

## Whispers of the Shaytan and the Lower Self    November 6, 2025

**wanafsin wamā sawwāhā fa-alhamahā fujūrahā wataqwāhā. qad aflahā man zakkāhā. waqad khāba man dassāhā- sadaq ( Surah ash-Sharh 94:7)**

...and by the nafs and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it, And inspired it (with the consciousness, knowledge of) what is wrong for and what is right for it. Successful indeed is the one who purifies their self, doomed is the one who corrupts it

Our actions are signs of being alive. We engage our faculties, our hands or feet or tongue or eyes, to walk, to talk, to hold. Sometimes we feel regret, sometimes peace as a result of our actions. When we die, all our actions will cease. On the Day of Judgment we will be shown the consequences of our actions, our deeds. Our deeds and the associated intentions are the only things that we will bring with us to the hereafter.

What makes us move and do things? Or makes us stop and do nothing? What is the essence of the energy behind our actions? Regardless of right or wrong, each action starts with a thought that enters into our mind. A thought appears in the mind as a result of the interactions of billions of neurons communicating through electrochemical signals.

These thoughts create ideas, opinions and finally tendencies, inclinations in the heart, which then form our will. Once the will is established, if we have enough power we act. Our will initiates our actions, controlling our faculties towards achieving a goal.

The initial thought that starts everything is generated by either external or internal influences. Some thoughts are the results of certain needs that Allah places within our being, such as food. When we are hungry, food enters our thoughts and does not go away until we are satisfied. When we are attacked, fear enters into our thoughts; we start thinking about self defense. External influences, like watching a movie or hearing a story, are generally easy to detect, as they can trigger strong emotions and subsequent thoughts.

However, thoughts are not always produced by external influences that are visible or tangible. Interior influences are more difficult to analyze. Sometimes when we close our eyes and just imagine an object, we feel the same effect as if we actually see the object. This happens because the brain fires the same cells whether we are observing an object or merely thinking about it. Consequently, the brain struggles to differentiate between imagination and reality, and we cannot tell if the actions are caused by our imagination or reality. Some of these influences that create a thought in mind are of beneficent, good origin; some of them are of bad, evil origin. The thoughts that come to mind without any recognizable intermediary are called inspirations. Inspirations are like sparks, sudden bursts of energy, which are not initiated voluntarily.

There are good inspirations and bad inspirations. Good or beneficial inspirations that come to mind are called angelic inspirations. These may be sent to anyone by Allah-u Ta'ala through an angel. The angel is called the inspirer, and the invitation is placed in the heart of the faithful person. This kind of inspiration can only lead to good. The least of such inspirations bring peace, satisfaction and goodness to you, without harming anyone. More powerful angelic inspirations bring benefits to others through you, without any apparent benefit to you. These are the inspirations of those who sacrifice themselves for the sake of Allah for others. Working lawfully and bringing sustenance home is the result of such inspirations. Angelic inspirations, which are called ilham, do not enter into a heart unless the heart is cleansed from the insatiable desires of this world, which cloud the mind with imaginations. Ilham is a divine gift, which appears in the heart suddenly without the use of any established sources or knowledge. In Surah Shems (7: 8) Allah-u Ta'ala confirms this divine gift with the following verse:

“By the nafs (the self) and by Him Who perfectly proportioned it and inspired it what is wrong and what is right...”

Thus the lower self directly receives this inherent moral compass or innate knowledge directly from the divine source. Hence, every self innately knows that evil, immorality, and oppression are bad. And likewise, the beauty of goodness, reward, and morality is also inspired in everyone. Sins, denials, and ungratefulness cloud this inspiration. Piety, taqwa, and righteous deeds, however, increase it.

