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Surah Al-Falaq

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قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾

1. Say "I seek refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak".

This Surah reminds us of our Lord and it reminds us of what should be our relationship with Him. The base relationship that any servant has with Allah (swt) is one of need. One of being desperately in need. And this is what He (swt) reminds us of in this Surah. The world out there is a dangerous place. There is much evil. There is much darkness. And there are many who seek to do you harm in so many ways. You have but one hope. But this one hope is the greatest of hopes. This is what Allah (swt) wants us to realize in this Surah. But He (swt) is not in any need of us. We mean nothing to Him (swt). So He (swt) will not give us His protection unless we seek it from Him (swt). Unless we yearn for it from Him (swt). Unless we beg and plead and pray to Him (swt) to grant it to us. So this Surah is nothing but a dua that we make. Nothing but a prayer of desperation and need.

The first word in the first ayah of this Surah is a command. Allah (swt) tells us "to say". Notice here how Allah (swt) is guiding our behavior. He (swt) is guiding our thinking. He (swt) is bringing us to a particular state of mind. These should not just be words that we simply utter like a parrot. Rather they should seep into our hearts. We should not only be saying these words on our tongues when we read Quran or in Salah or before we go to bed. Rather we should be living these words every moment of our lives. At every moment we should be saying these words to ourselves in our hearts. This is the extent to which we need our Lord. This is the extent to which we depend on Him (swt). We should pray that He (swt) is always with us. We should pray that He (swt) does not leave us to ourselves for even the blink of an eye. This is how much we need Him (swt). This is the basis of our relationship with Him (swt).

Allah (swt) commands us to say that we seek refuge in Him (swt) and He (swt) tells us to refer to Himself (swt) as the Lord of the Daybreak. Insha Allah first let us try to understand what it means to seek refuge in Him (swt), then let us try to understand why He (swt) refers to Himself (swt) as the Lord of the Daybreak.

Allah (swt) commands us in this ayah to seek refuge in Him (swt). What does this mean? The concept of seeking refuge implies that there is a danger. It also implies that there is a place of safety that will protect one from this danger. We know that the place of safety is Allah (swt), but what exactly is the danger that we need to seek refuge in Him (swt) from? He (swt) gives us some examples of these in the ayahs to come, but in reality it is much more than these. Recall how we said in other Surahs that the purpose of our lives was Allah (swt), He (swt) is the reason for our existence. He (swt) created us only for Himself (swt). To dedicate our entire lives only for Him (swt). So He (swt) must be the goal towards which we must always be journeying. All of our actions must only be for Him (swt). Once we realize this then we realize what it is that we need to seek refuge in Him (swt) from. We need to seek refuge in Him (swt) from everything that is not Him (swt). Although the ideal is for us to dedicate ourselves only for Him (swt), there are so many forces that are working to pull us away from Him (swt). There are many distractions and temptations in this world. There are many demons that will try to take us away from Him (swt). This is what we need to seek refuge in Him (swt). From all that will take us away from Him (swt). Of course Shaitan is the prime example of this. But there are so many others. Your desires. Your lusts. Your negligence. Your laziness. The Prophet (saw) would always seek refuge in Allah (swt) from laziness and despair. There is also something that you might think of more than your Lord. This may be your work, your family, your money, your business, your possessions. All of these are demons that pull you away from the Divine. Can you then even begin to realize how important it is that you seek refuge in Allah (swt) from these? Why would Allah (swt) tell you to seek refuge in Him (swt) unless there was a real danger for you? Unless there was a real possibility that these things could harm you. Harm you by taking you away from Him (swt). If that should happen then how terrible would it be? How terrible would it be if you are pulled away from the One Who you were created for? How terrible would it be if you were to ever become distant from Him (swt)? There are not even words to describe it. That is why to seek refuge in Allah (swt) is not something that is optional for us. Rather it is an obligation of the utmost importance. The consequences of it are far greater than you can possibly imagine.

Now that we know the importance of seeking refuge in Allah (swt), we should understand how exactly do we do it? The linguistic derivation of the word *'aodu* that Allah (swt) uses here gives the meaning of being close to something. Of being inside of something. Something like a child runs close to its mother when it perceives some danger. Something also like a man runs into a fortress to escape an enemy. This is what we need to do. But how exactly do we do this with Allah (swt)? We can never reach Him (swt) in the physical and literal sense, so how exactly can we be close to Him (swt). How exactly can we be "inside" His (swt)'s protection? Of course it is by saying these words. But it is not only by saying these words. It is also by remembering Him (swt). When we remember Him (swt) then He (swt) is close to us. So we have to say these words, we have to say "I seek refuge in Allah", then we have to think about the meaning of what we are saying. When we say this then Insha Allah we will be in His protection. When we say this then Insha Allah it will be like we are that child running to our mother and we will be like that man running inside his fortress. Our thoughts of our Lord. Our reflections and contemplations about Him (swt) Insha Allah is how we can reach Him (swt).

Allah (swt) describes Himself in this ayah as the Lord of the Daybreak. Both of these words actually give a far deeper meaning in their original Arabic. The word *rabb* does not just mean "Lord", it also means Creator. The One Who brings into existence from a state of non-existence. It also means the Sustainer and the Maintainer. The One Who keeps in existence that which He brought into existence. Now how can you and I understand this? What is the impact that it must have on our lives? We should realize that the One Who we are seeking refuge in, the One Who we are asking to protect us, is the One Who brought us into being in the first place. You exist right now. You can see, you can feel, you can taste, you can think. This is only because of Him (swt). You exist at this moment only because of Him (swt). Not only did He (swt) bring you into being but for every moment of your life He (swt) is maintaining your existence. When you know that there is such a Being, how then can you turn away from Him? How then can you do anything that is displeasing to Him (swt)? Just like Allah (swt) is Rabb for you and me, He (swt) is also Rabb for all creation. This should tell you the right that He (swt) has to be served.

