62839 - Remedy for Whispers from Shaytan

the question

Because I am suffering from waswasah (whispers from the Shaytan), sometimes I do not answer my wife when she tries to speak to me, because of this waswasah or because I believe she is the cause of this waswasah. Does the fact that I do not answer her count as a talaq (divorce)? If I speak to her angrily does that count as a talaq?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Not answering your wife does not count as a talaq, neither does speaking to her angrily.

No matter how much you may think of divorce, or intend and resolve to do it, talaq (divorce) does not take place until and unless you utter the words of talaq. That is because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah has forgiven for my ummah (followers) that which is whispered to them and which crosses their minds, so long as they do not act upon it or speak of it.”(Narrated by al-Bukhari, 6664; Muslim, 127)

Based on this, according to the scholars if a man thinks of talaq, that does not mean anything unless he speaks of it.

Indeed, according to some scholars, if a person is suffering from waswas, his talaq does not count even if he utters it, so long as he did not have the intention of talaq. Al-Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“The talaq of a person who is suffering from waswas does not count even if he utters the words, if that was not done deliberately, because this utterance happened because of waswas, not because of his will or intention. Rather it was forced upon him because of the strength of the waswas and

his lack of self-control. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, 'There is no divorce under compulsion.' So this divorce does not count, because he did not really want to do that. This was something that was forced upon him with no intention or choice on his part to do that, so this does not mean that talaq has occurred."

(Fatawa Islamiyyah, compiled by Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez al-Musnad, 3/277)

We advise you not to pay any attention to these whispers, and to ignore them, and to do the opposite of what they are calling you to do. For these whispers (waswas) come from the Shaytan to cause grief to those who believe. The best way to deal with them is to remember Allah a great deal (dhikr), to seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytan, to keep away from sins and wrong actions which are the means by which Iblees gains control over the sons of Adam. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

Indeed, there is for him no authority over those who have believed and rely upon their Lord. [al-Nahl 16:99]

It is worth quoting here what Ibn Hajar al-Haytami (may Allah have mercy on him) said about dealing with waswasah in his book al-Fatawa al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kubra, 1/149. This is what he said:

"He was asked about the problem of waswasah (insinuating whispers from the Shaytan), and whether there is a remedy for it.

He replied by saying that there is an effective remedy for it, which is to ignore them completely, no matter how frequently they may come to mind. When these whispers are ignored, they do not become established, rather they go away after a short time, as many people have experienced. But for those who pay attention to them and act upon them, they increase until they make him like one who is insane or even worse, as we see among many of those who have suffered from them and paid attention to them and to the devil whose task it is to insinuate these whispers, whom the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) warned us against when he said, "Beware of the whispers with regard to water (i.e., wudu/ablution) which is caused by a devil called al-Walhan" – because that causes a person to go to extremes with regard to doing wudu, as was

explained in Sharh Mishkat al-Anwar.

In al-Saheehayn there is a report which supports what has been mentioned above, which is that whoever suffers from waswas should seek refuge with Allah and turn away from the waswas. So think about this effective remedy which was taught by the one who does not speak of his own whims and desires to his ummah (followers), and understand that whoever is deprived of this is deprived of all goodness, because waswasah comes from the Shaytan, according to scholarly consensus, and the accursed one (the Shaytan) has no other desire than to make the believers go astray, make them confused, make their life a misery, cause them distress to the extent that they leave Islam without realizing it.

Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. (Faatir 35:6 – interpretation of the meaning)

According to another hadeeth (prophetic narration), the one who suffers from waswasah should say, “Amantu Billahi wa bi rusulihi (I believe in Allah and in His Messengers).” Undoubtedly, whoever thinks of the paths of the messengers of Allah, especially our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will find that his path and his law is easy and clear, with no hardship in it.

and (He) has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. (al-Hajj 22:78 – interpretation of the meaning)

Whoever ponders this and believes in it sincerely, the problem of waswasah and listening to the Shaytan will go away. In the book of Ibn al-Sunni it is narrated via ‘Aishah (may Allah be pleased with her), “Whoever suffers from this waswas, let him say ‘Amantu Billahi wa bi rusulihi (I believe in Allah and in His Messengers)’, three times, and it will go away from him.”

Al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abd al-Salam and others mentioned something similar to the above. They said: the treatment for waswasah is to believe that this is an idea from the Shaytan and that Iblees is the one who is bringing these thoughts to his mind, and he should strive to fight him. Then he will have the reward of the mujahid (warrior), because he is fighting the enemy of Allah. If he does

that, then the Shaytan will flee from him. This is what mankind has been tested with from the beginning of time, and Allah has given him (Iblees) some power over man as a test for him, so that Allah may show the truth to be true and falsehood to be false, even though the disbelievers may hate that.

In Muslim, hadeeth no. 2203, it is narrated that ‘Uthman ibn Abi’l-‘As said: “The Shaytan was interfering with my prayer and recitation of Quran. He [the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)] said: ‘That is a devil called Khanzab, so seek refuge with Allah from him and spit drily to your left three times.’ I did that, and Allah took him away from me.”

This hadeeth proves the point we are making, which is that waswasah can only overpower the one who is ignorant and confused and does not know what’s what. But the one who has knowledge and understanding will follow the Sunnah (prophetic teachings) and keep away from bid’ah (innovation). The worst of the innovators are those who follow waswas, hence Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that his shaykh al-Rabee’ – who was the imam of the people of his time – was the fastest of the people in relieving himself and doing wudu.

Ibn Hurmuz used to be slow in relieving himself and in doing wudu, and he used to say “I have a problem, do not follow my example.”

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said that some of the scholars considered it mustahabb (liked) for the one who was affected by waswasah with regard to his wudu or prayer to say La ilaha il-Allah, for when the Shaytan hears dhikr (remembrance of Allah) he slinks away, and La ilaha il-Allah is the best of dhikr, and the most effective remedy for warding off waswasah is to remember Allah a great deal.

We ask Allah to take away the waswasah that you are suffering and to increase us and you in faith, righteousness and piety.

And Allah knows best.