This beautiful compass that we received directly from Allah-u Ta'ala through angels is tempered by another force, evil inspirations, the inspirations of Shaytna-i lain, which is called “waswasa.” When Iblis was expelled from Allah’s presence for his arrogance, he asked permission for his punishment to be delayed until the time that we are raised again. Allah-u Ta'ala gave him permission; then Iblis promised to put us all in wrong and in grievous error, but confessed that he would not be able to touch the sincere and purified ones. This means that except for the sincere and purified servants of Allah-u Ta'ala, we will also be exposed to evil inspirations of Shaytan.

We often blame Shaytan-i lain for his desire to lead us astray, and assume he has the power to make us do whatever he wants. We also blame others for being manipulated by Shaytan and for harming us, but we never blame ourselves. The truth is that he was not given any power over mankind. He just invites mankind to do wrong and we respond; he makes suggestions and we follow. Surah Ibrahim (14:22) contains a confession. It is the confession of Shaytan-i lain. It goes as follows:

“And when everything will have been decided, Satan will say: Indeed, Allah has made you a true promise. I too made you a promise, but I failed you. I did not have any authority over you. I only called you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; blame yourselves.” How can Iblis deceive us when he does not have the power to move even a needle, to kill a mosquito? How can he be so effective, to the extent that we are ready to throw our faith for him to pick up?

His whisper is his weapon. This is the only ability he was given to attack mankind: his whispers, his suggestions, his provocations. He uses the stimulus that falls on our senses; he uses our memories and perceptions that create thoughts. His aim is to influence the heart, which is the center of your intentions. Once intentions are influenced, action follows. The name of this whisper is waswasa. These are persistent thoughts, impulses or images that cause distressing emotions such as unjustified fears or anxieties, that make us behave against religious precepts, or the moral conduct that is exemplified by Rasulallah (saws). Such behavior finally weakens and destroys faith. Waswasa creates an alternative reality. In the alternative reality, we forget the promise of Allah-u Ta'ala but listen to the deceptions of Shaytan-i lain. It makes us deny the Truth. It makes us reject what is offered by Allaha-u Ta'ala.

Two sources create these delusions in the heart that is called waswasa: Shaytan himself, and the nafs, the ego. Most of our delusions are created by our selfish ego. The source of these delusions are fears that are not justified, ambitions that are unbounded, desires that are not satisfied. Shaytan often uses the desires of the nafs when he creates delusions. The difference between waswasa created by the self and by the shaytan is that the nafs insists on its suggestion until it gets it. Shaytan keeps making different suggestions until he lures people into sinning. If you reject one temptation, he offers another one.

We may distinguish between the inspirations (ilham) which are angelic in nature, and those whose nature is and satanic, by observing the effects they leave behind. An angelic inspiration is followed by a sensation of freshness and joy. You experience no suffering, no negative change in your physical or mental state, and it leaves behind a new insight, a powerful understanding, new knowledge. It is like a sudden ray of light that brings clarity and warmth without causing any strain.

Waswasa, on the other hand, leaves you with a sense of exhaustion in your limbs, you experience physical and psychological pain, sorrow and humiliation, you are in a state of confusion and mental disorientation. It is a darkness whose intense impulse leaves you drained, distressed and intellectually scattered, unable to bring your thoughts together.

In order to prevent waswasa and eliminate it from our lives, we must embrace the help that Allah-u Taal offers in Surah Fussilat (41:36): "And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing." The first solution is to seek refuge in Allah-u Ta'ala from the incitements of Shaytan-i lain.

Do not allow your fears and anxieties to overtake you. When Moses (as) was in front of the sea and everyone around him thought it was the end. He said, 'No!' My lord is with me and He will guide me." So no matter how big your problems seem to be, and even if you cannot see a solution, do not let Shaytna-i lain whisper and inject into your heart fear and hopelessness. Rather, turn to Allah and trust in Him. His help will come and your problems will be solved better than expected. He is always on your side and knows what is best for you, better than you do. Then ignore the waswasa rather than feeding it, being consumed by it, and allowing it to spoil your commitment to Him.

**Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi**