

An account of Ayyub

It is well-known among the historians and Qur'anic commentators that Ayyub was the son of Amwas, son of Aeos, son of Ishaq son of Ibrahim. His mother was a descendant of Lut. Some scholars however maintain that Ayyub was the son of Aaes and his wife Rahmat was the daughter of Afraem bin Yusuf, or she was Mahir the daughter of Meesha son of Yusuf, or Liya daughter of Ya'qub. But the first opinion is more prevalent (i.e.. his wife was Rahmat).

Authentic chain of narrators quotes that Abu-Basir asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq the reason for Ayyub being inflicted with such severe calamities. Imam replied that it was due to the excess of bounties Allah had bestowed on him. And he used to thank Allah in the proper way. At that time the Satan was not barred from the heavens. He used to travel up to the Divine Throne also. One day he saw the thankfulness of Ayyub etched in the celestial tablets. They were carried up with great care and respect. When Satan saw this, the fire of jealousy flared up in his heart. He said to Allah, "Ayyub is so thankful to You because You have bestowed bounties in huge proportions. But if you take the bounties away he would not remain thankful. If You allow me to control his fortunes You will realize how thankless he can become."

The Almighty granted Satan the privilege to control the wealth and children of Ayyub. He was elated and at once rushed towards the earth and began to destroy the wealth and children of Ayyub. The more he proceeded in destruction the thankfulness of Ayyub intensified.

Now the Satan requested for power over the cultivation owned by Ayyub. This was also granted. He mobilized his assistants and landed on the fields of Ayyub. They spewed out a venomous breath and all the crops withered.

Ayyub was all the more thankful. Hence Satan demanded control over the goats and sheep owned by Ayyub. When it was granted he killed them all. Ayyub became more sincere and thanked Allah frequently.

Satan told Allah, "Ayyub was yet thankful because he knows You would return the bounties soon and he prayed desperately to the Almighty and requested Him to grant complete power over the body of Ayyub.

Allah told him, "You are given power over Ayyub's body except his Aql (power of reasoning) and his eyes."

According to another version the exceptions concerned heart, eyes, tongue and ears. When he received the permission he dashed to the earth as he feared that if the Divine Mercy surrounds Ayyub it will be an obstacle on his way. He came to Ayyub and blew a venomous breath into his nostrils. As a result Ayyub was inflicted with a severe malady that covered his whole body with sores and leprous wounds. He continued in this condition for a long time and continued to praise and thank Allah without any reservations. Ultimately worms developed in his infected wounds. The patience of Ayyub reached such heights that whenever a worm fell from his body he picked it up and put it back saying, "Stay where the Almighty has originated you." Such a dreadful odor emanated from his body that the people banished him to a dirty corner of the town. His wife Rahmat, the daughter of Yusuf went out to beg and got him whatever she could obtain.

When a long time passed for Ayyub in such afflictions, the Satan realized that his thankful always exceeded the intensity of the calamities that befall him. So he went to a group of Ayyub's followers who had become hermits and resided in the mountains. He told them, "Come let us go and see why Ayyub has been inflicted with such calamities." The people came down and mounting their horses headed towards Ayyub. When they came near, the horses were terrified of the stench and bolted out of control. The riders tied the horses in a far corner and proceeded on foot. They came to Ayyub to ask him about his conditions. A young man also accompanied them. They sat down near Ayyub and said, "If you tell us of the deadly sin you have committed we can guard against it. We do not dare to pray for your forgiveness lest Allah sends His wrath upon us. We never expected you would suffer from chastisement that did not befall anyone else. It must be due to a sin that you has concealed from us."

Ayyub said, "I swear by the Might of my Lord, and He is a witness that I never ate anything without sharing it with the poor and orphans. And whenever I came across two worship acts, I always preferred the more difficult."

Hearing these words the young man told his companions, "May Allah destroy you! You come to Allah's Prophet and criticized him to the extent that he was forced to reveal a good deed he had performed in secret."

When they went away, Ayyub supplicated Allah and sought His permission to express a wish. The Almighty sent a cloud that hovered over his head and voice came out from it, "You are permitted to express your desire: Ask, whatever you wish. I am always near you."

