

Eid 2020 Reinvented- Managing the Shaytaan Out of Lockdown

Ramadan of 2020 was a very unique set of circumstances in Muslim history, with many masjid doors closed globally, no daily Jamaat, no itikaaf, no taraweeh and no usual collective gatherings of family and friends with quarantine in practice. The lifestyle of women during Ramadan changed radically with the organization of family life and collective events missing. However Inshallah we used this extra time to maximize the rewards of getting closer to Allah as many of us had more time to reflect on strengthening our relationship with Allah (swt) in this time of hardships. Allah (swt) has given a blessing to the believers in times of adversity in that it is a chance polish the Islamic personality and glow brighter in the sight of Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgement. ﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَفُو﴾ **“Who has created death and life that He may test which of you is best in deed. And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving.”** [67: 2].

With this in mind we can actively embrace challenges in life knowing that they are sent from our Creator to earn the rewards of the Next Life and have forgiveness for our wrong doing. With the COVID19 experience throwing the entire world and people's personal lives into a state of uncertainty and confusion, the Muslim seeks to focus on the factors that are in their control. We are only accountable to seek knowledge of the rules of Allah (swt) and follow them in any given hardship. We must not feel overwhelmed with matters that are beyond our ability to calculate or change. Furthermore, Allah (swt) gives clear consolation and hope in that we are never given a test without Allah (swt) knowing that we are capable of passing the test. In Surah Baqarah Allah (swt) says; ﴿لَا يَكْلَفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ﴾ **“Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear...”** [Qur'an, 2:286].

During the Blessing of the month of Ramadan we are free of the shaytaan roaming free as Allah (swt) places them in chains during the days of fasting as described in the Noble Hadith of the Prophet (saw). The report by Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: ﴿إِذَا جَاءَ رَمَضَانَ فَتُفْتَحُ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ وَتُغْلَقُ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ وَصُفِدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ﴾ **“When Ramadan begins, the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are put in chains.”** [Narrated by al-Bukhaari (3277) and Muslim (1079)]

With all of the challenges that COVID19 brought with the limitation on collective worship, Muslims find their inner strength from Allah (swt) directly and we made immense benefits from that focused time to increase our taqwa. Now with the celebrations of Eid we see the 'release' of the Shaytaan from their “lockdown” circumstances. We may find ourselves missing the advantages of Ramadan and feel weaker in facing the hardships of life. However, there are always ways for us to see our Iman in a state of strength. Seeking knowledge continuously throughout the year will serve our mentality in always thinking about how each action should be done in the correct manner that Allah (swt) commanded. Indeed it is an obligation that never ends in our life; ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ﴾ **“Whoever seeks knowledge and help other people to learn will get unaccountable rewards from Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) will grant him high ranks in this world and the Hereafter. "Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have been granted knowledge to high ranks.”** [Qur'an 58:11]

Making the Mandoub (recommended actions) a regular and natural part of our lives will elevate our state of Taqwah above the basic weakest level. Allah (swt) gave the non-obligatory action as a means to protect us from easily slipping into the Haraam (forbidden actions). An example is the sunnah prayers make up for the shortcomings in the fard salat. The Prophet (saw) said: ﴿مَنْ شَابَرَ عَلَى ثِنْتَيْ عَشْرَةَ رُكْعَةً مِنَ السَّنَةِ بَنِيَ لَهُ بَيْتٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ أَرْبَعِ قَبْلِ الظُّهْرِ وَرُكْعَتَيْبَعْدَ الظُّهْرِ وَرُكْعَتَيْنِ بَعْدَ الْمَغْرِبِ﴾

«وَرَكْعَتَيْنِ بَعْدَ الْعِشَاءِ وَرَكْعَتَيْنِ قَبْلَ الْفَجْرِ» **“Whoever persists in performing twelve rak’ah from the Sunnah, a house will be built for him in Paradise: four before the Zuhr, two Rak’ah after Zuhr, two Rak’ah after Maghrib, two Rak’ah after the ‘Isha’ and two Rak’ah before Fajr.”** [Sunan Ibn Majah]

Keeping good company that helps you to remember Allah (swt) and your purpose in life to worship Him (swt) is a vital part of keeping on track and weakening the influence of the Shaytaan throughout the rest of year. In another Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: «إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ وَالْجَلِيسِ السَّوِّءِ كَمَثَلِ الْمِسْكِ وَنَافِخِ الْكَبِيرِ فَحَامِلُ الْمِسْكِ إِمَّا أَنْ يُحْدِثَكَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَبْتَاعَ مِنْهُ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رِيحًا طَيِّبَةً وَنَافِخُ الْكَبِيرِ إِمَّا أَنْ يُحْرِقَ ثِيَابَكَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ رِيحًا خَبِيثَةً» **“The example of a good companion and a bad companion is like that of the seller of musk, and the one who blows the blacksmith’s bellows. So as for the seller of musk then either he will grant you some, or you buy some from him, or at least you enjoy a pleasant smell from him. As for the one who blows the blacksmith’s bellows then either he will burn your clothes or you will get an offensive smell from him.”** [Muslim]

One final action point to improve our success in times of hardship is to remember death and the limitations of this life so we do not become overburdened with matters that are actually very trivial and will be completely forgotten when we are raised on the Day of Judgment.

Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an: هُمْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ * وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُن مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ * **“O you who believe! Do not let your wealth or children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. Whoever does that is lost. Give from what We have provided for you before death comes to one of you and he says, ‘O Lord, if only you would give me a little more time so that I can give sadaqa and be one of the righteous.’ Allah will not give anyone more time, once their time has come. Allah is aware of everything you do.”** [63:9-11]

Of course there are many other ways Allah (swt) and our beloved Messenger (saw) taught us with regards to staying steadfast in the deep through hard times, but with even these basic principles practiced - immense progress can be made by all Muslims globally regardless of age, gender, monetary status or area of residence.

In summary, with the Shaytaan out of lock down, we can still lock him out of our lives in an effective manner with the following advice from our Lord (swt); **«وَيَوْمَ يَعْصُ الظَّالِمُ عَلَىٰ يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا * يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا»** **“And (remember) the Day when the wrong-doer will bite his hands and say: Woe to me! Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger. Woe to me! If only I had not taken so-and-so as a friend! He has led me astray from this Reminder (the Qur’an) after it had come to me. And Satan is ever a deserter to man in the hour of need.”** [Qur’an: Chapter 25, Verses 27-29].

From this last reminder of the glorious Quran we should keep Allah (swt) as our best friend and protector over and above any other creation in the earth. Ultimately everything returns to Him (swt) for accountability including the Shaytaan himself!

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