

## 5 - The Presence of the *Shayṭaan* at the Time of Death

When death comes, the *Shayṭaan* is keen not to let the person escape from him. Muslim narrated from Jaabir ibn 'Abdullah that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

“The *Shayṭaan* is present with anyone of you in all his affairs. He is present even when he is eating, so if any one of you drops a piece of food, let him clean off any dirt that may be on it and

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<sup>14</sup> Bukhari, *Kitaab ar-Riqaq*, *Baah man aḥabba liqaa' Allah aḥabba Allah liqaa'ahu*. See *Fath al-Baari*, 11/357

<sup>15</sup> Bukhari, *Kitaab al-Janaa'iz*, *Qawl al-Mayyit wa huwa 'alal-Janaazah*, *Qaddimooni*. *Fath al-Baari*, 3/184. Also narrated by Nasaa'i in *Kitaab al-Janaa'iz*, *Bab as-Sur'ah jil-Janaazah*, 4/41

eat it, and not leave it for the *Shaytaan*. When he has finished eating, let him lick his fingers, for he does not know in which part of the food the *barakah* (blessing) is.”

Our scholars mentioned that during those critical moments (of death), the *Shaytaan* comes to a person in the form of his father or mother, or some other loved one who sincerely care for him, advising him and calling him to follow Judaism or Christianity or some other principles that go against Islam. Then those for whom Allah has decreed doom deviate (from the truth).<sup>16</sup> This is what is meant in the *aayah*:

﴿رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الرَّحِيمُ﴾



«Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate [from the truth] after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower.» (Qur'an 3: 8)

‘Abdullah, the son of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, said: “My father was dying, and I had in my hand a piece of cloth with which to bind his beard. He was drifting in and out of consciousness, and gesturing with his hand to say ‘No, no.’ He did this several times, and I said to him, ‘O’ my father, what was that?’ He said, ‘The *Shaytaan* was standing near me, biting his fingertips (i.e., trying hard) and saying, ‘Come on, Ahmad!’ and I was saying ‘No, no,’ - until he died.”<sup>17</sup>

Qurtubi said: “I heard our shaykh, Imam Abul-‘Abbaas Ahmad ibn ‘Umar al-Qurtubi, saying, ‘I visited a brother of our shaykh, Abu Ja‘far Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qurtubi in Qurtubah (Cordova), when he was dying. It was said to him, “Say *Laa ilaaha illallah*,” and he was saying, “No, no.” When he came to consciousness, we

<sup>16</sup> *Tadhkirat al-Qurtubi*, 33

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 34

mentioned that to him. He said, “Two devils came to me on my right and my left. One of them was saying, ‘Die as a Jew, for it is the best of religions,’ and the other was saying, ‘Die as a Christian, for it is the best of religions,’ and I was saying to them. ‘No, no’”...<sup>18</sup>

But this does not necessarily happen in every case, as Ibn Taymiyah said. Some people may be tempted to follow other religions before they die, and others may not be tempted in this manner. This happened to some people. All of these are among the trials of life and death which we are commanded to seek refuge from in our prayer.<sup>19</sup>

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyah mentioned that the *Shayṭaan* is at his most keen to mislead a person at the time of death, because it is such a critical time. In support of this view he quoted the hadith which is narrated in *Aṣ-Ṣaḥeeḥ*: “It is man’s final deed (before death) that counts.” And he (ﷺ) said:

“A person may do the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is no more than a cubit between him and it, then the decree overtakes him and he does an action of the people of Hell and thus enters it (Hell). Or a person may do the deeds of the people of Hell until there is no more than a cubit between him and it, then the decree overtakes him and he does an action of the people of Paradise and thus he enters it (Paradise).” Hence it is narrated that “the *Shayṭaan* tries his hardest to tempt the son of Adam at the time of death, and he says to his helpers, ‘Try to catch this one, for if he gets away you will never catch him.’”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Opt. cit

<sup>19</sup> *Majmoo’ al-Fataawa*, 4/255

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid* 256