

Ayyub: The Patient One

Allah Ta`ala praised His worshipper Ayyub (alayhis salam) in His Noble Qur'an saying:

"Truly we found him patient. How excellent a slave (was Ayyub)! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance (to us)." [Qur'an; 38:4].

A group of angels were discussing Allah's other human creatures, how those who were humble earned Allah's pleasure, while those who were arrogant brought upon themselves His displeasure.

One of the angels remarked: "The best creature on earth today is Ayyub, a man of noble character who shows great patience and always remembers his Generous Lord. He is an excellent model for the worshippers of Allah. In return, his Lord has blessed him with a long life and plenty of servants, as well as the needy and the poor share in his good fortune; he feeds and clothes the poor and buys slaves to set them free. He makes those who receive his charity feel as if they are favoring him so kind and gentle is he."

Iblees's Jealousy for Ayyub

Iblees overhearing all of this became annoyed. He planned to tempt Ayyub to corruption and disbelief, so he went to him. He tried to distract Ayyub from his prayers by whispering him about the good things in life but Ayyub was a true believer and would not let evil thoughts tempt him. This disturbed Iblees even more; thus he began to hate Ayyub even more.

Iblees Destroys Ayyub's Wealth

Iblees complained to Allah about Ayyub. He said that although he was continuously glorifying Allah he was not doing so out of his sincerity but to satisfy Allah so that his wealth should not be taken away. It was all a show, all out of greed.

"If You remove his wealth then You will find that his tongue will no longer mention Your name and his praying will stop."

Ayyub was one of His most sincere devotees. He did not worship Him because of the favors; his worship came from his heart and had nothing to do with material things. But to prove to Iblees the depth of Ayyub's sincerity and patience, Allah allowed him to do whatever he and his helpers wished with Ayyub's wealth.

Iblees was very happy, he gathered his helpers and set about destroying Ayyub's cattle, servants and farms until he was left with no possessions. Rubbing his hands in delight, Iblees appeared before Ayyub in the disguise of a wise old man and said to him: "All your wealth is lost, some people say that it is because you gave too much charity and that you are wasting your time with your continuous prayers to Allah. Others say that Allah has brought this upon you in order to please your enemies. If Allah had the power to prevent harm, then He would have protected your wealth."

True to his belief, Ayyub replied: "What Allah has taken away from me belongs to Him. I was only its trustee for a while. He gives to whom He wills and holds back from whom He wills." With these words, Ayyub again prostrated to his Lord.

Iblees Destroys Ayyub's Children

When Iblees saw this, he felt frustrated, so he again addressed Allah: "I have stripped Ayyub of all his possessions, but he still remains grateful to You. The real test of a person is through his children. You will see how Ayyub will reject You."

Allah granted Iblees authority but warned him that it would not reduce Ayyub's faith in His Lord nor his patience. Iblees again gathered his helpers and set about his evil deeds. He shook the foundation of the house in which Ayyub's children were living and sent the building crashing, killing all of them. Then he went to Ayyub disguised as a man who had come to sympathize with him. In a comforting tone he said to Ayyub: "The circumstances under which your children died were sad. Surely, your Lord is not rewarding you properly for all your prayers." Having said this, Iblees waited anxiously hoping Ayyub was now ready to reject Allah.

But again Ayyub disappointed him by replying: "Allah sometimes gives and sometimes takes. He is sometimes pleased and sometimes displeased with our

deeds. Whether a thing is beneficial or harmful to me, I will remain firm in my belief and remain thankful to my Creator." then Ayyub prostrated to his Lord. At this Iblees was extremely angry.

Iblees Destroys Ayyub's Health

Iblees called on Allah. "O my Lord, Ayyub's wealth is gone, his children are dead, and he is still healthy in body, and as long as he enjoys good health he will continue to worship You in the hope of regaining his wealth and producing more children. Grant me authority over his body so that I may weaken it. He will surely neglect worshipping You and will thus become disobedient."