This then brings us to the other meaning of the word rabb and that is the One Who is obeyed, the One Who is submitted to, the One Who is served. Allah (swt) just by being Rabb, just by referring to Himself (swt) as Rabb, demands our obedience. Now we have realized from this ayah that He (swt) is our only hope. He (swt) is the only One Who can save us from everything in this world that can destroy us. But how can we turn to Him (swt)? How can we flee to Him (swt)? How can we seek His refuge if we have angered Him (swt)? Why would He (swt) protect us if we have been disobedient to Him (swt)? So when we learn that one of the meanings of His Name Rabb is the One Who is obeyed and served then we cannot allow this to be just knowledge that we learn. Rather we have to take a lesson for it in ourselves. We have to practically implement the knowledge that we have. We have to rush to be obedient to His Law. We have to strive to do all that He (swt) has commanded us to do and we have to struggle with ourselves to stay away from all that He (swt) has forbidden us from. Especially if we want to seek refuge in Him (swt). Especially if we want Him (swt) to save us from all the monsters and the demons that are coming to harm us. So tomorrow at dawn fight with yourself to wake up on time for Fajr. The next time someone in your family does something to upset you struggle with yourself not to become angry with them or even to say something to them that might displease them. This effort that you make demonstrates your submission and your servitude to your Rabb.

In several ayahs of the Quran, Allah (swt) has referred to Himself as Rabb. But in this ayah He (swt) refers to Himself as the Rabb of the Daybreak. He (swt) is the Rabb of that time when the night ends and the day begins. He (swt) is the Rabb of that time when the darkness is destroyed and the light becomes dominant. That precise moment when the light overwhelms the darkness. That moment when outside there is more light than there is dark. Allah (swt) is telling us here that He (swt) is the Rabb of that moment. How beautiful is this in the context of this Surah? This Surah where we are seeking His protection from all the things in the world that could harm us. Are not all those things the darkness and is He (swt) not the light that destroys them? Is not He (swt) the daybreak that cuts through the darkness of all evil. The darkness of all that is other than Him (swt)? What better refuge can you have then other than He (swt)?

The Arabic word *falaq* actually gives a far deeper meaning than simply Daybreak. It also means that which cuts and cleaves. That which rents asunder. That which tears. Is this not also an accurate description of our Rabb? Is He (swt) not also the One Who tears and rips? How is this so? When you seek Him (swt), when you make Him (swt) as the purpose of your existence, then He (swt) cuts through everything else in your life. You reach that station where nothing else matters except He (swt). He (swt) cleaves through all the desires and demons that you had in your life. He (swt) destroys all else. Until nothing returns except He (swt).

This is the One Who we have to seek refuge in. The Overwhelming. The One Whom consumes all else. We have to realize that He (swt) is the Light and that everything else other than Him (swt) is darkness. Do you not want to run away from the darkness and into the Light? Do you not want to run away from what will hurt you and towards what will save you? The way that you do this is by following the command that Allah (swt) has given you in this ayah. It is by seeking refuge in Him (swt). If you choose Him (swt) then the night is over. The time of despair and hopelessness is over. Now your life has a purpose. Now your existence has a meaning. You live for something greater than the satisfaction of your desires. You live for something more than just this world. All that you have to do is make this choice, and you will be rewarded with a reward that is greater than all imagine. In this life you will have peace and tranquility. Nothing will ever upset you. No fear will ever overwhelm you. Even if the world around you is a hell, you will have paradise in your heart because you know that your Rabb is with you. In the next life the reward is far greater. It is gardens of bliss and joy. It is being close to the Divine. It is being able to behold the Divine. Such is so tremendous and so sublime that it cannot be described in words. It can only be experienced. Once you do you will realize the true fulfillment of existence.

But you also need to make an effort on your part. Do not think that such a great reward comes cheap. First of all you need to choose to seek refuge in Allah (swt). You have to choose to make Him (swt) the most important in your life. If you do not. If you allow the demons to attack you, then that was your choice to make and Allah (swt) will allow you to make that choice. Even when you choose to seek refuge in Him (swt) you must do it while being obedient to Him (swt).

You have to realize that you are not simply seeking refuge in anyone. You are seeking refuge in a Rabb, and a Rabb needs to be obeyed.

In his tafsir of this ayah Imam Qurtubi (ra) quotes a narration where the Prophet (saw) was once traveling on a long journey with Uqbah bin Amr (ra). The Prophet (saw) was riding and Uqbah (ra) was walking. During this journey Uqbah (ra) told the Prophet (saw) that he (ra) was reciting Surah Hud and Surah Yusuf to get the protection of Allah (swt) for this journey. The Prophet (saw) told him that instead he (ra) should read this Surah. Because this Surah is the best of duas to recite to ask Allah (swt) for protection from anything of this world. Allah (swt) is the Real and the True. Even more true than the world around us. Because He (swt) is the Creator and Sustainer, as well as the Lord and Master, this world is completely under His (swt)'s Power. If we then want to be saved from all the dangers of this world, then what better refuge can we seek other than He (swt)?

The Prophet (saw) told his companion to recite this Surah in that instance when the two of them were on a long journey. In those days many were the dangers that could befall travelers when they went on long journeys. So this shows us that this is a Surah that could protect us from the dangers of this world. How then can we not seek refuge in our Rabb? How then can we not recognize all of the dangers of this world that could take us away from Him (swt)? Allah (swt) loves us. He (swt) wants nothing but the best for us. Why would He (swt) command us to seek refuge in Him (swt) unless there was a dire for us to? Unless there were real dangers in that dark world out there. It is only the arrogant who think that they do not need Allah (swt), who foolishly think that they can conquer the world around them, who convince themselves that they do not seek refuge in Him (swt). May Allah (swt) save us from ever being like them! For our part we have to be like the Prophet (saw). We have to live for Allah (swt). We have to do what He (swt) is pleased with us doing. So if He (swt) tells us to seek refuge in Him (swt) then we have to seek refuge in Him (swt). We have to realize that He (swt) only tells us to do what is good for us. What could save us from a terrors and horrors unimaginable! He (swt) is a Being of Love and Light.

2. And from the evil of all that He created.

We said in the previous ayah about how this one small Surah can protect us from all the dangers of this world. In this ayah Allah (swt) shows us how this is so. This ayah is a continuation of the command that He (swt) gave in the previous ayah. In that command He (swt) told us to seek refuge in Him (swt). To seek His Protection. Just from this simple command we learned many things. First of all we learned that there are things out there that can harm us. There are things out there that can take us away from Allah (swt). This is because the greatest of harms is to be distant from the Divine. Although we fear harm to our selves, to our family, to our wealth, to our honor and status, none of these can compare with harm to our relationship with our Lord. So yes we do seek refuge in Allah (swt) from harm coming to the things that we care about, but most of all we seek refuge in Him (swt) from being distant from Him (swt). We also saw that because Allah (swt) commanded us to seek refuge in Him (swt) that shows us that to seek refuge in Him (swt) is something that is beloved to Him (swt). In other words He (swt) will reward us just for our seeking refuge in Him (swt). He (swt) will raise our station with Him (swt) just for our running to Him (swt). We also saw in the previous ayah how He (swt) did not tell us to seek refuge in "Allah" or "Ar-Rahman", rather He (swt) told us to seek refuge in Ar-Rabb. So we must remember that we are seeking refuge in our Creator and Sustainer. The One Who originated us and the One Who maintains our existence at every moment. Who better than He (swt) to take as a refuge? But we also realized how another of the meanings of the Name Rabb is the Lord and Master. The One Who needs to be obeyed. The One Who needs to be served. So although we are desperate for His Protection. Although we are desperate for His refuge, we need to realize that in order for us to attain this we need to give Him (swt) His right. In this ayah Allah (swt) shows us just how this Surah can protect us from all the things of this world. With just three small words Allah (swt) covers everything of this world that could harm us.

Allah (swt) commands us in this ayah to seek refuge in Him (swt) from the evil of all that He (swt) created. Every single thing is a creation of Allah (swt). Everything. There does not exist a thing in this entire universe except that it is a creation of Allah (swt). He (swt) is the One Who brought it into existence when before it was nothing. Such is His Nature. He (swt) is the Creator. The One Who originates. The One Who brings into being. If all that we knew about Him (swt) is that He (swt) is the Creator then this should be enough for us to dedicate ourselves to Him (swt). How can you not adore and serve the One Who brought you into existence? The One Who brought everyone that you know and everything that you have into existence. You were nothing and He (swt) is the One Who made you what you are. You had nothing and no one, and He gave you everything that you have and everyone that you know. How then can you refuse to serve Him (swt)? The One Who creates. The One Who brings into existence.

Now of all the things that Allah (swt) has created, He (swt) tells us that some of these are evil. The Arabic word *sharr* that Allah (swt) uses here actually gives a far deeper meaning than simply evil. Insha Allah let us explore some of these meanings. First of all it gives the meaning of something that one becomes. Something that one turns to. So there is nothing that is *sharr* in its original form. There is nothing that is *sharr* to begin with. Rather people and things turn into *sharr*. They become *sharr*. Because one of the very meanings of this word is something that one turns into, something that one becomes. Another meaning of this word is one that is worthy of blame. One that is worthy of finding fault with. So *sharr* is not something intrinsic to a thing. It is not something that is part of the essence of a thing. Rather it is a label that is put on a thing. In other words someone has to say that something is *sharr* for it to be *sharr*. Yet another meaning for this word is something that is a blemish, something that is a fault, something that is not right, not the way that it is supposed to be. Yet another meaning for this word is something that spreads out. Something that encompasses and consumes. If we understand all of the meanings of this word, then Insha Allah we can understand the nature of evil. The concept of evil has been difficult to understand and grasp for many theologians and philosophers. Here however Allah (swt) tells us of its reality. May He (swt) allow us to understand!

The first and most important lesson that we can take from this ayah is to realize that evil cannot in any way be attributed to Allah (swt). Although we can see from this ayah that evil is what He (swt) has created we must realize that it can never be attributed to Him (swt). First of all this is because of the authentic hadith where the Prophet (saw) said to his Lord "All good is in your Hands and evil is not to be attributed to you". We know that the Prophet (saw) does not speak on desires or from his (saw)'s own mind. So when he (saw) says these words it is based on revelation. Thus the first reason why we say that evil cannot be attributed to Allah (swt) is because He (swt) Himself has told us so. For the believer this should be enough. Whenever a text gives a clear meaning that cannot be interpreted in any other way, then we have to submit ourselves to that meaning. We should not use our minds to understand the text in any other way when the meaning is already clearly established. So when Allah (swt) says that He (swt) is not evil we have to believe in this. We can never question this in any way.

The second reason why evil can never be attributed to Allah (swt) is because of the linguistic derivation of the word *sharr* that we discussed above. We said that among the meanings of this word is something that was not originally evil, but rather something that became evil. Something that turned into evil. This is how all evil in the world is. Nothing is created as evil. Things become evil. Things choose to be evil. Now we know that the only creations who have been given the free will to choose are jinn and human beings. So it is only these that can become evil. Men become evil because of the choices that they make. The worst of these choices is when they choose to turn away from Allah (swt). Because there is no greater evil than they to be arrogant before the Real and the True. So when Abu Jahl came out of the womb of his mother he was not evil. But the moment he chose to reject the Message of his Creator when it reached him, then he became evil. Thus his evil cannot be attributed in any way to Allah (swt) because it was a choice that he made. He chose to be evil. Similarly when any man decides to do what is not pleasing to Allah (swt). When any man hurts another, when any man speaks ill of another, when any man neglects his prayers or his servitude of his Lord, then because of that choice he becomes evil. Thus evil is from men and not from the Divine.

