than him. When he disobeyed Allah, He caused him and made him a Satan and named him Iblis.

- According to Ibn Abbas and al-Masudi, before his fall, Iblis was beautiful, ennobled and honored, a ruler over the lower heavens and the earth, and one of the keepers of the janna, the earthly Paradise, temporary home of Adam and Eve.
- When he fell from grace, the Almighty cursed him, deformed him, and cast him away from His mercy. All of this is documented in al-Tabari's tafsir. All Iblis's offspring, therefore, are deformed and ugly, as a matter of fact, the ugliest of all jins. Had humans only seen them, they would have wondered how they ever listened to them and obeyed them.
- There is another theory as to how Iblis came to be mixed with the angels. It is recorded by Sayyid Ali ibn Tawus on p.33 of his book Sa'd al-Su'ood. He says that in the Tablets of prophet Enoch (Idris), there is a record of how the jinns were multiplying and how corrupt they were; so, Iblis pleaded to Allah to save him from them and to let him be in the company of the angels instead, and that Allah granted him his wish.
- Iblis's kunya is "Abu Murra."
- When the Meccans wanted to assassinate the Messenger of Allah in a plot very well documented in history books, a man named al-Shaykh al-Najdi appeared to them. He, in fact, was none other than Iblis. Iblis had simply taken the form of that man and came to the plotters with the suggestion to select one man from each of the Meccan tribes for the execution of their scheme so that Muhammad's blood would be lost among them and Banu Hashim, his clan, would simply be unable on its own to face all the other tribes combined. The kunya of that Najdi was "Abu Murra." Iblis, therefore, was named likewise.
- The jinns eat and drink, marry, and have their own social system. Some of them live for thousands of years, but there is no term set for Iblis and his offspring; he and they shall live till the Day of Judgment. Such respite granted to Iblis is referred to in verses such as these:

He (Iblis) said: *Lord! Grant me a respite till the time when they are raised (for judgment). He (Allah) said: So surely you are of the respited ones, till the period of the time made known.* (Qur'an, 15:36-38)

- This respite means an exemption from having to die, one that lasts till Israfil blows his trumpet for the second, not the first, time, with a time period of forty years between both blows.
- Some scholars, however, are of the view that this respite will terminate at the “minor qiyama”, that is when Imam Mahdi (AS), the Awaited Savior, will reappear to put an end to all tyranny and mischief and to start a period of peace and tranquility never enjoyed before in the entire history of mankind.
- Naturally, such an enjoyment can never be complete without first putting an end to Iblis’s mischief-making, and Allah knows best.

*What did Iblis do before committing his disobedience?*

Here is a tradition transmitted by Ibn Abbas that sheds light on this subject:

- The first to dwell on earth were the jinns.
- They caused corruption on it and shed blood, killing each other.
- Allah then sent Iblis to them with an army of angels to annihilate them.
- They were a tribal group called jinns.
- Iblis and the angels with him caused a bloodbath among them and eventually banished them to the islands in the oceans and to the mountains.
- His success caused him to be proud and haughty.
- He said, *I have done something nobody has ever done before.*
- Allah was aware of how Iblis felt, but the other angels who were in his company were not.

Jameel ibn Durraj once asked Imam Abu Abdillah al-Sadiq (AS) about Iblis, whether or not he was an angel. “He was not an angel,” said the Imam (AS),” ... *he was from the jinns, and he was in the company of the angels. The angels regarded him as one of them, but Allah knew that he was not; so when He ordered him to bow down to Adam, he did what he did.*

- Iblis knew exactly what he was made of; he knew that unlike the angels who were created from light (noor), he, being a jinn, was created from fire; in the following Qur’anic verse, he admits this fact:

He (Allah) said: *What inspired you from making obeisance when I commanded you to? He (Iblis) said: I am better than him: You have created me of fire, while him have You created of dust.* (Qur’an 7:12)

The Almighty Himself, Creator of everyone and everything, tells us that Iblis was one of the jinns in many verses; here is one of them:

*And when We said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam, they made obeisance but Iblis (did not). He was of the jinns, so he transgressed the commandments of his Lord. (Qur'an, 18:50)*

- This verse has confused some people: On one hand, the Almighty says that He addressed the angels, and Iblis was amongst those addressed; so, will that not make him one of them? Not necessarily according to the way Arabs use their language. On the other hand, the very same verse very clearly states that “he (Iblis) was of the jinns.”

