

WASWASAH AND DISTURBING THOUGHTS



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Waswasah

Waswasah is a whisper from Shayṭān; he whispers thoughts and ideas into our minds. As a result, various types of thoughts cross a person's mind unintentionally. At times, a person suffers from excessive doubts about his purity, resulting in him feeling without reason that he is unclean or his wuḍū is incomplete or his wuḍū has become nullified. Shayṭān whispers these thoughts only to bother and annoy a person. Many a time, Shayṭān whispers random thoughts into a person's mind whilst he is performing ṣalāh. Shayṭān does this to distract him from focusing on Allāh ﷻ. At times the thoughts may take the form of filthy images which cross the mind and rouse sexual desires.

The whispers that worry people the most are thoughts of doubt about matters of Dīn. One does not only feel guilty for experiencing such wretched thoughts but becomes depressed and despondent. The rule of thumb to remember here is that on the Day of Qiyāmah, a person will only be held accountable for his voluntary actions. He will not be held accountable for involuntary actions. Such actions neither render sin nor reward. Therefore, we should not worry about such thoughts that enter our hearts involuntarily, since they are injected into our minds by Shayṭān and not created by ourselves.

Thoughts of this nature are not ours but rather whispers of Shayṭān, thus we have no control over them. For this reason, they are not blameworthy; neither do they render one sinful, nor do they affect one's spiritual condition. One should simply ignore them and not worry about them, no matter how evil, filthy or dark the thoughts may be. Such thoughts will have no effect, as long as one does not bring them into action or speech. Rasūlullāh ﷺ states,

*Indeed, Allāh ﷻ overlooks the thoughts which pass through the hearts of my Ummah, so long as they do not bring them into action or speech.
(Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)*

However, if we entertain and prolong the thoughts voluntarily after Shayṭān's whispering, it will constitute a sin, as this is tantamount to

bringing the thoughts into action. This is a voluntary action; thus it will render one sinful and result in spiritual decline. It is blameworthy and we will be held accountable for it on the Day of Qiyāmah.

Anyone can Experience Waswasah

As explained above, evil thoughts entering the mind involuntarily should not be a matter of concern. A waswasah is an influence of Shayṭān and not one's own doing. Such thoughts can be experienced by all people, including the pious. The Ṣaḥābah ؓ also experienced such thoughts. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ reports,

A group of Ṣaḥābah came to Rasūlullāh ؐ and asked, "We experience such thoughts passing through our minds which we find very grave to mention and discuss." Rasūlullāh ؐ asked, "Do you recognise the evil of such thoughts as they cross your minds?" They said, "Yes." He replied, "That is a clear sign and evidence of your pure Īmān." (Muslim)

Subḥānallāh, this experience which caused the Ṣaḥābah ؓ to fear and panic was classified by Rasūlullāh ؐ as a sign of Īmān. This is because becoming concerned and worried because of thoughts that conflict with one's belief is a proof of one's firm conviction in his belief. A person will only become worried about such thoughts and deem them to be grave when Īmān is firmly embedded in his heart and he has no doubts about it. This shows that one is a true believer.

Why Shayṭān Bothers You

Shayṭān whispers objections and doubts regarding Dīn into a person's mind when he desires to remove the goodness he sees in the person's heart. Just as a thief only steals from a house in which there is something valuable, Shayṭān only attempts to steal from that heart in which there is the treasure of Īmān. Having doubtful thoughts only means that there is goodness in you which Shayṭān is attempting to seize by creating these doubts in your heart.

What to do when Experiencing Evil Thoughts

Rasūlullāh ؐ states,

Shayṭān comes to one of you and says, "Who created this? Who created

this?” until he asks, “Who created your Rabb?” When he reaches this stage, seek refuge in Allāh and stop (thinking along this line). (Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

People will keep questioning each other until this is said: “Allāh created everything, so who created Allah?” Whosoever experiences this should say, “I believe in Allāh and His Messengers.” (Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

From the aforementioned explanation and aḥādīth, we can conclude that when evil thoughts enter our minds, we should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Realise that the thoughts are whispers of Shayṭān and then seek refuge in Allāh ﷻ by reciting **أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ**.
2. Do not feel guilty or become frustrated for experiencing these thoughts because they are not yours. They are the handiwork of Shayṭān.
3. Remind yourself that you are a person who has firm belief in Allāh ﷻ by saying **أَمَنْتُ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهِ** (I believe in Allāh ﷻ and His Messengers) and then refrain from paying any attention to the thoughts whatsoever. Do not even worry about repelling the thoughts, as this will cause further disturbance. Just ignore them and they will disappear over time.
4. Do not entertain them voluntarily, as doing so will render you blameworthy and accountable on the day of Qiyāmah.

In short, we should simply recite **أَمَنْتُ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهِ** and **أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ** and ignore the thought and get on with whatever we should be doing. Seeing this indifferent attitude of ours, Shayṭān will soon realise that his efforts are in vain and will stop bothering us, and eventually the thoughts will disappear.

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