83731 - Fabricated Stories

the question

I hope that you can tell me whether this report – which I heard from a preacher – is sound. He got up at 4.20 a.m. to get ready to pray Fajr (early morning prayer). He went and did wudoo (ablution) and got dressed, and got ready to go out and go to the mosque. He was accustomed to doing that since he was a child. He was used to offering all his prayers in congregation in the mosque, even Fajr prayer. He left his house and made his way to the mosque. Whilst he was on his way, he stumbled and fell, and tore part of his garment.

He went back home to change his garment and put on another one. He did not get angry or swear or curse, he just went back home and simply changed his clothes. Then he set out again for the mosque, and again he stumbled and fell, and part of this garment got ripped as well. He went back home and changed his garment. Both garments had got torn but that did not deter him from his keenness to offer the prayer in congregation in the mosque. He set out again for the mosque, and he stumbled for the third time, but suddenly he felt that he was not falling, and there was someone holding him and preventing him from falling to the ground. The man was surprised and looked around, but he did not see anyone. He stood confused for a moment, then he carried on towards the mosque. Then he heard a voice saying: “Do you know who I am?” The man said: “No.” The voice replied: “I am the one who prevented you from falling.” The man said: “Who are you?” He replied: “I am the shaytan.” The man asked him: “If you are the shaytan, why did you prevent me from falling?” The shaytan answered: “The first time when you stumbled and went home to change your clothes, Allah forgave you all your sins. The second time when you stumbled and went home to change your clothes, Allah forgave your family. The third time when you stumbled, I was afraid that if you went back home and changed your clothes, Allah would forgive all the people of your neighbourhood, so I supported you and prevented you from falling.”

What is confusing me about this story is: is it possible for the shaytan to speak to a person and hold his hand and prevent him from falling as is described in this story?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

There is no basis for this story in the books of Sunnah (prophetic teachings), hadeeth (prophetic narrations) and history. It is contrary to Islam for several reasons:

1 – The conversation between the man and the shaytan. It is possible for the shaytan to whisper to a person (waswasah) when he is in his real form, but speaking to him is not possible, unless the shaytan appears to him in human form.

2 – The shaytan says that he supported the man when he stumbled. This is something that is unbelievable, and the shaytan is unable to do such a thing. Allah has made the angels protectors and guardians of man, to protect them from the harm of the jinn, because they can see us but we cannot see them. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“For him (each person), there are angels in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by the Command of Allah” [13:11]

In this made-up story it clearly states that the shaytan is able to protect a person against that which may harm him, or that the shaytan is able to prevent something that has been decreed by Allah.

3 – The most serious thing in this story is where the shaytan says that the first time Allah forgave the man all his sins, then the second time he says that Allah has forgiven his family, and he says that if he had fallen a third time, Allah would have forgiven the people of his neighbourhood! All of this is lies against Allah and claiming to have knowledge of the unseen. Even if a mujahid (warrior) is wounded in battle against the kuffar (disbelievers) it does not bring such virtues, so how can it be ascribed to the one who is going to the mosque? It is not ascribed to one who stumbled when calling people to Allah or going to uphold ties of kinship or other acts of worship, so how can these

virtues be ascribed to one who falls when he is going to the mosque?

There is nothing about falling or stumbling that brings such virtues. Many of the Sahaabah (companions) fell, stumbled or were injured at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but there is nothing in the Sunnah which ascribes such virtues to them or even some of those virtues. Allah does not forgive a family or the people of a neighbourhood or city because of the deeds or acts of worship of one of the righteous, let alone the fact that stumbling does not bring a person closer to Allah and it is not an act of worship in itself. If anyone were to benefit from the actions of another, then the father of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) would have benefited from the prophethood of his son, and the son of Nuh would have benefited from the prophethood of his father, and Abu Talib would have benefited from the prophethood of his nephew Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Moreover, how did the shaytan know of all that so that he could tell this man about it? Does the shaytan have the power to prevent mercy reaching one of the slaves of Allah upon whom He wishes to bestow it?

No. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whatever of mercy (i.e. of good), Allah may grant to mankind, none can withhold it; and whatever He may withhold, none can grant it thereafter. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise” [35:2]

Secondly:

Undoubtedly these false stories are things that become widespread among those who do not understand their religion properly and who do not know the Oneness of their Lord (Tawheed). They are propagated by liars and storytellers who fabricate lies against the laws of Allah.

