

## QUR'ANIC CHAPTER AN-NAS

### Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

The human is always exposed to devilish temptations and the Satans, of Jinn and men, try to penetrate into his heart. The higher the standard of his knowledge and degree of his social position, the more intense the temptations of the Satans will be until they divert him from the straight way and send him astray.

This Sura commands the holy Prophet (S), as a leader and as an example, to seek refuge with Allah from the evil of any temptations.

The content of this Sura corresponds with the previous one, Sura Falaq. The subject is supplementary to that of the previous Sura. In both of them, Man is asked to take refuge with Allah by using His name /rabb/, 'The Lord', with a difference that in Sura Falaq various kinds of external evil are mentioned, but in this Sura the evil of internal, hidden tempters is emphasized.

Opinions are divided as to whether this Sura is Meccan or Medinan, but the tone of the statements is more agreeable with other Meccan Suras.

Regarding the fact that this Sura and Sura Falaq, according to the Islamic narrations, have been revealed together, and in many commentators' opinions Sura Falaq is Meccan, this Sura can be considered Meccan, too.

### *I - Take Refuge With the Lord of Mankind*

In this Sura, which is the last Sura of the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet (S), again, is personally addressed, as an example to and a leader of people, and the command is:

*Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Mankind  
The King of Mankind  
The God of Mankind*

It is interesting that, here, three attributes of the magnificent attributes of Allah; *Lordship, Ownership, and Divinity*, are emphasized, all of which are directly concerned with the training of Man, and his rescue from the grips of the tempters.

Of course, the objective of 'taking refuge with Allah' is not that a person says this phrase merely with his tongue, but he should accomplish it with his thoughts, Faith, and actions. He should avoid devilish routes, devilish programs, devilish minds and communications, and devilish societies and meetings; and travel the divine paths; otherwise, the person who follows those devilish ways and lets himself fall into the hands of those temptations cannot be safe by only reciting this Sura.

With saying '*The Lord of Mankind*',  
he confesses His Lordship and places himself under His guidance.

By saying '*The King of Mankind*',  
he knows himself as His object, and His obedient servant.

By saying '*The God of Mankind*',  
he goes on the path of worshipping Him, and avoids worshipping others but Him. Undoubtedly, the person who is actually qualified with these three attributes, and truly believes in them, will be safe from the mischief of the tempters.

In fact, these three attributes are three important lessons of instruction and three means of rescue from the evil of temptations which keep Man safe.

From the evil of the slinking whisperer,  
Who whispers evil into the hearts of Mankind,  
From among Jinn and Mankind.

The term /waswas/ has the infinitive meaning 'to tempt' and sometimes it is used, as in this verse, with the subjective meaning, 'tempter'.

The term /khannas/ is derived from /khunus/ with the meaning of 'to gather, to remain behind', and /khannas/, here, means 'Satan' because he hides himself at the name of Allah and hiding is with the action of remaining behind, so, the word has been used in the sense of 'to hide'.

Therefore, the meaning of the verses are: 'Say I take refuge with Allah from the devilish tempter who runs away and hides himself from the name of Allah'.

Basically, the devilish ones act hiddenly, and sometimes they murmur temptations into our ears so that we believe that the ideas are our own thoughts. This very kind of thinking causes us to go astray.

The method of Satan is alluring and shows injustice in the form and under the guise of justice; lies inside a shell of truth; sin in the semblance of worship, and aberration in the appearance of guidance.

In short, they, themselves, and their affairs, both, are hidden, and this is a warning to all followers, of the right and the path of truth, not to expect to see Satans in their real form, or observe their activities in their true, crooked shape. No, it will never be so. They are 'slinking whisperers' and their job is to plot, lie, be mischievous, be hypocritical, commit fraud and deceit, simulating truth, and hiding the right.

If they appear on the scene in their real form, if they do not mix wrong with right, and if they speak clearly and honestly, the truth would become apparent; as Hazrat Ali (p.b.u.h.) says: The fact is, had falsehood been allowed to appear separately from truth, seekers of truth would have easily discerned it and would have kept away from falsehood....

Nahj-ul-Balagha, Sermon 50, (Arabic version ).

They always take parts of truth and falsehood and mix them together to get control over people; as Amir-al-Mu'mineen Ali (S) , continuing the above sermon, says: *...and Satan took advantage of this situation and gained complete control over the minds of its followers...*

The words 'whispers' and 'hearts' used in the verse: Who whispers evil into the hearts of Mankind are an emphasis on this idea.