Now some people may bring the argument that Allah (swt) already knew that Abu Jahl would become evil. They would say that He (swt) decreed for him to be evil. What such people are saying is true and we cannot deny it because it has been clearly established in the text. There are clear ayahs of the Quran and sound ahadith of the Prophet (saw) which clearly tell us that Allah (swt) Knows all things and that He (swt) has decreed everything. But at the same time there are also clear ayahs of the Quran where Allah (swt) tells us that He (swt) has given man the free-will to choose. Now you might think that there is a contradiction here, but in reality there is not. We have to realize that we can never fully understand Allah (swt). We can never fully realize the extent of His Power and His Knowledge. We cannot estimate Him (swt) like we estimate ourselves. We simply have to accept the fact that it is within His Power and Ability to know everything and at the same time to give us the free will to choose. How exactly this is so is something that we can never fully understand with our limited intellects. We just have to accept the fact that it is so. Such is part of our submission to Him (swt).

Now that we realize that evil comes from our own selves and not from Allah (swt), we now have to understand exactly what evil is. In other words who exactly is the one to define what evil is. Can you say from your own mind that something is evil? If you were to look at an object or a person, can you tell just by looking at it or them if they were evil or not? Is there anything about them that you can sense which could tell you if they were evil or not? For example you can tell how tall someone is, you can tell the color of their skin, but can you tell just by looking at them if they are evil or not? Of course you cannot. This is because we as humans have not been given the ability to directly sense good and evil. We cannot tell only by our senses if something is evil or not. This point is further proven by the fact that not everyone can even agree on what is evil and what is not. Different people have different estimations of what is evil. What is evil for one person may not be evil for another. For example to steal from the rich to give to the poor. Some people would say that it is evil because you are stealing, others will say that it is not because there is a greater good that is accomplished. Thus no two people can come to consensus on the exact definition of what evil is. It is beyond our ability to know.

Recall how we said that another meaning for *sharr* is something is labeled or something that is called as such. So evil is not something that is intrinsic to a thing but rather evil is a label that is given to a thing. For example you are a human. You have eyes, ears, nose, hands and feet and other features that are intrinsic to being human. But you do not have evil, there is nothing in your nature or your being that is evil. Rather to be evil, you must be given that label. Someone must declare you to be evil. Now if we as human beings cannot sense what is evil and what is not evil then who can give someone that label? Who is one to say that thing is evil or that person is evil? Of course it is only Allah (swt). Only He (swt) can judge. Only He (swt) can make that estimation. This is because only He (swt) has the knowledge of what constitutes evil. We with our own minds cannot say. Since we cannot sense evil we cannot make the judgment of what is and what is not evil. Only He (swt) has such Knowledge.

Once we understand these two meanings for the word *sharr* then Insha Allah we can answer the question of why Allah (swt) created those things that are evil. First and foremost we have to realize that evil is what He (swt) says is evil and not what we may think is evil. We can never know from our own minds if something is evil or not. We may say that something is evil based purely on our whims and desires when in reality it is not because He (swt) has not decreed it to be. When we realize this then we cannot question anything that Allah (swt) does and say that it is evil. For example if one of our loved ones should pass away or if we should be afflicted with a disease or some calamity then we cannot say that such was evil from Allah (swt). There may be some good in that calamity that we do not realize at that moment. Look at the blessed example of the Prophet (saw), Allah (swt) took away all his (saw)'s children save one in his (saw)'s lifetime. But did he (saw) ever complain because of this? Did he (saw) ever lament and become depressed? Did he (saw) decrease even an iota in his (saw)'s striving to please his Lord? Of course not. Because he (saw) knew that he (saw) was created only for Allah (swt). He (saw) knew that he (saw) belonged completely to Allah (swt) and so He (swt) was free to do with him (saw) whatsoever He (swt) pleased. He (saw) also knew that he (saw) was not one to judge what evil was. So he (saw) submitted completely to the Decree of his (saw)'s Lord.

So the first realization that we need to come to is that many things which we may think are evil are not really evil. We have to realize that we can never say by ourselves what is evil and what is not evil. The people may think that something is evil when in reality it is not and the people may think that something is not evil when in reality it is. For example there are many people who think that war is evil, there are many people who think that killing is evil. When we know that in reality these are not. Allah (swt) has told us that there are times when war is needed and there are times when killing is needed. In fact to go out and fight in the Way of Allah (swt) and to kill the enemy for Him (swt) is among the most beloved of acts to Him (swt), so how could it in any way be evil? By the same token there are many people who would say that there is nothing evil about women showing their beauty in public. There is nothing evil about women displaying their charms to the world. But we know that such a deed is indeed evil because Allah (swt) has clearly forbidden it in His Sacred Law. So the first realization that we need to come to is that we are not the ones to define evil. The only One to define evil is the All-Knowing. The next realization that we need to come to is to see that Allah (swt) never creates anything that is inherently evil. Nothing that Allah (swt) ever created was evil to begin with. Rather people become evil because of the choices that they make. When a man chooses to kill his brother unjustly he becomes evil. When a man chooses to steal from the people he becomes evil. When a man speak ill of another he becomes evil. When a man takes something that was not his right he becomes evil. When a man turns away from the worship of his Creator he becomes evil. Thus this shows us how all of the evil that is in the world today is only from men and from jinn. It does not have its source in Allah (swt). As for Allah (swt), He (swt) is as He (swt) has told us in the noble hadith, all good is from Him (swt) and evil is never attributed to Him (swt). Evil is only from the people. Such is part of their imperfection. This also fits with the language of the ayah. Notice in the ayah that Allah (swt) does not tell us to seek refuge from the evil that He (swt) created, rather He (swt) tells us to seek refuge from the evil of those things that He (swt) created. So there are things which Allah (swt) created and these things are evil. He (swt) did not create evil itself rather He (swt) created those things which became evil.

