

Of Man, Satan, and Evil

Eid is the bringer of many things; gifts, celebrations, family visits, and more often than not, a series of immoral thoughts and desires that consume one's mind. It all starts with the last night of Ramadan where a few ideas manage to creep in. Then, with the arrival of Eid, they multiply quickly and within the space of a few hours, overwhelm me.

After a 30 day absence, evil is back with a vengeance and wills me to do what I ought not to; to break promises that I had promised not to break; to morph me back to the person I once was; a person I decided not to be. And as I entertain these evil ideas, I cannot help but wonder about the reasons behind this sudden change in thought. Why is it that as soon as Ramadan comes to an end, one quickly abandons his Ramadan ways and starts to indulge, at least intellectually, into what is wholly immoral and wrong?

The answer, I was told as a child, is the absence of Satan during the holy month of Ramadan. According to the story, Satan and his children are locked in hell for the month. This leaves man free of Satan's bad influence, providing him with the perfect opportunity to embrace the "good" ideals prescribed by God. In other words, the story attributes our generally more positive behavior in Ramadan to the absence of Satan's influence.

The validity of this story is somewhat susceptible. But this is not the purpose of this article: as I sit down and entertain whether the story of Satan's absence is true, I am absolutely horrified.

If Satan was truly absent, then what can possibly explain the brutal pounding of Homs that tore hundreds of children from limb to limb? What can possibly explain the reign of terror in Iraq that left more than 1000 people dead? What can possibly explain the racism, violence and hatred that has consumed the streets of Egypt?

These are questions I am not willing to entertain for they are questions that are too dark for my liking. But I unfortunately must do so, and with them, I reach the inevitable conclusion that the explanation lies within one's self. It is not Satan, but man who is responsible for such horrid forms of brutality. It is man who is capable of inflicting evil at an unprecedented scale, the likes of which leaves Satan in envy.

But such conclusions are not reached by all men; certainly not by Arabs. Arabs say that it is Satan that is responsible for our immoral behavior. It is Satan that is responsible for pushing us astray. It is Satan that urges us towards the koshers of evil. It is Satan's fault, all of it.

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What a predictable Arab reaction: after all, “it is the West who’s responsible for our current state of affairs. It is Israel who’s responsible for the plight of the Palestinian people. It the working environment that is responsible for my lack of progression. It is the stress that is responsible for my rude behavior.” Whether it is Satan, a foreign power, the unsupportive boss, or other external forces, the Arab man is quite frankly the most skillful creature ever created in finding external excuses for his own failure. Nothing bad could be the direct result of his own decisions and actions; it is always the conditions, the people, and whatever else his innovative mind can conjure to rid himself of taking responsibility for his current situation.

And with such behavior, the Arab man is assured a life of stagnation, misery, and defeat; for it is the acts of recognizing failure, learning from mistakes, and taking responsibility for one’s actions that are the corner stones of success. If we are to progress as a people, we must abandon blaming others for our misfortunes and start focusing on ourselves. We must start accepting responsibility for our decisions and state of affairs and we must employ our wit and time in finding solutions to our problems rather than finding excuses.

They say “the greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he doesn’t exist” - I say his greatest trick was to convince the world that he does...

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