All of these are on the one hand, and on the other hand the phrase: 'From Jinn and Mankind' informs us that 'the slinking whisperer' is not among only a group of people or a special class of Man with a particular sign, but they can be found here and there among Jinn and Man with any form and in any society. We should be careful of them and take refuge with Allah from the evil of all of them.

Explanation: Why Do We Take Refuge With Allah?

At any moment it is possible that one may go astray, and when Allah bids His Apostle to take refuge with the Lord from the evil of the 'slinking whisperer' it is an evidence that becoming involved in the trap of the tempters, who whisper evil in people's minds, is possible.

So, everyone must seek refuge to Allah, with His name /rabb/, i.e., the Lord of Man, i.e., the Cherisher and Sustainer. By invoking this great attribute, Man can be hopeful and expect an especially particular retreat. Everyone should seek refuge with Allah as their King and Owner, invoking His authority over the affairs of Man, i.e., He is the One Who can independently act over His creation to seek the protection by invoking the divinity of the Lord as the God of Mankind for it is His authority which must necessarily be obeyed, i.e., it is His command or His Will which is always done.

Therefore, against the evil of these whisperers, there are heavenly angels for the believing servants of Allah and seekers of Truth, to come to help them, as Sura Fussilat, No. 41. Verse 30 says: In the case of those who say: 'Our Lord is Allah', and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time) ...

Nahj-ul-Balagha, Sermon 50, (Arabic Version)

But, in any case, we should never be proud and feel that we are not in need of the Divine lessons, admonishments and assistance. We should always take refuge with Him and be aware and prepared.

Supplication:

*O Lord! Protect us all from the evil of every tempter and dark inspiration.*

*O Lord! The trap is deep, the enemy is wakeful, his plots are hidden, and rescue is impossible but with Your Grace.*

# QUR'ANIC CHAPTER AL-FALAQ

## Ayatullah Sayyid Kamal Faqih Imani and a Group of Muslim Scholars

Some commentators believe that this Sura is Meccan while some others know it to be Medinan. The Sura contains some divine teaching commands to the holy Prophet (S) , in particular, and to all Muslims, in general, to seek refuge with Allah from every kind of ill arising from outer nature, dark and evil plotting and envy on the part of others.

On the occasion of revelation of this Sura, there are some narrations cited in most of the commentary books to the effect that the holy Prophet (S) was affected by some magic incantations, practiced by a few Jews, and became sick. Gabriel came down and indicated the place of the magic paraphernalia, which were hidden at the bottom of a well, by the Jews. They were taken out of the well and, then, these verses were recited and the physical condition of the Prophet (S) improved.

But, the late Tabarsi and some other researchers reject these kind of narrations whose reference is limited to only Ibn-i-Abbas and 'Ayishah, because:

Firstly, the Sura is popularly known as Meccan, and the tone of the verses are also similar to Meccan Suras, while the problems which the holy Prophet (S) had, with the Jews, occurred mostly in Medina, which is, itself, a testimony that these kinds of narrations are not correct.

Secondly, if the holy Prophet (S) could, so easily, be affected by the witchcraft of sorcerers, so much so, that he became sick and stayed in bed, it would have, also, been easy to stop him from reaching his great goal. Surely the Providence, Who had sent him for such a great and important mission, the Prophecy, protected him against the witchcraft of sorcerers.

Thirdly, if sorcery is to have had an effect on the body of the holy Prophet (S), then, people might imagine that witchcraft could affect his holy soul, too, and his thoughts would be subject to the witchcraft of sorcerers, so, this idea would destroy the principle of confidence in the holy Prophet (S) .

The Holy Qur'an opposes the idea that the Prophet (S) was bewitched: "Or (why ) has not a treasure been bestowed on him, or why has he (not) a garden for enjoyment? The wicked say: 'You follow none other than a man bewitched'". "See what kind of comparisons they make for thee! But they have gone astray, and never a way will they be able to find!". (Sura Furqan. No,25, verses 8-9 ).

Here, 'bewitched', whether mentally or bodily, is a witness to our objective point. However, with these very doubtful narrations, in regard to understanding the meaning of the verses, the sanctity of the position of the Prophet (S) cannot be questioned.