Once we realize this when we have to realize how fortunate and blessed we are. How blessed we are that He (swt) gave us the correct understanding of this concept. Others have not been blessed like you and me. The Christians for example were plagued for centuries by this question. They could not answer why if God was good and God was love was there evil in the world. For many of them what their religion taught and what they observed in the world around them was a clear contradiction. This led many of them to lose faith. This led many of them to give up on the religion. How blessed then are you that Allah (swt) gave you this knowledge? How fortunate are you that your Lord saved you from this confusion? Why then can you not increase in your worship and servitude of Him (swt) in order that you may show your gratitude?

We also have to realize that although the evil in the world does not come from Allah (swt), He (swt) still has complete power and control over it. Although it is men who create evil these men are always under His (swt)'s Power. Because as we can also see from the ayah they are all His (swt)'s creation. He (swt) is the One Who brought them into existence and He (swt) is the One Who sustains their existence at every moment. So even though they are evil we should never fear them. Rather we have to realize that if we seek refuge in their Creator then they cannot harm us in any way Insha Allah. Of course their evil is great. Of course their evil knows no bounds. Of course they are capable of deeds darker than the darkest night. But there is One Who is over them. There is One Who has complete power and control of them. This One is the only hope for all the weak and all the helpless. They only have to seek refuge in Him (swt) and they would be safe. He (swt) is their Light in the darkness.

Let us now conclude our discussion of this ayah by looking at the remaining meanings of this word *sharr*. Another meaning that we mentioned is something that is a blemish, something that is a fault. Does this also not correctly reflect the true nature of evil? Evil is like a disease. Evil is a flaw. It is not how things were meant to be. In a perfect world, the world that Allah (swt) created, there would be no evil. As we mentioned previously Allah (swt) did not create anything that was inherently evil. Rather evil was brought into existence because of the choices that men made. Because of their mistakes. This also shows us how evil is from us and not from the Divine.

Since we have established that evil comes from men and not from Allah (swt) we can see how close or distant the world is from Allah (swt) based on the amount of evil that we can see in the world. Today there is much evil in the world and this shows us how distant we have become from the Divine. How often do we remember Him (swt)? How many of us take time out of our day to worship Him (swt)? Do we rule our lands by the Sacred Law that He (swt) has sent? We as Muslims are the guiltiest. The rest of the world has not received the Message from Him properly. Yet we have. We have the Quran on our shelves. Yet we still turn away. In our arrogance and pride we turn away. Is it then any surprise that there is so much evil? Especially in our lands. Be it our sisters who are raped brutally by the filthy disbelievers in Kashmir and Bosnia, or our children who are starving to death in Somalia and Sudan, or our brothers who are slaughtered mercilessly in Iraq and Philistine. Evil is all that is other than He (swt) and this evil has spread across the Muslim world because we have turned away from Him (swt).

This then brings us to the final meaning of this word that we mentioned and that is something that spreads. Something that envelops and consumes. Evil is something that has been created by us and so we are responsible for its proliferation or its containment. If we choose not to worship Allah (swt), if we choose not to please Him (swt), if we choose not to establish the Islamic State and live according to the Divine Law that He (swt) has sent, then we are responsible for the spread of this evil. The source of it is our own sins. Our own heedlessness.

Allah (swt) commands us in this ayah to seek refuge in Him (swt) from all of this evil. So just as we must work to remove this evil from the world we must also ask our Rabb to save us from it. If we do not then it will consume us. It will take us away from Him (swt). And there would be no greater tragedy than that. To be distant from Allah (swt) is pain both in this life and the next. Our only hope is in Him (swt). Only He (swt) can save us. How important then is it that we seek refuge in Him (swt)? But we have to also realize that there is no one better for us to turn than Him (swt)? Recall from this ayah that He (swt) created this evil. So if He (swt) only wanted to, He (swt) could give us complete protection from it. If only we would turn to Him, if only we would heed the sincere counsel that He (swt) give us here.

3. And from the evil of the darkness when it intensifies.

To understand the exact nature of the evil which Allah (swt) speaks about in this ayah we have to remember what we said about evil in the previous ayah. Recall how we said that evil is not what we say is evil but it is what Allah (swt) has called evil. So many things that we think are evil may not be evil and many things that we think are not evil may indeed be evil. We also mentioned that evil comes not from Allah (swt) but rather it comes from us. We as human beings create evil. We abuse the free-will that our Rabb has given us in this world. We choose to do what we know is displeasing to Him (swt). We choose to do what will cause injustice and suffering for others. We choose to be arrogant and proud. We choose to have hatred and jealousy. We choose to be niggardly and miserly. We choose not to have patience with the Decree of our Lord. When we do that is when we create evil. This is what is evil. Only when we understand evil in this way will we be able to correctly understand this ayah Insha Allah.

Allah (swt) tells us in this ayah to seek refuge in Him (swt) from the evil of the darkness when it intensifies. Now what exactly is the evil that our Rabb speaks of here? What exactly does He (swt) mean here by darkness? The linguistic definition of this word *ghasaqa* is the darkness of the night. It is the darkest part of the night. The part of the night when the darkness is the most intense. When the light of the day is the most distant. This is the linguistic definition of this word, but is this the meaning that Allah (swt) intended? Is He (swt) telling us to seek refuge in Him from the darkest part of the night? Is the darkest part of the night even an evil? Recall from the previous ayah how we said that Allah (swt) does not create evil, and is not the night a creation of His (swt)? So this cannot be the meaning of the ayah. This cannot be the meaning that He (swt) intended. We are not being told to seek refuge literally from the darkness of the night. Because the night is also a creation of His, and He (swt) does not create evil.

