



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

WASWASA - WHISPERING FROM SHAYTAN AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT

Many Muslims are affected by these whisperings from shaytan. Shaytan has made a promise when he himself made a du'a to Allah to mislead all of us:

المُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطِكَ لَهُمْ أَقْعَدَنَّ
أَيْدِيهِمْ بَيْنَ مَنْ لَاتِيَنَّهُمْ ثُمَّ
وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَمِنْ
أَكْثَرَهُمْ تَجِدُ وَلَا شَاكِرِينَ لَهُمْ
شَاكِرِينَ

"...surely I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path. Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left, and You will not find most of them as thankful ones (i.e. they will not be dutiful to You)." 7: 16-17

The first victim was of course - Adam (AS) when shaytan came to whisper into Adam's ears:

"Then *Shaitan* (Satan) whispered suggestions to them both in order to uncover that which was hidden from them of their private parts (before); he said: "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become of the immortals." And he [*Shaitan* (Satan)] swore by Allah to them both (saying): "Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both." So he misled them with deception. Then when they tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their shame (private parts) became manifest to them and they began to stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves (in order to cover their shame). And their Lord called out to them (saying): "Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you: Verily, *Shaitan* (Satan) is an open enemy unto you?" 7: 20-22

Shaytan then in surah 5 verses 27-31 managed to sow enmity and hasad to Habil and Qabil – which eventually led to the death of Habil.

Until today, these whisperings are real and we should make every effort inshaAllah to ward off these whisperings

Definition

Insinuating thoughts (*waswasa* in Arabic – the plural being *wasāwis*) from the Devil (*Shaytān*) is an illness many people, including Muslims, suffer from. These insinuating thoughts can come to the righteous, the wicked and the pious. The result of paying a great deal of attention to these insinuating thoughts can be very detrimental to ones spiritual, emotional and psychological well-being. If a person keeps paying attention to these thoughts, the spiritual illness that results from it resembles insanity.

Roots and Causes

We discussed above on how shaytan first started to whisper in the ears of Adam (AS) in order to lead his to disobey Allah. Any form of disobedience that is carried out is a success to shaytan.

Shaytān intends to raise doubts among believers concerning the Hereafter. He also wants to make them more eager for this life, cause them confusion in the religion and lure them to commit sins. This is why there is a hadīth that encourages seeking refuge with Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) from the lures of *Shaytān* from all directions.[3] The Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) used to often recite this supplication in the morning and when night falls:

O Allāh! I ask You for well-being in this life and the Hereafter. O Allāh! I ask You for pardon and well-being in my religion, family and life. O Allāh! Cover my errors and reassure me in times of difficulty. O Allāh! Protect me from before me, from behind me, from my right, from my left and above me. I seek refuge with Your greatness from being killed from below.[4]

Shaytān is our clear and open enemy and Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) has commanded that we treat him as such. Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) says:

Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy.[35: 7]

Shaytān has promised that he will lay in wait for the believers in order to distract, confuse and lead us astray. He is at war with mankind and in particular the believers. He is constantly trying to gain control over the believers and shake the sound belief in their hearts, causing them to suffer psychological, emotional and intellectual anxiety in matters pertaining to their life and faith.[6]

This constant battle between good and evil (*Shaytān* and the believers) will continue as long as believers remain in this world. *Shaytān* will aim to attack believers with his insinuating thoughts (*waswasah*), which can enter into matters of the religion such as

belief, purification, prayer and other types of worship. It can also enter into matters pertaining to one's life in this world such as when we worry about our job, sustenance, family etc.

The first recorded incident of this kind can be found in the time of the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam). It was narrated that Abū Hurayrah (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) said:

Some of the companions of the Messenger of Allāh (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) came to the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) and said to him, 'We find in ourselves thoughts that are too terrible to speak of.' He said, 'Are you really suffering from that?' They said, 'Yes.' He said, 'That is a clear sign of faith.' [Muslim]

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu) that a man came to the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) and said,

I think thoughts to myself, which I would rather be burnt to a cinder than speak of them." The Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Praise be to Allāh, Who has reduced all his [the Shaytān's] plots to mere whispers. [Abu Daud]

It is clear then that believers may suffer from these whispers of the *Shaytān*, insinuating thoughts of *kufr* (disbelief), which may make him feel distressed and very anxious, however, it is clear from the *hadīth* that the fact that these whispers come, but were are so greatly disliked, and they are pushed away from the heart, is a clear sign of faith. Hence the seekers of knowledge and devoted worshippers experience *waswasah* and doubts which others do not face precisely because they are trying to remember Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) much through seeking knowledge and worship, and so *Shaytān* will come to prevent them from drawing closer to Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā). [9]