Ali ibn Ibrahim narrates a tradition traced to Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (AS) who quotes the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (AS) stating the following:

- Seven thousand years passed since two species, the jinns and the nisanas, were on earth when Allah the Exalted wanted to create a new creation.
- He unveiled the curtains of the heavens and said to the angels: Look at the residents of the earth from among My creation; look at the jinns and the nisanas.
- When they saw all the sins they were doing, they deemed them monstrous and said: *Lord! You are the Exalted One, the Omnipotent, and there are Your weakling creatures being sustained by Your sustenance, yet they live in disobedience to you while You do not seek revenge for Yourself.*
- When He heard the angels say so, He said to them, *I am going to create a successor to them on earth who will be the hujja (argument or proof) on earth.*
- The angels then said, *Glory to You! Are you going to permit to live on it one who will cause corruption just as the jinns have done? Make a successor one of us, for we do not disobey You; rather, we always Praise, Glorify, and Sanctify You.*
- The most Exalted One said, *I know what you do not; I wish to create a creation Myself and to bring out of his offspring prophets and righteous servants as well as guided Imams who I shall appoint as successors (of one another) over My creation and on My earth, and I shall purge My earth from the nisanas and exile the tyrant ones from among the disobedient jinns and let them reside in the air and throughout the earth, and I shall create a curtain between the jinns and My creations.*
- The angels then said, *Lord! Do whatever You please.*
- Allah then distanced them from the Arsh (Throne) as far as the distance of five hundred years.
- They gathered around it and pointed at it with their fingers, whereupon the Lord looked mercifully at them and set up for them the ma'moor House and said to them: *Circle around it, leave the Throne alone*, so they circled it, and it is the House entered every day by seventy thousand angels who never return to it.

- Allah, therefore , made the ma'moor House for the repentance of the residents of the heavens, then He made the Ka'ba for the repentance of the residents of the earth.

Imam Ali (AS) has also said the following about Iblis as recorded in Nahjul-Balagha:

Conceit overcame him, so he boasted of the superiority of his origin over Adam, and he became fanatical in his bias to his own. The enemy of Allah, therefore, is the leader of fanatics, the ancestor of the proud, the one who set the foundations of fanaticism. He argued with Allah with regard to His destiny, wearing outfit of arrogance, taking off the robe of humility. Do you not see how Allah, because of his pride, humiliated him and because of his arrogance abased him? He made him in the life of this world condemned, and He prepared for him in the hereafter the fire. Had Allah desired to create Adam of light that snatches the eye-sight and dazzle the minds, and had He made his fragrance breathtaking, He would have just done that. And had He done so, all would have submitted to him, and it would have been easier for the angels to tolerate him.

But Allah, the most Exalted One, tries His creation with a little of what they do not know in order to thus test them, in order to rid them of pride, in order to distance them from conceit; so, you should learn a moral lesson from what Allah did to Iblis! He nullified all the good things he had done for such a very long time and all his endeavor, for he had adored Allah for six thousand years, whether they were years of this life's calculation or of that of the hereafter, all because of a moment's touch of pride!

Ali ibn Ibrahim, the renown mufassir, has said,

- Pride is the very first transgression whereby Allah was disobeyed by Iblis.
- Iblis said, *Lord! Exempt me from having to prostrate to Adam, and I (in return) shall worship You in such a way no angel near to You nor a sent messenger ever will.*
- Allah said, *I have no need for your worship. I wish to be adored as I wish, not as you.*
- But he refused to prostrate, whereupon Allah said to him, *Get out of it, for you are accursed.*
- Iblis said, *How so, Lord, while You are the Just One Who never oppresses? This means You will not reward me for all the good deeds I have done.*
- Allah said, *No, I will not, but ask me whatever you wish of the affairs of the life as rewards for your good deeds, and I shall grant it to you.*

- The first thing Iblis asked for was to remain alive till the Day of Judgment, and Allah, the most Exalted One, granted him his request.
- Then he asked Him to give authority over Adam's offspring, and He granted him this one too.
- Then he said, *Let me be as close to them as the blood in their veins*, and Allah said, *I grant you this one, too*.
- Then Iblis said, *No son is born for them except that two are born for my service, and I shall see them while they cannot see me, and I shall appear to them in any form I wish*. Allah said, *I grant it to you*.
- Then he said, *Lord! Grant me an increase!* Allah said, *I have made for you and your offspring a home in their [humans'] chests*.
- Iblis then said, *Lord! You have given me enough!*
- It was then that Iblis said, as verse 82 of Surat Saad (Qur'an, 38:82) and verse 17 of Surat al-A'raaf (Qur'an 7:17) tell us, *By Your Might, I will surely make them live an evil life, all of them, except Your servants among them, the purified ones*, (Qur'an 38:82-82), and, *As you have caused me to remain disappointed, I will certainly lie in ambush for them on Your Straight Path, then will I certainly come to them from before them, from behind them, from their right side, and from their left, and You shall not find most of them thankful*. (Qur'an, 7:16-17).

On rare occasions, however, Iblis offered sound advice to a select few, knowing that he by no means could fool them. He offered advice to Noah and Moses:

- When Nuh invoked his Lord to condemn his people and to inflict retribution upon them, Iblis came to him and said, *O Nuh! Remember me in three situations, for I am closer during them to any of the servants of Allah: Remember me when you are angry, and remember me when you have to arbitrate between two contenders, and remember me when you sit with a woman and nobody else is present with you*.
- When Nuh landed from the ark after the flood was over, Iblis came to him and said, *Nobody on the face of earth has done me a bigger favor than you! You invoked Allah against these sinners, so you relieved me from having to deal with them. Shall I, then, teach you two merits? Beware of envy, for it did to me what it did. And beware of avarice, for it did to Adam what it did*.
- One of the pieces of advice Iblis offered Prophet Musa was the following: *Whenever you contemplate upon offering charity, do it immediately, for whenever a servant of Allah contemplates upon paying something by way of charity, I, rather than any of my fellows, will keep him company in order to desist him from doing it*.

Who makes Iblis's job easier? As we have learned from the above, anger is on the top of the list, for when anger overtakes someone, the latter will be too weak to use common-sense, let alone wisdom. He will be rash and erratic. The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali (AS) wrote a letter once to al-Harith al-Hamadani in which he said, *Beware of anger, for it is a great host of Iblis.*

Besides anger, women play a major role in assisting Iblis in carrying out his schemes, I mean when people are overcome by their carnal desires for women who are not lawful for them.

Iblis once said to Moses, *O Musa! You should never be in the company of a woman who is not permissible for you, for no man does so except that I, rather than any of my fellows, will keep him company.*

#### Definition of Iblis

In the Qur'an, the Devil has 2 names. Iblis, probably derived from the Greek diabolos & used always in the singular & as a personal name, usually in the context of his fall from grace.

Some scholars have argued that Shaytan, his other name which is Arabic & possibly derived from the roots 'to be far from' or 'born with anger,' may have been acquired as a result of his rebellion, while others argue that Iblis is used in context of the Devil's relationship to God, while Shaytan is used in relation to humans. Shaytan occurs much more frequently in the Qur'an than Iblis, usually in connection with the temptation & seduction of humans.

The Qur'an mentions the account of the fall of Iblis several times. When Allah created man, he told all spirits to bow before him. Iblis refused claiming he was better than humans because he was created out of fire instead of mud. Allah then cast him down for his pride. Allah then agrees to let Iblis tempt humanity until the last day when the dead are raised, but tells Iblis he will have no power over Allah, Himself, or any of Allah's servants.

#### Tricks of Satan

As for the tricks of Shaytan against you they are seven.

1. *He obstructs you from doing acts of obedience.* Repel him, if Allah protects you, by realizing that you are in need of these acts of obedience in order to gather provision from this life for the next life which will have no ending.
2. *He commands you to procrastinate in acts of obedience.* Repel him, if Allah protects you, by realizing that your appointed time is not in your hands and that you could die at any moment.

3. *He commands you to rush in acts of obedience by suggesting to you, "Hurry! In order that you can do so and so!"* Repel him, if Allah protects you, by realizing that few acts of obedience done with perfection is better than many done incompletely.
4. *He commands you to perfect your worship in order to be seen of men.* Repel him, if Allah protects you, by realizing that the sight of Allah is enough for you over the sight of men.
5. *He whispers arrogance and pride in your heart by saying, "Who is greater and more precise than your obedience?"* Repel him, if Allah protects you, by realizing that your acts of obedience to Allah is a blessing from Allah, not from yourself. If it were not for the bounty of Allah, you would not be able to establish any act of obedience, which are nothing next to the blessing of Allah Ta`ala.
6. This is the greatest of his tricks, he says to you, *Make strenuous effort in keeping your obedience of Allah secret. Soon He will make your acts manifest before the world!* Repel him, if Allah protects you, that you are a slave of Allah and that He alone is your Master. If He wills, He will manifest you and if He wills He will keep you concealed. If He wills, He will make you important and if He wills He will make you insignificant. That is for Him to decide, and you should not care whether He manifests your good deeds to people or not, because there is nothing in their hands worth seeking after.
7. He suggests in your heart, *There is no need for you to perform acts of obedience to Allah. Truly, if you were created and destined to be among the people of bliss, then there is no danger in you neglecting the acts of worship. And if you were created and destined to be among the people of wretchedness, then there is no benefit in doing them.* Repel him, if Allah protects you, that realizing that you are a slave. And that it is the duty of a slave to obey the commands as is the rights to slaveness (`ubuudiyya).