This then brings us to our original question in that what does Allah (swt) mean here by darkness? What exactly is the evil that we are being told to seek refuge from? If the linguistic definition is not what is meant by this word then it has to be a metaphorical meaning. So what exactly is the darkness of the night a metaphor for? We said in the previous ayah that the only true evil was the evil that was created by men, and what better way to describe the evil of men other than by calling it the darkness of night? Is not the evil of man so great that it is like the darkest night? This is what we are being commanded to seek refuge in Allah (swt). From the evil that men create. From all the evil that is there in the world today. So we see that the meaning given in this ayah is actually an emphasis of the meaning in the previous ayah. There is much evil in the world out there. Allah (swt) describes this evil like the darkest part of the night. And in His Love and concern for us He (swt) commands us to seek refuge in Him (swt) from it.

Evil is in fact all that is displeasing to Allah (swt). He (swt) gave man the free-will. The free-will to choose Him (swt) or to choose other than Him (swt). When man chooses the latter that is when he creates evil. Everything that is done in heedlessness of the Divine. Everything that causes pain and suffering. Everything that causes injustice and oppression. This is what is evil. This is what Allah (swt) describes here as the darkest part of the night when it intensifies. For Allah (swt) to describe it in such a way just think how evil and vile it must be. So the next time that you sin, the next time that you decide to do something that is displeasing to Him (swt), then realize from this ayah what you are becoming. Not only are you becoming distant from the Divine, but you are becoming like the darkest part of the night.

How frightening is this? How important than is it that we seek refuge in Allah (swt)? What are the terrors and the demons that are lurking out there in the darkness of the nights? Arrogance. Desires. Jealousy. Sin. Lusts. Love for this world. Secularism. Materialism. Democracy. These are but a few of them. Our only hope is in Allah (swt). In turning to Him (swt). In striving to please Him (swt). Only He (swt) can save us from this unspeakable darkness. Why then can we not choose Him (swt) over the ugliness of all that is other than He (swt)?

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾

4. And from the evil of the witches when they blow on knots.

In this ayah Allah (swt) brings our attention to a very specific kind of evil. In the previous ayahs He (swt) had showed us how evil was all that was other than Him (swt). He (swt) showed us how evil was what was created by the hands of man. He (swt) described this evil to be like the darkest portion of the night when it becomes the most intense. Such is the vileness and corruptness of it. Now in this ayah He (swt) tells us about a very specific form of this evil. Of all the sins that man can commit this crime is one of the most hated to the Divine. Because with this sin man seeks to give himself a power beyond what Allah (swt) gave him. Because with this sin he seeks for himself a power that is beyond his two hands and beyond the material things of this world. Of course this sin is magic, and it is among the greatest of evil.

Allah (swt) commands us in this ayah to seek refuge in Him (swt) from the witches who blow on knots. This was a way in which magic was practiced at the time of the Prophet (saw). There would be these women who would blow on the knots that have been tied on ropes. They would take ropes, tie knots in them, and then they would blow on these knots. For hours and hours they would just blow on these knots thinking that through them they were doing magic. Allah (swt) tells us here to seek refuge in Him (swt) from them.

When it comes to magic there has been a difference of opinion among our scholars. Some of our scholars have said that there really is a power that magic has, it really does have an effect on people and things. Other scholars have said that there is no such thing and they say that all might and power is only with Allah (swt). Of course Allah (swt) Knows best. We lean however to the latter of these opinions. We believe that the vast majority of those who claim to practice magic really have no power at all. It is only imagination and fables. They may trick the people into thinking that they have power when in reality they have none. Perhaps the only few instances when magic has existed in the world was when Allah (swt) specifically allowed it to

exist. For example the two angels Harut and Marut who were sent as a test for the people of Babylon. This was power that Allah (swt) allowed to exist as a test for the people. Other than this there does not seem to be any credible narrations of where real magic was ever worked. To believe that magic has power also contradicts what we believe when we say that all Might and Power are only with Allah (swt). Everything is a creation of Allah (swt). Even our very own actions. How then can we believe for power to exist outside of Him (swt)?

If we are saying that there is no power that these witches have, then a question to ask is why is Allah (swt) telling us here to seek refuge in Him (swt) from them? The answer is that we seek refuge in Allah (swt) from ever becoming like them. Not only from becoming among those who practice this dark art, but also from becoming among those who believe in it. We know that magic is among the greatest of sins in the Sacred Law. Many scholars are of the opinion that only shirk and killing are greater sins than practicing magic. So when we seek refuge in Allah (swt) from these witches we are first and foremost asking Him (swt) to save us from becoming like them. We are asking Allah (swt) to save us from being among those who do this evil deed.

In addition we are also asking Allah (swt) to save us from becoming among those who believe in such superstitions and heresy. How many are the people in the world today who do actually believe in magic? How many are the people today who believe that there is some power that exists outside of Allah (swt)? Allah (swt) is the Real and the True. He (swt) is the Overwhelming and the Overpowering. When compared to Him (swt) everything else is but an illusion. How far astray and misguided then are those who believe that there exists power outside of Him (swt)? Be this power from magic or power from amulets or charms or from anything else of this world. This world is but an illusion. He (swt) is the Real and the True. This is what we have to always remind ourselves of. That is why we have to always ask Him (swt) to save us from becoming like these witches. These foolish women who would blow with all of their strength upon knots and think that there is some kind of supernatural effect that their blowing has. All this time they would be utterly heedless of the Real and the True. The One Who created them, the One Who sustains them, the One Who is even allowing them to blow on those knots.

