

## Ten Key Signs to Recognize the Attacks of Satan and Counter Them

### Characteristics of Evil Messages and How to Recognize the Attacks of Satan

In previous lessons, we discussed the essence of Satan and his four types of attacks. But is there a way to recognize these attacks? How can we understand when we are under his influence? One important point that God has repeatedly emphasized is Satan's open enmity toward humanity. This understanding helps us identify his tactics. God has endowed each of us with the ability to discern between angelic messages and satanic ones. Signs of satanic messages include: sadness, grief, anxiety, fear, restlessness, despondency, depression, irritability, sensitivity, and hopelessness. In contrast, thoughts and messages from angels are characterized by hope, happiness, trust, strength, vitality, and peace.

Before finding ways to recognize the attacks of Satan, we must understand that self-knowledge is one of the most important tools in this regard. When we know our inputs, strengths, and weaknesses, we can build strong barriers against Satan's influence and even use his attacks as stepping stones for growth. Just like many other blessings from God, the existence of Satan has dual aspects. If we use it wisely, we benefit; otherwise, we suffer. It is similar to the blessing of water, which can be a source of life or a cause of drowning.

God has pointed out many key aspects regarding Satan's enmity toward humanity and the types of his attacks in various verses of the Quran. By recognizing the signs

of the attacks of Satan, we can identify these assaults and keep ourselves out of their reach.

### **Negative Thoughts and Offensive Language**

One of Satan's traps is to create corruption, discord, and enmity through the instillation of negative thoughts and inappropriate, offensive words. Satan's whispers produce delusions, erroneous thoughts, and disturbing, anxiety-inducing imaginations. Each of these can ruin relationships. Many of us have experienced emotional failures in relationships that began respectfully and lovingly but ended in deadlock due to our diminishing care in choosing the right words.

Many conflicts, disagreements, hatreds, and wars arise because individuals fail to use appropriate and correct words. Therefore, when our words and thoughts lead to separation, discord, and bitterness, we are under Satan's attack and must implement appropriate countermeasures.

Satan is merely a tempter, and his tricks are limited to initial attacks and thought production; it is we who follow his messages. For example, sometimes Satan plants a suspicion about someone or something in our hearts. If we do not control our thoughts, this suspicion may turn into mistrust. Satan can easily give wings to our negative thoughts based on the foothold we provide him, turning a mistaken thought into a real conflict in the external world.

## **Prejudice and Arrogance**

Prejudice is one of Satan's works, which manifests as sensitivity, resistance, and unreasonable, foolish, and illogical favoritism. When we stubbornly cling to our beliefs and statements despite the rightful and logical superiority of the other side, we have fallen into prejudice. Arrogance and prejudice were among the main factors that led to Satan's downfall and his expulsion from God's presence. His belief in his own superiority to humans bred pride and prejudice against God's command, leading him to refuse to bow to Adam.

After being cast out from God's presence, Satan uses these two tools to deceive us and create negligence. Thus, one way to recognize the attacks of Satan is to examine whether we have logical reasons for our thoughts, words, beliefs, and actions, or if we are stubbornly clinging to them without any reason.

## **The Trick: "Be Pure in Heart"**

We have all likely heard or said the phrase "Be pure in heart!" in various contexts. This statement is often made when we try to justify neglecting an obligatory duty. However, according to the verses of the Quran, to have eternal bliss and to avoid permanent harm, we must both be pure in heart and do right deeds [1]. Therefore, one way to recognize the attacks of Satan is to see if we are avoiding obligatory and right deeds under the pretext of being pure in heart.

## **Distance from the Remembrance of and Connection with God**

The Arabic word *Shaytān* is derived from the root *š-ṭ-n*, meaning “distant, astray.” When we remember God and our purpose of creation, Satan has no power over us. However, when our remembrance of God and connection with Him diminishes, Satan draws closer to our hearts. Thus, one way to recognize the attacks of Satan is to become aware of the factors that distance us from God.

Being in certain places and around certain people can lead us to negligence and make us forget God. Those experiencing depression, grief, fear, anxiety, irritability, sensitivity, conflict, or divorce often lack strong individual and communal connections to *fitri*-based communities and spiritual social gatherings. Therefore, if the gatherings we attend make us increasingly depressed and sad, we should suspect a Satanic attack.

