

SŪRAH 114

Al-Nās

(Mankind)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful.

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, (1)

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾

the King of mankind, (2)

مَلِكِ النَّاسِ ﴿٢﴾

the God of mankind, (3)

إِلَهِ النَّاسِ ﴿٣﴾

from the mischief of the slinking prompter, (4)

مِن شَرِّ الْوَسْوَاسِ الْخَنَّاسِ ﴿٤﴾

who whispers in the hearts of mankind, (5)

الَّذِي يُوسِّسُ فِي صُدُورِ النَّاسِ

﴿٥﴾

from among jinn and mankind. (6)

مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ ﴿٦﴾

The Lord of Mankind

In this *sūrah* refuge is sought in the Lord, Sovereign and God of mankind from the insidious whisperer, *jinn* or human, who prompts evil ideas in people's minds. The *sūrah* presents God's relevant attributes to keep away this invisible evil which the mind on its own cannot shut out. For the Lord is He who preserves, directs, cherishes

and protects mankind; the Sovereign is He who owns, governs and independently runs the world; and God is the One who supersedes all other beings and supervises over all their affairs. The particular mention of mankind here brings man closer to God's protection and care.

God, in His grace, instructs His Messenger and his community of followers to recognize these of His attributes, and to seek His protection against this sneaking evil which locates itself within their hearts. For they cannot rid themselves of such an evil which surreptitiously and imperceptibly creeps into their hearts, unless they are helped by God, the Lord, the Sovereign.

The nature of this evil-importing medium is identified in the text first as '*the slinking prompter.*' Its function is outlined as to '*whisper in the hearts of mankind.*' Then its origin is specified as '*from among jinn and mankind.*'

The style adopted here is quite significant because it draws our attention fully to the identity of this sneaking whisperer after describing its nature in order to show the process by which such evil is insinuated. This enables us to be alert and able to confront it. When we are given the full picture we know that this sneaking whisperer operates secretly. We also realize that it can be either *jinn* or human, for human beings can easily spread their evil stealthily.

We do not know how the *jinn* perform this whispering, but we certainly find its repercussions in the behaviour of individuals as well as in human life generally. We know for sure that the battle between Adam (man) and Iblīs (Satan) is a very old one. War between the two was declared by Satan out of the evil inherent in him, his conceit, envy and resentment of man. He was given God's permission to carry out this battle for some purpose which only God knows. But, significantly, man has not been left alone, dispossessed of the necessary means of protection. He has been provided with the power of faith, [that is, conscious belief in, and knowledge of, God and His attributes through conviction and sincere devotion]. Meditation and seeking refuge in God are among the most effective weapons. When man neglects these means of security and defence, he indeed has only himself to blame.

Ibn `Abbās quotes the Prophet as saying: "Satan besieges a person's heart, but he subsides whenever that person conscientiously remembers God. He only insinuates his evil when a person is heedless of Him."

As for humans, we know a great deal of their curious ways of whispering and prompting. Some types are more devilish than the Devil, such as: 1) a bad companion who injects evil into his comrade's heart and mind while he is unaware, thinking his friend to be trustworthy; 2) a ruler's counsellor or advisor who 'whispers' all sorts of evil thoughts to him, trying to turn him into a tyrant; 3) an unscrupulous slanderer who fabricates and decorates tales to make them sound factual and convincing; 4) a

hustler of immoral business dealings who tries to get through to people by exploiting their sensual, carnal desires. There are scores of other 'whisperers' who inconspicuously lay their traps, utilizing different weak points which they deliberately look for. These are more devilish than even the *jinn* themselves. Faced with evil in this guise, man is incapable of ensuring his own safety. God therefore points out to him the means he can employ in this fierce battle. There is also a very direct significance in describing the 'prompter' as 'slinking'. While this description indicates the secretiveness of the whisperer on the one hand, it is, on the other, an illusion to its intrinsic feebleness whenever it is discovered or resisted. It subsides and meekly withdraws when met in the open; or, as the Messenger said in his accurate illustration: "He (Satan) subsides whenever one conscientiously remembers God, but insinuates his evil whenever one is heedless of Him." This fortifies any believer's heart against this timid, subsiding whisperer.

Nevertheless, the battle is everlasting since this 'prompter' is always watchful for the right moment, when one neglects remembrance of God, to implant its evils. For a believer to be conscious of God once in a while is not sufficient, as the war continues till the end of time. The Qur'ān vividly states this in a scene that is full of life:

When We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam,' they all prostrated themselves; but not so Iblīs [Satan]. He said, Am I to bow down before one whom You have created out of clay?' [And] he added: 'Do You see this being whom You have exalted above me? Indeed, if You will give me respite until the Day of Resurrection, I shall bring his descendants, all but a few, under my sway.' [God] said: "Begone! As for those of them who follow you, hell will be the recompense of you all, a most ample recompense. Entice with your voice such of them as you can. Muster against them all your cavalry and your infantry, and share with them wealth and offspring, and promise them [what you will] – indeed, whatever Satan promises them is nothing but a means of deception. But over My servants you shall have no power. Your Lord is sufficient as a Guardian. (17: 61-65)

This concept of the battle and the source of evil in it, whether provoked by Satan himself or by his human agent, inspires man to feel that he is not helpless in it; since God, his Lord and Sovereign of the universe controls all creations and events. Though He has permitted Satan to attack, He has supreme power over him and He has also provided guidance for mankind. God leaves to Satan only those who neglect Him. By contrast, those who live in consciousness of Him are safe and protected against his intimidation and incitements. Thus, righteousness is supported by the only true power, God's, whereas evil is backed by a 'slinking prompter', a sneaky whisperer, cowardly in the open field, quick to retreat in war, and easily defeated when we seek refuge with God.

This is the most perfect concept of the battle between good and evil. It is a concept which protects human beings against defeat and provides them with strength, confidence and contentment.

Praise be to God at the beginning and at the end. From Him we derive confidence and success. To Him we turn for unfailing support.