This is one meaning to this ayah. When we say that we are seeking refuge in Allah (swt) from the witches who blow on knots we are telling Him (swt) that we are seeking His (swt)'s protection from ever becoming like these women. These fools who believe that they have some power. Power that exists outside of the Divine. But there is an even deeper meaning for this ayah. The Arabic word *'aqada* that Allah (swt) uses here does not just mean knots. It means all that binds and holds. All that protects and restraints. All that creates order and peace. All that creates justice and equity. Now why did the witches blow on the knots that they had tied on ropes? It is because they thought that their blowing would somehow break those knots. They thought that their blowing would somehow cause those knots to come undone. Now by the same token when we see that the word *'aqada* is not only restricted to knots, then we can see the deeper meaning that this ayah gives. Not only is Allah (swt) telling us here to seek refuge from these witches, but He (swt) is telling us to seek refuge in Him (swt) from all those who love to cause chaos and disruption. Those who want to undo the restraints and the binds. Those who want to dismantle the Divine Law.

We said before how evil was a creation of man, and when he does evil this is what he does. He breaks the bonds, he transgresses the limits, he becomes arrogant and proud before the Sacred Law of his Lord. So in addition to speaking about witches and magic, this ayah is speaking about all those who oppose the Law of Allah (swt). All those who want to create chaos and bloodshed in the land. All those who want to bring injustice and inequity. The ones who want to bring a system where the lusts and passions are not restrained. A system where greed and extravagance is not checked in any way. A world where women can go out in public showing their beauty. A world where pornography and prostitution are permitted. A world where interest and usury and rampant. Where so much is wasted for nothing. This is what happens when the knots are undone. This is what happens when the Islamic State is destroyed. So we see from this ayah as well how displeasing such people are to Allah (swt). How He (swt) wants us to seek refuge in Him (swt) from ever becoming like them. We have to be among those who work to bring order and justice to the world. Among those who work to restore the Divine Law.

5. And from the evil of the envier when he envies.

In this ayah Allah (swt) tells us about yet another evil that we need to seek refuge in Him (swt) from. See here His (swt)'s Love for us. See here His (swt)'s care for us. He (swt) Knows that there are all these things out there in the world that could harm us. That could make us become distant from Him (swt). That is why He (swt) commands us here to seek refuge in Him (swt) from all of these. In this ayah He (swt) brings our attention to the evil of envy. Of all the sins and crimes that man can commit this is without a doubt one of the vilest. Not only does this sin reveal one's own pride and arrogance, but it also reveals one's selfishness and utter disregard for others. It reveals how one has no love and compassion for one's fellow brother. Because this sin is so evil, it is most hated to the Divine. That is why He (swt) warns us about it in this ayah. So that perchance we would make the effort to protect ourselves from it. Of course the best way to save ourselves from it is by following the command that Allah (swt) has given us here and seeking refuge in Him (swt) from it. After we pray to Him (swt), and after we hope in Him (swt), then we ourselves must make the effort. We ourselves must save ourselves from becoming of the envious. And the first step in this effort is to find out the nature of this evil.

There are actually two levels of envy that we need to watch out for. The first is a feeling of displeasure that comes about when you see someone else given a bounty or a blessing that has not been given to you. You question Allah (swt) as to why this person has been given this bounty. You think that you are more deserving of it than he or she. The next level of envy is when you wish that person loses that bounty. You have so much hatred of the fact that this person has been given something which you have not that you wish that they would lose it and that it would come to you. These are the two levels of envy that we need to watch out for. As we can see the first is the stepping stone for the second. First Shaitan makes you to look at all the things of this world that others have been given. Then he makes you desire what they have been given. He takes your heart away from Allah (swt) and towards that bounty. Then he makes you

hate that person because of it. Then he makes you wish that person would lose that bounty and that it would come to you. This is the nature of envy. It is from the devil. It makes you heedless of the Divine. It turns you into a person of darkness and evil. May Allah (swt) save us from that!

Now does the envious person actually have some power over the one whom he envies? This also is an area where there has been some difference of opinion among our scholars. Some of our scholars have said that the envious person really does have some power, what is sometimes known as "the evil eye". This is the belief which claims that if someone looks upon you with envy then you will be stricken with calamities and difficulties because of that. Such a belief holds that just that feeling of envy in the heart of someone has power, it has a power to cause you harm. Other scholars have rejected this notion. Once again they cite the fact that all might and all power are only with Allah (swt). So they claim that there is no power that exists outside of Him (swt). The only power that we as human being have is the limited power to move our limbs. And even these are created by Him (swt). We have no power to cause someone harm just because of a feeling that we have towards them in our hearts. Once again we lean towards the latter of these opinions but as always Allah (swt) Knows best.

If we take the opinion that the envious person does have some power, that there is some truth to the belief of the evil eye, then in this ayah we are asking Allah (swt) to protect us from the evil effects of that envy. Even if there exists such a power we have to always remember that the power of Allah (swt) is greater than that. Allah (swt) is the One without Whose permission a leaf cannot even fall, without Whose permission a whiff of smoke cannot even blow, how then can we believe that the envious person can do anything to us unless it be by His Will? Even if all the people in the world were to envy us with the strongest of envy that is possible, they still would not be able to harm us in the least unless it be by the Permission of our Rabb. That is why we have to seek refuge in Him (swt). Allah (swt) Knows best if there is such a thing as evil eye. But just in case there is, we have to seek refuge in Him (swt) from it. People become envious for the most simple of matters and often times they burn with envy. How many then are the great calamities that they can cause for us with such envy? Our only hope is in Him (swt).