## **Lack of True Awareness and Weak Certainty**

God has not allowed Satan to dominate humans; he only overcomes those who, through ignorance and misguidance, grant him permission [2]. In fact, our ignorance and lack of knowledge make us submissive to Satan.

Whenever our instability, anxiety, sadness, and other negative feelings stem from ignorance and weak insight and certainty, it means the path for the attacks of Satan has been cleared. For instance, many of us know there is no logical reason to fear darkness or the dead, yet how many of us are willing to walk through a cemetery

in the dark for hours? This is an example of how Satan exploits our lack of certainty and instills fear in us.

If we do not increase our awareness and certainty, we become prime targets for falling into the traps of doubt, delusion, and superstition. Examining the beliefs of those who believe in magic and sorcery shows that many of them lack deep beliefs, knowledge, and awareness.

### **Fearing and Neglecting the Future**

To move toward the future, we need motivating forces, the most important of which are hope, vitality, strength, and peace. New decisions for the future may have ambiguous dimensions that cause us some fear and anxiety, but these emotions are deemed acceptable as long as they prompt us to remain vigilant and attentive. Decisions that drown us in sadness, fear, anxiety, and lethargy undoubtedly carry messages from Satan, as he is the weakened version of despair, weakness, sadness, laziness, and fear.

One of Satan's tricks is to present the future as so daunting that we feel powerless to make decisions, take action, or move forward. Therefore, a reliable way to recognize the attacks of Satan is to assess our state when making decisions and choices for the future. If we proceed with hope, happiness, strength, courage, confidence, and trust, we have overcome Satan; however, lethargy, sadness, and anxiety are clear signs of Satan's dominance over us.

Another of Satan's strategies to ensnare us is to distract us so much that we forget all our future goals and responsibilities, engaging instead in activities that yield no benefit for our worldly and eternal lives, ultimately wasting our time. An example of this is excessive attention to sports competitions and other imaginal and estimative rivalries. Many individuals have lost their physical and mental health, and even their lives due to their obsession with a sports team.

Addiction to video games is another example of activities that ensnare us in imaginary competitions and ultimately lead to negligence. Spending aimlessly in the virtual world is also a prevalent issue today, affecting many individuals. This pointless activity results in outcomes such as envy, gossip, and endless worldly rivalries. We must not forget that our main rival is Satan, and the most genuine struggle in the world is our daily competition with him.

### **Fear of Poverty and Financial Hardship**

One of the things Satan uses to instill fear in us is poverty and financial hardship. If we fear poverty despite checking things out and taking reasonable risks in economic matters and marriage, it means Satan has successfully attacked us.

God is the best provider, and unlike Satan, He always promises an increase in sustenance [3]. Matters such as marriage, giving charity, almsgiving, and paying *zakat* [4] and *khums* [5], which Satan presents as sources of poverty and hardship, are among the highly profitable ways to receive sustenance and blessings, as repeatedly emphasized by God and the Household of the Prophet (Peace be upon them) [6].

## **Improperly Arranged Desires and Decisions**

One of Satan's greatest efforts is to thwart our good and effective desires and decisions. However, if we resist, he tries to alter them and divert them from their original path, exhausting us and leading us to failure in achieving our aspirations and decisions. One way to recognize the attacks of Satan regarding desires is to constantly measure them against the structure that God has designed and see if they are arranged according to divine criteria.

If the order of our desires and decisions contradicts what God has designed [7], it means we have deviated from the normal path and fallen into *fisq* (straying from the right path). Wrong desires and decisions not only waste our time, resources, emotions, assets, talents, and lives but also ruin our hereafter. A clear indication of a genuine desire and decision is that as we pursue it, we experience a growing sense of peace, strength, and happiness.

Satan's job is to present us with enticing desires, to trick us into being deceived by their appearance, and to distract us from our main path. Many aspirations appear good, reasonable, and even sacred, but when we pursue them, we fall into negligence, and we become dark within. Some decisions can occupy us to the extent that we become engrossed in them day and night, forgetting that we have an eternal life ahead. Desires and decisions that prevent us from having solitude with God and keep us constantly engaged are significant warning signs that we have fallen into Satan's trap.