*I - Take Refuge With the Lord of the Dawn.*

In the first verse of the Sura, the holy Prophet, himself, (S) as a model and leader, is addressed and the command is:

Say: I take refuge with the Lord of the dawn,  
From the evil of what He has created,

We should seek refuge with Allah from the evil of all wicked creatures, wicked men, Jinn, animals and evil happenings; and from the evil of the 'carnal soul'.

The term /falaq/ is based on /falq/ which originally means 'to split, to separate some from others, daybreak'; and since at the time of the appearance of daylight the black curtain of night breaks open, this word is used with the meaning of 'daybreak', as well as, /fajr/ which is used for the 'break of dawn'.

Some know the word with the meaning of 'the creation of all living creatures' which includes men, animals and plants, because they come forth from splitting seeds, eggs, and the like, which is the most surprising stage of their existence. In fact, when it comes forth, a great change happens in that being and it transfers from one world to another. Sura An'am, No. 6, Verse 95 says: *It is Allah Who causeth the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the One to cause the dead to issue from the living. That is Allah; then how are ye deluded away from the truth?*

Some have considered a broader meaning for /falaq/ than what was said above. They think that its meaning covers any creation, in general, because it is by the creation of every being that the curtain of nothingness breaks and the light of existence appears.

Each of these three ideas is a surprising phenomenon which is an evidence for the greatness of Allah, its Creator. That Allah is qualified with this attribute conveys an intensely profound content and a wide ranging concept.

Some Islamic narrations denote that /falaq/ is a well or a prison in Hell which appears clearly in the midst of it.

This narration may refer to one example out of its examples, but, it is not to limit the vast meaning of /falaq/, of course.

The phrase in the second verse does not mean that the divine creation, by itself, has an evil, because creation is the same as existence and existing is absolute goodness. The Qur'an says: He Who has made everything which He has created Most good...(Sura Sajdah, No. 32, verse 7) .

Evil appears where the creatures diverge from the laws of creation and separate from the appointed path; for example, the sting (of insects) or the keen teeth of animals are their weapons to defend themselves against their enemies, and, the same is true for the weapon we use against our enemies. If this weapon be used appropriately it is 'good', but if it be used inappropriately and against friends it is 'evil'.

Besides, there are many things that we, from their appearance, count as 'evil', but they are, indeed, 'good' like startling and warning events or infestations of pests, which awaken Man from the sleep of neglect and move him to seek the path of Allah, and they are certainly not 'evil'.

Then, explaining and commenting on the subject, it says:

And from the evil of the dark night when it comes,

The term /ghasiq/ is derived from /ghasaq/ which, as Raqib cites in Mufradat, means 'The intense darkness of the night which appears at midnight' and that is why the Qur'an, referring to the end of the time of the sunset prayer, says: ...till the darkness of the night... (Sura Bani Isra'il, No. 17, verse 75) . Some books of lexicon have rendered the word /ghasaq/ to mean 'the darkness of the beginning of the night' which, regarding the root of the word, seems improbable; and it is certain that the darkness of the night becomes full when it rushes into the midnight. One of the concepts that is essential for this meaning is 'attack, or rush'. So, it has been applied with this meaning, too.

Therefore, the term /ghasiq/, in the verse under discussion, means either 'attacker' or any 'evil creature' that uses the cover of the darkness of the night to attack, because not only the wild and biting animals come out of their dens at night and cause damage, but also filthy, defiled persons often misuse the darkness of the night for their wicked aims.

The term /waqab/ derived from /waqb/ means 'hole, ditch', so, its verb with the meaning of 'to enter into a hole' has been used; or, it means 'to overspread'.

And from the evil of those who blow on knots (practice Secret Arts ),

The term /naffathat/ is derived from /nafth/ which originally means 'to emit a little water out of the mouth' and, since it is done by blowing, the term has been applied with the meaning of 'to blow'.

But, many commentators have interpreted /naffathat/ with the meaning of 'witches' who blow on knots with a kind of incantation by which they practice sorcery, while some others have rendered the term in the sense of 'tempting women' (1) , especially their own wives, who continuously murmur in the ears of men to weaken them from doing positive actions. Examples of these women are known in history.

Fakhr-Razi says that some women, to influence the affections of dignitaries' hearts, occupy their thoughts.

This idea is more apparent in our time than in olden times, because one of the most important means of spy-influence in statesmen and politicians, of the world, are women spies who, with their 'blowing on knots', and their constant temptation and communication, unlock the safes of secrets and obtain the most vital information and deliver it to the enemy.

Again, some have interpreted /naffathat/, to mean 'mischievous souls' or inciteful societies who loosen the 'knots' or decisions with their constant propagations.

Of course, it should be noted that, apart from the former occasions of revelation, there is no trace, in the verse, to show that it properly refers to the witchcraft of sorcerers, and supposing that the verse be rendered so, it is not an evidence that the occasion of revelation is right. It only denotes that the holy Prophet (S) sought refuge to Allah from the evil of sorcerers, just like healthy people who seek refuge to Allah from the disease of cancer, though they have never been attacked by it.

And from the evil of the envious (one) when he envies

This verse shows that envy is the worst and the most disgraceful quality of the wicked actions, because the Qur'an has counted it equal to the behaviour of savage animals, biting snakes, and tempter Satans.

( 1 ) It must be noted, here, that this is a biased male opinion and not a statement from the Holy Qur'an. It would be just as possible to write 'tempting men'. In either case, it is an ignoble trait and highly discouraged in the Holy Qur'an.

### Explanations:

#### *1. The Most Important Sources of Vice and Corruption*

At the beginning of this Sura, the holy Prophet (S) is bidden to take refuge with Allah from the evil of all creatures. Then, in its description three kinds of evil are pointed out: a) the evil of 'the dark night when it comes'; b) the evil of 'those who blow on knots' and loosen the decisions of faith, belief, and love and relations, with their temptations and evil communications; c) the evil of the 'envious one'.

From this short, but meaningful, explanation it is clearly understood that the main origins of evil are these three sources which should be noted, completely.

#### *2. The Influence of Sorcery*

The explanation about the reality of sorcery in old times and today, and the viewpoint of Islam on sorcery, and whether it is effective or not, is described by commenting on some other verses of the Qur'an, for example, Sura Baqarah, No. 2, verse 102 and 103. In those statements the effect of sorcery and witchcraft is somehow accepted, but, not in the form that some superstitious people talk about.

The point that should be mentioned, here, is that, on the one hand, when, in these verses, the Prophet (S) is bidden to take refuge to Allah from the evil of the witchcraft of sorcerers, and the like. It does not mean that the Prophet (S) has been bewitched by their evil arts; but, it is just that the Prophet (S) takes refuge to Allah from any errancy or mistake and sin, i.e., he, under the light of Allah's Mercy, will be safe from the harm of those evils. And, if it were not for the Mercy of Allah, the effect of witchcraft, on him, would be possible.

On the other hand, it was previously said that there is no evidence to support that the objective meaning of /naffathat-i-fil-'uqad/ 'those who blow on knots' refers to 'sorcerers'.

#### *3. The Evil of the Envious*

Envy is a hideous, evil quality which comes forth due to different factors, such as, weakness in faith, the existence of miserliness in the unity of a person, and which demands or wishes the destruction of another person's blessing.

Envy is the origin of many great sins.

Envy, as mentioned in many Islamic narrations, eats away and destroys the faith of Man. Imam Baqir (p.b.u.h.) says:  
Verily, envy eats Faith as fire eats wood.

Another tradition from Imam Sadiq says:

The decay of religion is envy, arrogance and pride.

This is because an envious person, in fact, protests the Divine Wisdom of why He has given such blessings to some people and has covered them under His Grace, as Sura Nisa, No. 4, verse 54 says: Or do they envy mankind for what Allah hath given them of His bounty?...

For the reproach of envy, it is enough to mention, as an example, the first slaying that Man committed, in the world, where Cain killed his brother Abel, and the motive was envy.

The envious ones have always been one of the hindrances on the way of prophets and Saints, and that is why the Holy Qur'an commands the holy Prophet (S) 'to take refuge with the Lord of the dawn'.

Though the holy Prophet, himself, (S) is the addressee, in this Sura and the next one, certainly he is an example and all should take refuge with Allah from.

Supplication:

*O Lord! We, too, seek refuge to You from the evil of the envious ones.*

*O Lord! We ask You to protect us from being envious of others, too.*

*O Lord! Keep us safe and sound from the evil of those who 'blow on knots' and from their temptations against the path of Justice and Truth.*