Allah has issued a stern warning against these liars. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Say (O Muhammad): (But) the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are Al-Fawaahish (great evil sins and every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse) whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), unrighteous oppression, joining partners (in worship) with Allah for which He has

given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge” [7:33]

What khateebs (orators) and preachers must do is be above being mere storytellers who tell the common folk stories that go against sharee’ah (Islamic teachings). The salaf (pious predecessors) of this ummah (nation) issued a stern warning against these storytellers, because of the bad effects that their stories have on the common folk and because they contain things that go against the laws of Allah.

In a hadeeth that was classed as hasan (sound) by Shaykh al-Albani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah it was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “When the Children of Israel were doomed they started to tell stories.”

Shaykh al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It says in al-Nihayah: “when they were doomed they started to tell stories” which means they relied on words and forsook deeds, and that was the reason for their doom, or vice versa: when they were doomed it was because they stopped doing good deeds and turned to stories.

Al-Albani said, commenting on this:

It may be said that the reason they were doomed was that they paid too much attention to stories at the expense of fiqh (jurisprudence) and beneficial knowledge which teach the people about their religion, and motivate them to do righteous deeds. Because they did that, they were doomed. Al-Silsilah al-Saheehah.

This is the case with the storytellers; they pay too much attention to stories and myths, which they narrate to the common folk, without any understanding or knowledge, and the common man hears a lot but does not understand any ruling or gain any knowledge.

Ibn al-Jawzi said in Talbees Iblees:

The storytellers are not condemned just for being storytellers, because Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“We relate unto you (Muhammad) the best of stories” [12:3]

“So relate the stories” [7:176]

Rather the storytellers are condemned because they tell many stories without mentioning any beneficial knowledge, and usually they mix sound and unsound material in what they narrate and rely on things that are mostly impossible. End quote.

It was narrated that Abu Qilabah ‘Abd-Allah ibn Zayd said: Nothing kills knowledge but stories. A man may sit with another man for a year and not learn anything from him, and he may sit with a knowledgeable man and not get up until he has learned something. Hilyat al-Awliya.

How often do these storytellers narrate from bad reports to the masses, and tell them these fables, which reach such a status among the masses that they believe everything that they hear and even give them precedence over the scholars and seekers of knowledge.

Al-Hafiz al-‘Iraqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

One of the problems with them is that they speak to so many people and tell them things that they are unable to comprehend, and that leads them to confusion and makes them develop misconceptions. This applies if what they tell them is sound, so how about if it is false?

Tahdheer al-Khawaas by al-Suyooti,quoting from al-Baa’ith ‘ala al-Khalaas by al-‘Iraaqi.

Ibn al-Jawzi said:

The storyteller narrates weird reports to the masses, and tells them that even if he had even the slightest whiff of knowledge he would not have told them. So the masses leave with a lot of false notions in their minds, which they discuss amongst themselves. If a scholar denounces them, they say: we heard this, he narrated it to us. How many storytellers have misled others by means of the fabricated reports they narrate to them; how many people have turned yellow with hunger (because of what they heard encouraging asceticism); how many people left their families, homes and cities to wander like monks; how many have refrained from doing that which is permitted; how

many have refrained from learning and teaching knowledge, believing that he is going against his own whims and desires; how many have made their children orphans because of their asceticism whilst still alive; how many have turned away from their wives and not given them their rights, so that she is neither single nor truly married. End quote. Al-Mawdoo'aa

This is why the storytellers are criticized by many of the salaf.

Maymoon ibn Mahran (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The storyteller may expect punishment from Allah, and the one who listens to him may expect mercy.

Al-Albani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, following hadeeth no. 4070 in al-Silsilah al-Da'eefah:

This was narrated by Ibn al-Mubarak in his book al-Zuhd with a saheeh isnaad (authentic chain).

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The greatest liars among the people are the storytellers. The people need truthful storytellers who will remind them of death and the punishment of the grave. It was said to him: Didn't you attend their gatherings? He said: No. Al-Adaab al-Shar'iyyah by Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali.

We ask Allah to set straight the affairs of the imams (leaders) and khateebs (orators), and to guide them to that which is best for them and others.

And Allah knows best.