Allah wanted to teach Iblees a lesson that Ayyub was a devoted servant of his Lord so He granted Iblees his third request but placed a condition: "I give you authority over his body but not over his soul, intellect or heart, for in these places reside the knowledge of Me and My religion."

Armed with this new authority, Iblees began to take revenge on Ayyub's body and filled it with disease until it was reduced to mere skin and bones and he suffered severe pain. But through all the suffering, Ayyub remained strong in his faith, patiently bearing all the hardships without complaining.

Allah's righteous servant did not despair or turn to others for help but remained hopeful of Allah's mercy. Even close relatives and friends deserted him. Only his kind, loving wife stayed with him.

In his hour of need, she showered her kindness on him and cared for him. She remained his sole companion and comforter through the many years of suffering.

His disease lasted for a long time until his visitors felt disgusted with him. His friends kept away from him and people abstained from visiting him. No one felt sympathy for him except his wife. She took good care of him, knowing his former charity and pity for her.

Ayyub's Prayer for Mercy

Therefore Iblees became desperate. He consulted his helpers, but they could not advise him. They asked: "How is it that your cleverness cannot work against Ayyub, yet you succeeded in misleading Adam the father of man, out of Paradise?"

Iblees went to Ayyub's wife in the form of a man. "Where is your husband?" he asked her.

She pointed to an almost lifeless body crumbled on the bed and said: "There he is, suspended between life and death."

Iblees reminded her of the days, when Ayyub had good health, wealth and children. Suddenly, the painful memory of years of hardship overcame her, and she burst into tears. She said to Ayyub: "How long are you going to bear this torture from our Lord? Are we to remain without wealth, children or friends forever? Why don't you call upon Allah to remove this suffering?"

Ayyub sighed, and in a soft voice replied: "Iblees must have whispered to you and made you confused. Tell me how long did I enjoy good health and riches?"

She replied: "Eighty years."

Then Ayyub replied: "How long am I suffering like this?"

She said: "Seven years."

Ayyub then told her: "In that case I am ashamed to call on my Lord to remove the hardship, for I have not suffered longer than the years of good health and plenty. It seems your faith has weakened and you are not satisfied with the decree of Allah. If I ever regain health, I swear I will punish you with a hundred strikes! From this day onward, I will not eat or drink anything by your hand. Leave me alone and let my Lord do with me as He pleases."

Ayyub's Health is Restored

Crying bitterly and with a heavy heart, she had no choice but to leave him and seek shelter elsewhere. In this helpless state, Ayyub turned to Allah, not to complain but to seek His mercy:

"Indeed! I am in distress and You are the Most Merciful of all those who show mercy." So We answered his call, and we removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him (that he had lost), and the like thereof along with them as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all who worship Us." (Surah Ambiya: 83-84)

Allah Ta`ala also instructed:

"Strike the ground with your foot: This is a spring of water to wash in and cool and a refreshing drink. And We gave him back his family, and along with them the like thereof as a Mercy from Us, and a reminder for those who understand." (Surah Saad: 42-43)

Ayyub obeyed and almost immediately his good health was restored. Meanwhile, his faithful wife could not longer bear to be parted from her husband and returned to him to beg his forgiveness, desiring to serve him. On entering her house, she was amazed at the sudden change: Ayyub was again healthy! She embraced him and thanked Allah for His mercy.

Ayyub was not worried, for he had taken an oath to punish her with a hundred strikes if he had regained health but he had no desire to hurt her. He knew if he did not fulfill the oath, he would be guilty of breaking a promise to Allah. Therefore in His wisdom and mercy, Allah came to the assistance of His faithful servant and advised him: "take in your hand a bundle of 100 thin straws and strike your wife once, and break not your oath.

"Truly! We found him patient. How excellent a slave! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance to Us!" (Surah Saad: 44)

During difficult times we must remember Allah more, pray harder, and be more thankful instead of being dissatisfied with our condition. We should praise and thank Allah for every condition that he tests us with. As we know these are the times when Shaytan tries to work on us the most by playing with our minds, emotions, and weaknesses. Allah would never forget to reward a servant for such a great task.

May Allah give us the faith and the patience when we are tested. Ameen.