If we suffer from this or have suffered from this in the past, we must remember first and foremost that this is essentially another way in which Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) has chosen to test us. Trials and afflictions no matter how great and far-reaching they become, will never endure or last forever *inshāAllāh*. Rather, the harsher and more difficult one's circumstances become, the closer one comes to ease, comfort, and relief. Help and aid are forthcoming from Allāh – we just need to face the trial with patience, perseverance and worship. [10]

Effects

(I) Waswasah in Matters of Belief

It was narrated from Abū Hurayrah (raḍiy Allāhu 'anhu), that the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) said,

The Shaytān comes to one of you and says, 'Who created such and such? Who created such and such?' Until he says, 'Who created your Lord?!' If that happens to any of you, let him seek refuge with Allāh and put a stop to these thoughts. [Bukhari and Muslim]

If this type of *waswasah* attack comes to us and attacks our belief, it must be fought and resisted. It can never harm us as long as we fulfil the duty of fighting and resisting it, and refuse to be controlled by it. The Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said,

Allāh will forgive my ummah (followers) for any insinuating whispers that may cross their minds, so long as they do not act upon it or speak of it. [Agreed upon]

We should denounce this type of *waswasah* in our hearts and with your tongue, and be the one who objects to it the most because they are only whispers and thoughts that cross our minds. Questioning our belief is a trap set by *Shaytān* which flows through the son of Adām (‘alayhi al-Salām) like blood flows to make one doomed and confused about this great *Deen*.

Traps of Shaytan

1. Shirk
2. Innovations
3. Major sins
4. Minor Sins
5. Wasting time
6. Prioritising the less important deeds
7. All out attack

Thus you will not find *Shaytān* whispering to you regarding small matters, but he strives with all his means to extinguish the light of knowledge and guidance in our hearts and to make us fall into the darkness of doubt and confusion. The Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) has told us of the appropriate remedy for such problems, which is to seek refuge with Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) and cut off from these thoughts completely. If a person does this and continues to worship Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā), seeking and hoping for reward from Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā), the *waswasah* attacks will soon stop, *inshāAllāh*. We must turn away from all of these ill thoughts as we are worshippers of Allāh, The All-Mighty. We must pay no attention to *waswasah* because the things that are whispered to us by *Shaytān* are neither real nor true; they are merely imagination and whispers which have no basis.

(II) Waswasah in Matters of Worship

Another strategy of *Shaytān* is to whisper to Muslims in matters of ritual purification (like in *ṭahārah*, *wuḍū’* and *ghusl*) and *ṣalāh* when they intend to perform them. For example, we all know how the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) performed *wuḍū’* and *ghusl* and that he was careful not to waste water. In fact, he forbade wasting water when performing *wuḍū’*. [Ahmed] However, a person under the influence of *waswasah* may repeat the number of times he performs an action in *wuḍū’* or *ghusl* in order to feel cleansed and thereby indirectly go against the *Sunnah* by thinking that he has not cleansed himself even though he has performed *wuḍū’* like the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam). [14]

We know that Allāh (subhānahu wa ta‘ālā) commands us to follow the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) because his way is the best way; measured, precise and perfect and whoever deviates from this has transgressed.

اللَّهُ رَسُولٍ فِي لَكُمْ كَانَ لَقَدْ
اللَّهُ يَرْجُو كَانَ لِمَنْ حَسَنَةً أُسْوَةٌ
كَثِيرًا اللَّهُ وَذَكَرَ الْآخِرَ وَالْيَوْمَ

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allāh you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for Allāh and the Last Day, and remembers Allāh much.”[33: 21]

فَاتَّبِعُونِي اللَّهُ تُحِبُّونَ كُنْتُمْ إِنْ قُلْ
ذُنُوبَكُمْ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ يُحِبُّكُمْ
رَحِيمٌ غَفُورٌ وَاللَّهُ

“Say: If you love Allāh, then follow me, Allāh will love you and forgive your sins.”[3: 31]

“And follow him so that you may be guided.”[17]

“And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it and do not follow other paths.”[18]

Shaytān can also whisper into the believers’ hearts regarding other aspects of worship such as *ṣalāh* – intentions regarding it, how many units (*rakāt*) one has prayed etc. *Shaytān*’s whispering can cast doubts into one’s intention for *ṣalāh* to the extent that one argues against their own certainty and thereby giving acceptance to the *waswasah*, which will only cause it to grow and return all the time.