Even if we take the opinion that the person who envies has no real power then we still have to seek refuge in Allah (swt). Because the envious person may still seem to harm us himself. He himself may seek to do something against us. He himself may seek to harm us in some way. This is the danger of envy. This is the level to which it can corrupt a heart. He may speak something against us or against one of our family members. Even worse than this is that he may try to harm us physically or financially. In all of these ways that an envious person can harm us we have to seek refuge in our Rabb. He (swt) is our only hope. All might and all power are only with Him (swt), and if He (swt) in His Infinite Mercy and Love should decide to protect us then they cannot harm us at all with their envy. No matter how eagerly they may desire to harm us they would not be able to because Insha Allah we would be in the protection of the Real and the True. This is what we must always pray for.

However even more intently than we pray to be protected from the harm of the envious person we must pray to be saved from becoming one. We must always be asking Allah (swt) to save us from this horrible disease. Envy is among the most displeasing of acts to Him (swt). In fact this is one of the sins for which Shaitan was banished forever into the Fire. This should show us just how displeasing this act is to Allah (swt). Just to have envy in your heart. Just to have that feeling of displeasure with what someone else has been given. Such is most displeasing to Him (swt). How can you ever hope to attain His (swt)'s Pleasure when you allow such feeling to linger in your heart? How can you ever hope to work in the dawah when even your heart is not in a state where you are pleasing to Him (swt)? Only one whose heart is very distant from Allah (swt) would have envy. Envy comes first and foremost from a displeasure with the Decree of Allah (swt). You are not pleased with how Allah (swt) has distributed the things of this world. You question as to why that person has been given more than you have. Why has Allah (swt) given that person that bounty? You are more deserving of it than He (swt). Allah (swt) has made a mistake. He (swt) is unjust. These are the kind of thoughts that linger in an envious person heart. That is why this sin is so displeasing to Allah (swt). Envy also shows that you care more for this world than you do for Allah (swt). You were created for Him (swt). You were not created

for this world. Why then can you not be pleased with whatever of this world He (swt) has decided to give you? Why then can you not be pleased only to have His (swt)'s Pleasure? Is not what is with Him (swt) much better than anything of this world? The envious person chooses this world over Allah (swt), and on top of that he has the audacity to question His (swt)'s Decree. So when we say that we seek refuge in the envious one when he envies we have to realize that we are first and foremost asking Allah (swt) to save us from ever becoming like this person.

Just think about this for a moment. If someone envies you then the worst that they can do to you is to cause some harm in this world. They may cause this harm themselves or this harm may come to you because of their evil eye. This would be terrible indeed and that is why we have to seek refuge in Allah (swt) from it. But now think that if you yourself would become envious. What are the terrible consequences of that? First of all you would become distant from Allah (swt) in the life of this world. You would cease remembering Him (swt). You would only be thinking about that person whom you envy and whatever it is that they have been given. Can you then imagine what will be your station? Can you imagine the sorrow and the grief that would consume your heart once you have left the Divine Presence? Once you are no longer among those who worship and remember Allah (swt). But this would only be the beginning of your torment. In the Hereafter you would return to your Rabb with Him (swt) being displeased with you. You will stand on the Plain of Judgment, alone and naked, completely at His (swt)'s Mercy. What then will be your fate? Can you even imagine the unspeakable fate that awaits you? May Allah (swt) save us all from that! That is why it is far more important that we pray to be saved from becoming the envious person rather than pray to be saved from their envy. Of course in the end we should pray for both. The more that we call out to our Rabb. The more that we seek His aid. The more that He (swt) will be pleased with us. What matters other than that?

Now we should always remember that whenever we make dua to Allah (swt), we ourselves have to make an effort on our part as well. As we pray to our Rabb, we ourselves must make an effort to be saved from envy. In order to be saved from the envy of others we should avoid boasting and showing off. Such arrogance is displeasing to Allah (swt) and this should be

reason enough to avoid it. But when we know that it could bring upon us the envy of others, and when we see in this ayah how we have been commanded to seek refuge from such envy, then that is all the more important reason for us to avoid it. So do not boast or brag about anything. Always try to be of the humble. We should also be modest in our lifestyle. We should not seek after the luxuries and extravagance of this world. We know that such invites the envy of others. We also know that such is displeasing to our Rabb. Rather we should use whatever extra money that we may have to support the dawah or to help the poor and needy. We should live in this world as the Prophet (saw) commanded us to, as a traveler who is but resting under the shade of a tree. We should only take of this world what will see us through on our journey. Insha Allah this is how we can attach our hearts to our Rabb rather than to this world. Insha Allah this is how we can save ourselves from the envy of others.

Even more importantly we have to take steps to save ourselves from becoming of the envious. This can be done first of all by remembering Allah (swt). By remembering the fact that we only live to please Him (swt). That is the only purpose of our lives. We should strive to reach that state where for every moment our only concern is His (swt)'s Pleasure. Once we are at this level why then should we care about what others have been given of this world? As long as our Rabb is pleased with us then we are content. This is the level that we should always be trying to reach. Insha Allah this is how we can save ourselves from becoming of those who envy. We can make this journey by always reflecting on the Majesty and Glory of our Lord. On remembering all of the favors and bounties that He (swt) has given us. On realizing His (swt)'s right upon us to be worshipped and served.

This is the realization that we need to walk away from this Surah with. We need to realize how He (swt) should be all that matters in our life. He (swt) is the Light in our darkness. He (swt) is the One Who can save us from all that is not He (swt). Our relationship with Him (swt) is that of a slave always in need of his master. There is so much in this world that can harm us. Only by seeking refuge in Him (swt) can we save ourselves. Only by wrapping ourselves in Him (swt) can we save ourselves. He (swt) is our only hope. He (swt) is all that matters.