Ayyub gathered all his strength and sat up with his thighs joined. Then he said, "O My Lord! I swear by Your Might that You never sent any afflictions upon me. But whenever I had the choice of two worship-acts, I preferred the one, which was most difficult for my body. And I never ate without sharing my food with orphans. Did I not echo Your praise? Did I not thank You sufficiently? Did I not glorify and purify

You (from every kind of association)?”

Ten thousand tongues of the cloud replied, “O Ayyub Who created you with the temperament that you prayed when all world was asleep? Who is that made worship most likeable to you? Do you think you have obliged the Almighty? Whereas He has favored you by granting you the divine opportunity to worship and thank Him.”

Ayyub picked up a handful of dust and stuffed it in his mouth and said, “I was wrong! And I beg forgiveness. All the bounties and opportunities of worship are from You alone.”

The Almighty sent an Angel who kicked the earth and a spring of water gushed out. Ayyub bathed in it and was immediately cured of all diseases and discomfort. His body become more fresh and beautiful than before. Then Allah caused orchards and gardens to grow around Ayyub. All the wealth, property and farms were restored. The Angel was sitting with him and engaged in conversation when his wife entered with a piece of dried bread. She saw in place of a ruin, a blooming garden and orchards. Instead of Ayyub she saw two handsome men. She began to scream and lament as to what has befallen Ayyub. Ayyub called her and when she came near she recognized him. Seeing the return of Divine bounties she fell down in a prostration of thankfulness.

When she had gone in search of food for Ayyub she was sporting lovely tresses. The people she had approached demanded her for her beautiful tresses in return of food. She cut off her locks and brought food for Ayyub. When Ayyub saw her pruned hair he was infuriated and vowed a hundred lashes for her. But when she told him the story he became sad and regretted his oath. The Almighty sent a revelation to him to hit her softly with a broom containing a hundred twigs. That would suffice to fulfill his oath.

After this, the Almighty brought to life even his sons who had died in the calamities and those who had died before them, that they might live with Ayyub again.

Later, the people asked him of the worst of the calamities that befell him. He replied it were the sarcastic remarks of the people.

The Almighty showered his house with pieces of gold and Ayyub gathered them. Whenever a piece fell out of bound he rushed towards it and picked it eagerly. Archangel Gabriel said, “Are you never satiated?”

“Who can ever be satiated with Divine bounties?” replied Ayyub. [1](#)

The Almighty says,

“And (remember) Ayyub, when he cried to his Lord, (saying): Harm has afflicted me, and Thou art the most Merciful of the merciful. Therefore We responded to him and took off what harm he had, and We gave him his family and the like of them with them: a mercy from Us and a reminder to the worshippers.” (21:83–84)

And on another occasion He says,

“And remember Our servant Ayyub, when he called upon his Lord: The Satan has afflicted me with toil and torment. Urge with your foot; here is a cool washing–place and a drink. And We gave him his family and the like of them with them, as a mercy from Us, and as a reminder to those possessed of understanding. And take in your hand a green branch and beat her with it and do not break your oath; surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely he was frequent in returning (to Allah).”

This is the translation of Ayats revealed with regard to Ayyub. Some other traditions have also been narrated in connection with the life of Ayyub: “His family and the like of them with them” indicated his sons who had died in bad times that Ayyub fell into and also those who had died before the afflictions. According to some reports ‘like of them’ indicates that more sons were born to the wife of Ayyub resembling those who were returned from dead.

As regards the granting of control to Satan over the fortunes of Ayyub many scholars express their reservations, especially Sayyid Murtaza. According to him it is very unlikely that Allah allowed Satan to control His Prophet. However, it is difficult to ignore such a large number of traditions in order to accept the views of these scholars. For example, we know that many a times, Prophets and Imams are tyrannized and oppressed by some people and forced to undergo untold difficulties, all this is mostly due to Satanic instigation. So it is not impossible for Satan to have control of Ayyub’s fortune and physical conditions. However, we must remember that the Almighty never gave him prerogative over the intellect and religion of Ayyub.

As mentioned in traditions the infected wounds of Ayyub began to teem with worms. This has also been belied by few theologians who say that a Prophet is never afflicted with a disability that is repulsive to people. And the incidence of worms in a diseased body is indeed repulsive. It is possible to justify this by saying that in all probability these things have been related in Sunni sources and have crept into Shi‘ah traditions due to Taqiyyah.