We know that certainty is not removed by doubt,[19] and whoever wants to rid himself of this trial must believe, with complete certainty that the truth is in following the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) in both words and actions. We must be certain that the way of the *Sunnah* is the Right Path and that any other path is enticement from the *Shaytān* to go against the *Sunnah*. [20]

Some scholars have stated that the main cause of *waswasah* in matters of worship is either ignorance of Islām or insanity – both of which are major defects. [21]

‘Ubay b. Ka‘b (raḍiy Allāhu ‘anhu) reported that the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

There is a Satan for ablution called Al-Walhan, so be on your guard against evil promptings from (wasting) water.[Tarmidhi]

‘Abdullah b. Zayd (raḍiy Allāhu ‘anhu) said: It was reported to the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) that a man imagined to have passed wind during prayer. He (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

He should not leave his prayer unless he hears a sound or smells something. [Bukhari and Muslim]

Abū Hurayrah (raḍiy Allāhu ‘anhu) reported that the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

If any of you steps on something impure, then dust or earth is a substance he can use to purify it. [Abu Daud]

The same applies for long clothes of women as the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) allowed women to loosen their clothing even though it might touch dirty places, but did not command them to wash them immediately. Instead he (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) told them that the dust of the earth purifies anything affected by dirty ground. [Abu Daud]

We must never pay attention to *waswasah* as it has no basis and is as a result of ignorance. If we pay attention to such thoughts they will only increase and have a bigger impact on us. The religion of Allāh is between excessiveness and negligence so we must take the middle ground by avoiding the negligence of careless people and at the same time refrain from joining the excessive people who transgress. Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) has made this *Ummah* a middle nation that is balanced and just, which is a state between excess and negligence. [26]

(III) Waswasah in One’s Daily Life

We have now seen that *Shaytān*’s main aim is to destroy the religion of a Muslim by attacking them with *waswasah* in matters of belief and worship in order to tempt, corrupt and misguide the believers away from Allāh’s (subḥānahu wa ta‘ālā) guidance. It can be seen clearly that he will use all of his means, resources and abilities in order to plague the believer with doubts and desires – two key factors that weaken one’s faith. Having either succeeded or failed in whispering into the hearts of the believer regarding matters of believe or worship, *Shaytān* can even use his infantry and cavalry in order to attack the believer with *waswasah* pertaining to one’s daily life.

In order to do this, he must first allow an idea to take root in our minds, develop that idea and then feed it with his *waswasah*. This can be anything from the fear of the repercussions of making a mistake in a mundane task (i.e. at work or school) to doubting the fidelity of one’s spouse. All it takes is a simple doubt or worry to occur in the mind, which then grows as a result of paying too much attention to it and thinking about all the possible outcomes and results regarding that thought. The result of which is extremely detrimental to one’s emotional, psychological, spiritual and even physical wellbeing. Paying too much attention can lead to physical illnesses such as high blood pressure, insomnia, anxiety and can even lead to full-blown panic attacks.

The cure for the *waswasah* in one's daily life is the same for the *waswasah* in one's belief and acts of worship and that is to leave these thoughts totally, and turn away from them until they leave you. A person should not even debate the thoughts within themselves, rather, cut away from them completely, as advised by the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam). Why should we pay attention to *waswasah* about future events when *Shaytān* does not even know what is going to happen to him the next day? And if he reminds you of your past, remind him of his future and what awaits him in the Hereafter!

The most effective way to deal with *waswasah* in matters of belief, worship and daily life is to ignore these Satanic whispers. First be aware of them and then, once recognised, completely ignore them. Ignore them completely, no matter how frequently they may come to mind. When these whispers are ignored, they do not become established; rather they go away after a short time, as many people have experienced. But for those who pay attention to them and act upon them, they increase until they make him like the one who is insane or even worse.

Remedies

As we have seen, one of the most effective remedies to ward off *waswasah* is to first recognise them, seek refuge in Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) from them and then completely ignore them until they go away. Below is a summary of the actions one can take to fight and resist these evil whispers of the *Shaytān* (*waswasah*).^[27]

1. When you first notice a negative idea coming into your mind, do not pay any attention to it. Seek refuge with Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) and give up these thoughts completely, as the Prophet (sall Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam) commanded. Ignore it!
2. Remember Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) and control yourself. Do not continue to think of these whispers. You have more beneficial things to do with your time and energy than entertaining *Shaytān's waswasah*.
3. Occupy yourself with worship and doing good deeds, in obedience to the command of Allāh and seeking to please Him. When you devote yourself completely and seriously to worship, you will forget about these whispers, *inshāAllāh*.
4. Frequently seek refuge with Allāh and make *du 'ā'* (supplicate) to free you from these whispers.
5. If the thoughts seem not to go away easily, start doing some *Dhikr* like repeating *subḥanallāh, al-ḥamdulillāh, lā ilāhaila Allāh, Allāhuakbar*
6. *Waswasah* pertaining to your daily life is usually concerned with a past or future event, so if you find yourself dwelling on something that has already happened (past) or something that may happen (future), bring yourself back

to the present and think about what you need to do for yourself right here and right now.

