

## (2) Taking physical shapes

Sometimes the devils come to a person not through *waswasah*, but by appearing to him in human form. Or he may hear voices but not see any physical form. Or they may appear in strange forms... Sometimes they come to people and tell them that they are from among the jinn, or sometimes they tell lies and claim that they are angels. Sometimes they call themselves "men of the unseen", or they claim to come from the spirit world.

In all these cases they speak to people, either directly or through a person whom they call a medium, whom they take over and speak through his mouth. Or they may respond via writing.

They may do even more than that. They may pick a person up and make him fly through the air, moving him from one place to another. They may bring him things that he asks for, but they only do these things to those who are misguided, who disbelieve in Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the earth, or who do evil things and sins that doom a person to Hell.

These people may pretend to be righteous and pious, but in fact they are among the most misguided and rebellious of people. Many stories of such people have been told in the past and in the present; which cannot be rejected or denied because they are so well known and widespread.

For example, Ibn Taymiyah described Al-Hallaaj as being: "A practitioner of 'natural magic' who was sometimes served by devils. Some of his followers were with him on the mountain of Abu Qubays, and they asked him for some sweets. He went to a nearby place and brought a tray of sweets. They investigated the matter and found out that it had been stolen from a sweet-shop in Yemen, and brought by the devil of that place."

And he said: "Things of this nature happen often to people other than Al-Hallaaj, to those who are following in the footsteps of the devils. We know of many such people in our own times and from other times. For example there is a person who is now (at Ibn Taymiyah's time) in

Damascus; the Shayṭaan used to carry him from the mountain of Al-Ṣaaliḥiyyah to a village near Damascus. He would bring him through the air to a small window high up in the house, and he would enter whilst they were watching. He used to come at night to Baab al-Ṣagheer (one of the six gates of Damascus at that time), and cross it, him and his companion. And he was one of the most immoral of people.

Another one lived in Shawbak (a fortified citadel in the outlying regions of Syria), and came from a village called Al-Shaahidah. He flew through the air to the top of a mountain whilst the people were watching, carried by a devil. He was a bandit.

Most of them are evil "shaykhs". One of them was called Al-Booshi Abu'l-Mujeeb. They used to set up a place for him on a dark night, and make bread as an act of worship. They did not remember Allah or any book in which there is mention of Allah. Then that Al-Booshi used to be lifted up in the air whilst they were watching, and they would hear what he said to the devil and what the devil said to him. If anyone laughed or stole some of the bread, he would be hit with a stick but they would not see who was hitting him.

Then the devil would tell them about some of the things they were asking about, and would tell them to sacrifice cows or horses to him, etc, and to strangle them and not to mention the name of Allah over them; if they did that, he would fulfil their needs.

Ibn Taymiyah also tells of a "shaykh" who admitted that he used to commit fornication with women and sodomy with young boys. He used to say, "A black dog with two white spots between its eyes comes to me and tells me, 'So and so has vowed to offer something to you, and he will bring it to you tomorrow.' The next day that person would bring that vow, and this kaafir 'shaykh' would tell him things about himself."

It is narrated that this "shaykh" said: "If someone asked me to get him some resin (a sticky substance used as a perfume and as medicine), I would say, 'I will do that when I enter a trance,' then the resin would appear in my hand or in my mouth, and I would not know who put it there."

And he said, "I would be walking and in front of me there would be a black pillar on which was light."

Ibn Taymiyah said: when this shaykh repented and started to pray and fast, and avoid *haraam* things, the dog disappeared, and no resin or anything else was brought to him.

He tells us of another "shaykh" who had devils whom he used to send to cause epilepsy in some people. The family of the person afflicted would come to the "shaykh" to ask him to heal him. He would send word to his followers (the devils) and they would depart from the person who was afflicted, and the family would give that "shaykh" a lot of money. Sometimes the jinn would bring him money and food which they had stolen from people. Some people had figs stored in vessels; when the "shaykh" asked his devils for figs they would bring them to him, and when the owners of the vessels looked for the figs, they would find that they had gone.

Another person was striving hard to seek knowledge, then the devils came to him and tempted him, saying, "We will excuse you from praying and we will bring you whatever you want." They brought him sweets, until he went to a shaykh who knew the Sunnah. He told him to repent, and then he paid the sweet-makers for the sweets that he had eaten when he was tempted by<sup>64</sup> the devils.

Shaykh al-Islam explained some of the ways in which the *Shaytaan* may trick people. He said:<sup>65</sup> "I know a person to whom plants spoke and told him of their beneficial qualities, but it was the *Shaytaan* speaking to him from inside the plants. I know another to whom trees and rocks spoke and said, 'Congratulations O' friend of Allah.' He recited *Aayat al-Kursiy* and that disappeared. I know someone who went out to hunt birds, and the birds and others spoke to him and said, 'Take me so that the poor can eat me,' but it was the *Shaytaan* who had entered them as he enters people and speaks through them. Some of them may be in a house with the doors locked, but he sees himself outside the house even though

<sup>64</sup> *Jaami' al-Rasaa'il* by Ibn Taymiyah, p. 190-194.

<sup>65</sup> *Majmoo' al-Fataawa*, 11/300.

Jaami' Rasaa'il

the door was locked, or vice versa. But when he recited *Aayat al-Kursiy* time after time, all of that disappeared.”

And he said (may Allah have mercy on him): “I know someone who heard a voice speaking to him, saying, ‘I come by the command of Allah,’ and promising him that he was the Mahdi of whom the Messenger ﷺ spoke. He showed him extraordinary feats, such as if it crossed his mind to control birds and locusts in the air, if he thought of the birds or locusts going to the right or to the left, they would go wherever he wished. If it crossed his mind to make some livestock stand up or fall asleep or go away, what he wanted would happen without any apparent movement on his part. They would take him to Makkah and bring him back. They would bring to him people whose appearance was beautiful and tell him, these are cherubim (‘angels’) who have come to visit you. He would wonder to himself, ‘Why do they appear in the form of beardless men?’ then when he raised his head he would see that they had beards. They said to him, ‘The sign that you are the Mahdi is that a mole will grow on your body’, then it would grow and he would see it, and other things, all of which were the plots of the *Shayṭān*.”<sup>66</sup>

And he explained: “The followers of misguidance and *bid’ah* who practice asceticism and forms of worship which are not prescribed in Islam sometimes foretell the future or have a mysterious influence. They often go to the places where the devils are, where it is forbidden to pray, because the devils descend upon them there. The devils talk to them in the same way that they talk to the soothsayers, and as they used to enter the idols and speak to the idol-worshippers. They help them in some of their requests just as they help the sorcerers and they help the idol-worshippers and the worshippers of the sun and the moon and the stars, when they worship them in the ways which they think are appropriate, such as glorifying them, wearing special clothes, burning incense and so on. There descend upon them devils which are called the ‘spirits of the stars’, who may fulfil some of their needs.”<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> *Majmoo’ al-Fataawa li Shaykh al-Islam*, 11/300.

<sup>67</sup> *Majmoo’ al-Fataawa*, 19/41.