Secondly we have traditions supporting the former view. Imam al–Baqir says in a authentic tradition reported by Ibn Babawayh that, Ayyub was involved in afflictions for seven years, without having committed any sin; because a Prophet is infallible and purified (from sins). They neither commit sins (small or big) nor are attracted towards evil.

Imam says, “Though Ayyub had the terrible disease there was no foul odor in his body and his appearance did not develop any deformity. Blood and puss also did not appear from his wounds, and thus he did not present a repulsive sight that people would shun him. There were no worms in his wounds and whenever the Almighty involves his Prophets and friends in such diseases, he keeps them free from such repulsive defects. The people avoided him not because of his disease but due to the calamities that befell him and due to their ignorance. They could not bring themselves to accept the fact that such a prosperous person as Ayyub could fall into such serious calamities.

The Holy Prophet said that the calamities that befall Prophets are far more terrible than those experienced by ordinary people. Moreover, the more lofty the status of a person the more calamities befell him. The Almighty sends upon His Prophets such afflictions so that people may not be led to believe that Prophets are gods. Allah bestows untold bounties upon His Prophets to prove to the people that Divine rewards are of two kinds: one for performing good deeds and one for undergoing difficulties. Also people must not belittle a poor man for his poverty or a sick person for his disease, or a weak creature for his frailty. The people must understand that Allah makes sick whoever He wants and curses whoever He desires. At all times and under all circumstances whatever Allah intends, He makes some affairs as means of deriving lessons and some as misfortunes and sometimes He grants as felicity to them. Allah is Just in all His affairs and Wise in all His actions. He does what is best for His creatures and whatever they have, is from Him alone.

According to a reliable tradition from Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali, Ayyub was afflicted with the loss of wealth and sons in the latter part of Wednesday.

Authentic traditions from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq state that Ayyub suffered for seven years without any fault of his. In another tradition Imam says, "Allah subjected Ayyub to afflictions without his having committed any sin. Ayyub maintained patience until the time people began to criticize and blame him for committing sins. Hence he complained to the Almighty because Prophets cannot remain patient if accused of sinful acts.

In another tradition Imam says that Ayyub prayed for divine forgiveness during the period of afflictions.[2](#)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says in a reliable tradition that when the Almighty granted release from difficulties to Ayyub he looked at the agricultural fields of The Israelites and said, "My Lord You have bestowed kindness upon your afflicted servant Ayyub. But he has not sown his fields like other people of The Israelites."

The Almighty revealed to him that he take out a handful of soil from his bag and spread it on the earth. After he complied he was able to harvest lentils (Masoor) or grams.

The hadith apparently shows that the two crops did not exist before this incident and Ayyub was the first to cultivate them.

We have another authentic report from Imam that a believer is subjected to every kind of calamity and every kind of death, but the Almighty never allows him to lose his power of reasoning. Imam says, "Have you not seen how Allah gave Satan, power over the wealth, children, family and all the things belonging to Ayyub except his 'Aql so that we may continue to believe in His oneness and worship Him with this belief."

Imam is quoted through authoritative chains that a beautiful woman, who had committed many sins, would be brought on the Resurrection Day. She would say, "My Lord You created me in a beautiful form.

And that's why I got involved in sins.”

The Almighty would summon Maryam and ask the woman, “Who is more beautiful, you or Maryam? We bestowed her with such incomparable beauty but she was not misguided by it.”

Then a handsome man will be brought forward. He was also a sinner because of his physical attraction. When asked he'd say that due to his physique women were attracted towards him and he was enticed into adultery.

The Almighty will summon Yusuf and say, “Were you more handsome than this man (Yusuf)? We made him the most attractive man but he was not beguiled by women.”

Finally a person who had suffered calamities would be brought there. When asked, he shall say that he was forced to sin due to untold calamities. The Lord shall summon Ayyub and say, “Who has undergone more difficulties, you or this Ayyub? We subjected him into such terrible afflictions, yet he did not fall into sins.”

1. Ayyub was eager to collect gold pieces not for their worldly value. It was, rather, for the fact that they were an aspect of Divine Mercy (as mentioned by him) that he was eager to collect them because they were a gift from his Lord and signified His kindness and Favor.

2. There is a difference among exegeses as regards the period of affliction. According to some it was 18 years and according to others, it was 7 years. The latter view is more prevalent.

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