## **Constant Reminders of Resentment, Sins, and Failures**

We all have experiences of resentment, sin, and failure in our past, but what matters is how we face and address these experiences. If we hold onto resentment forever and constantly think about our past sins and failures, how will we feel? One of the appropriate ways to recognize the attacks of Satan is how we deal with these matters. If an inner whisper prevents us from forgetting past resentment, constantly brings them to our attention, and causes bitterness between us and others, we should suspect a whisper from Satan. That is why Satan keeps us preoccupied with old grudges for years.

Past sins and failures should not hinder our forward movement. Anything that obstructs or slows our progress or causes us to regress is a trap of Satan. Regarding past failures, Satan sends continuous messages of inadequacy to deter us from moving forward, but we must not lose hope. The solution to overcoming this attack of Satan is to ignore the messages sent, persistently strive, and avoid laziness until we reach our ultimate goal.

## **Distorted Sacred Matters**

If Satan cannot mislead us by tempting us towards sin and error, he uses sacred matters. For instance, sometimes individuals become arrogant and proud due to their acts of worship and good deeds, considering themselves superior to others. However, we must understand that arrogant, self-centered, and selfish individuals are more likely to fall prey to Satan, as they become trapped in an endless cycle of



competition, always wanting to be more successful than others. Thus, with the slightest failure, they fall into Satan's trap.

Recognizing the attacks of Satan regarding sacred matters is not difficult. We must examine the effects of worship and sacred actions on our hearts and spirits. If these actions do not lead to greater humility, happiness, peace, and illumination, it means Satan has infiltrated us and diverted these actions from their true path.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is one example of the distortion of worship and sacred forms from their original path. Suffering from obsessions in matters like *wudu* (ablution), *ghusl* (ritual purity), and prayer means that Satan could not directly target the obsessive individual and lead them to sin, so he entered through sacred matters. Obsession is, in fact, a manipulation of the mathematics of creation. The God who created humanity knows better than anyone what is appropriate for everything. Changing religious boundaries, as well as excessive and unnecessary precautions can lead a person to become weary of worship, gradually causing doubt and ultimately leading them to abandon it.

Creating negative thoughts about sacred matters, God, and the Household of the Prophet (Peace be upon them) is another trap of Satan in the realm of sacred issues. He can only infiltrate our hearts and minds with this tactic if we create a void for him. Therefore, if we find that despite our prayers, recitation of the Quran, supplications, pilgrimages, good deeds, and adherence to divine limits, we are still bombarded with negative thoughts about sacred matters, we must recognize that these distressing thoughts come from Satan and are intended to sever our connection with the sacred. We should not pay attention to them, as they do not implicate us in sin. The only thing we need to do is fill the empty spaces in our minds

and hearts with positive thoughts and plans so that Satan has no opportunity to take advantage of them.

When Satan sees that we are not inclined toward forbidden acts and have a spiritual and divine orientation, he devises schemes within that framework. One of the most critical moments for recognizing the attacks of Satan is where there is innovation and the creation of new religions. In societies where people are inclined toward spirituality and religion, Satan cannot directly attack them with the suggestion of sin; therefore, he enters through the path of religion and spirituality, but with a religion that is filled with deviation. Examples of this include false mysticism and Sufism, as well as other deceptive schools of thought that we have all heard of. These are merely religious and sacred placations. Satan tries to instill a desire for such mysticism and sects in individuals to give them a religious and spiritual identity, allowing him to prepare them for greater deviations and dangers. In this lesson, we pointed out ten signs to recognize the attacks of Satan. Understanding the four types of Satan's attacks from various perspectives will help us find additional ways to identify these assaults. What other methods and signs do you know for recognizing the attacks of Satan?

## References

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[1]. Quran, 103:3

[2]. Quran, 15:42

[3]. Quran, 2:268

[4]. In Islam, *Zakat*, meaning “that which purifies,” is a form of alms giving which is more than just charity; it is a religious duty, ranked second only to prayer in importance. Collected by the Muslim community, it is a powerful act of purification and a reminder of our shared responsibility to care for the less fortunate.

[5]. The financial obligation that requires Muslims to pay a fifth of their savings from the income of the year that has just ended

[6]. Quran, 24:32

[7]. Quran, 9:24