7. Get up and physically do something different like making *wuḍū'*, offering two units of *nafl* prayer, going for a jog etc., because if you stay in one place it is easier for an idea to take hold and then develop.

Be strong and firm with yourself and resist the evil whispers of *Shaytān* and remember that Allāh (subḥānahu wa ta'ālā) says:

الَّذِينَ عَلَىٰ سُلْطَانٍ لَهُ لَيْسَ إِنَّهُ
يَتَوَكَّلُونَ رَبَّهُمْ وَعَلَىٰ آمَنُوا
الَّذِينَ عَلَىٰ سُلْطَانِهِ إِنَّمَا
بِهِ هُمْ وَالَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ
مُشْرِكُونَ

Verily, he (shaytān) has no power over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His power is only over those who obey and follow him, and those who join partners with Him. [16: 99-100]

Source: www.islam21c.com

Notes:

[1] Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan, p.6-7.

[2] Al-Qur'ān, 7:19-17.

[3] Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 31-33.

[4] Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 3.

[5] Al-Qur'ān, 35:7

[6] Al-Munajjid (Islamqa, 12315)

[7] Muslim

[8] Abū Dawūd

[9] Al-Munajjid (Islamqa, 12315)

[10] Don't be Sad, p 382

[11] Bukhārī and Muslim

[12] Agreed Upon

[13] Reported by Aḥmed

[14] Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan, p. 18.

[15] Al-Qur'ān, 33:21

[16] Al-Qur'ān, 3:31

[17] Al-Qur'ān, 7:158

[18] Al-Qur'ān, 6:153

- [19] 'al-Qawai'd al-Fiqiyya, p. 19.
- [20] Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan, p. 32-33.
- [21] Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan, p. 39.
- [22] Recorded by At-Tirmidhi
- [23] Recorded in Bukhārī and Muslim
- [24] Recorded by Abū Dawūd
- [25] Recorded by Abu Dawūd
- [26] Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan, p. 18.
- [27] Fatwas of the Permanent Committee of Scholars, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Fatwa no. 19616)
- [28] Al-Qur'ān, 16:99-100

Further reading:

- [1] Al-Qarni, Aaidah Ibn Abdullah, '*Don't be Sad*' (International Islamic Publishing House, 2005).
- [2] Al-Uthaymeen, Sheik Saalih, '*ta'leeq a'la qawa'id wa-al usool al-jaamiya wa-al furooq' wa-al tafaseem al-badee'ah an-nafi'a'* (mu-asas sheik Muhammed bin Saalih al-Uthaymeen, 1433h).
- [3] As-Sa'di, allamah Abdurahman bin Naasir '*al-Qawai'd al-Fiqiyya le-fahme annusoos ash-shariyyah'* (maktabah imam al-Waadi,' 1427h).
- [4] Al-Hilali, Muhammed Taqi-ud-Din & Khan, Mohamed Muhsin '*Interpretation of the Meaning of The Noble Qur'an'* (Darussalam Publishers & Distributers, 1996).
- [5] Abdi-s-Salam, Imam as-'Izz bin, '*Trials and Tribulations: Wisdoms and Benefits'* (Daar Us-Sunnah Publishers, 2004).
- [6] As-Sa'di, Abdur-Rahman Naasir '*Taysir al-Kareem ar-Rahman fekalame al-Manaan'* (Dar Ibn Jawzi 1416h).
- [7] Al-Munnajid, Sheik Saalih '*Suffering From Waswas (Insinuating Whispers) of the Shaytan About the Essence of Allah'* (www.islamqa.org, 12315).
- [8] Al-Jawziyya, Imam Ibn al-Qayyim & Al-Hanbali, Mauwafeq bin Qudaama '*Waswasah: The Whispering of Shaitan'* (Al-Firdous Ltd, London, 2006).
- [9] Al-Mubarakpuri, Sheik Safiur Rahman '*Tafsir Ibn Kathir (abridged),'* Volume 4, (Darussalam, May 2000).
- [10] Fatwas of the Permanent Committee of Scholars, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (www.alifta.com, Fatwa no. 19616)