

A SCIENTIFIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SATAN

We believe Satan is *Iblis*. This impression is not entirely correct. Physically Satan is not *Iblis*. The following discussion will provide sufficient clue to Satan's independent identity.

“And behold, We said to the Angels: Bow down to Adam. And they all bowed down except *Iblis*. He refused and was haughty. He became one of the rejecters of Faith.” (Q. 2:34)

“(God) said: What prevented you from bowing down when I commanded you? He said: I am better than he (Adam). You created me from fire and him from clay. (God) said: Get you down from this. It is not for you to be arrogant here; get out for you are the meanest (of creatures). He said: Give me respite till the day they (human beings) are raised up (resurrected for judgement). (God) said: Be you among those who have respite. He said: Because You have thrown me out of the way (misguided), lo! I will lie in wait for them (human beings) on Your straight way. Then I will assault them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left; nor will You find in most of them gratitude (for Your Mercy). (God) said: Get out from this, disgraced and expelled. If any of them follow you, I will fill Hell with you all. (Q. 7:12-18)

What we can understand from these verses is that when Allah ordered the Angels to bow down to Adam following his creation, all the Angels bowed down except *Iblis*. Allah asked him to explain his non-compliance. *Iblis* responded boastfully that he was much above man in status and that prevented him from prostrating before Adam. Allah asked him to get out from the divine abode. *Iblis* pleaded for respite till the Day of Judgement when all human beings are raised up again. Allah granted *Iblis* respite. *Iblis* then swore that he would mislead all human beings from the divine path except the most sincere and pious ones. How does *Iblis* go about misleading man and what is his strategy are some of the important questions that leave us in the lurch. Certainly *Iblis* is not physically in contact with billions of human beings in the world all the time misleading them. The following verses (translation in boldface added) throw light on this important issue offering a possible explanation through computer analogy. Allah turned to Adam and Eve:

O Adam! You and your wife dwell in the Garden and enjoy (its good things) as you wish but do not approach this *Tree* or you run into harm and transgression. Then began Satan (**not *Iblis***) to whisper suggestions to them bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before). He (**it**) said: Your Lord only forbade you this *Tree* lest you should become Angels or such beings as live for ever. And he (**it**)

swore to them both that he (**it**) was their sincere advisor. So by deceit he (**it**) brought their fall. When they tasted of the *Tree*, their shame became manifest to them and they began to sew together the leaves of the Garden over their bodies. And their Lord called to them: Did I not tell you that Satan (**not Iblis**) was an avowed enemy to you? They said: Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls (*nafs*). If You do not forgive us and bestow upon us Your Mercy, we shall be certainly be lost. (God) said: Get you down with enmity between yourselves. The earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a term. He said: Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from there shall you be taken out (resurrection).” (Q. 7:19-25)

These verses reveal that Allah asked Adam and Eve (the first human couple) to live in the Garden. They were ordered by God not to touch the *Tree* there. However, they were lured and misguided by the loathsome Satan (not *Iblis*) to disobedience. That led to their ouster from the Garden. It is important to note that it was *Iblis* who vowed before Allah to mislead man. But it was not *Iblis* who put the misleading suggestions to Adam and Eve but Satan. That is what the verses convey. The Quran did not use the word *Iblis* after the Angel’s conversation with Allah following creation of Adam, but used the word “Satan” instead. The use of the word Satan in place of *Iblis* in the above verses is glaring. Islamic scholars particularly the translators of the Quran have noticed this changeover but have not offered any convincing explanation nor did they distinguish the terms from each other. The situation has led to confusing interpretations. For instance, Yusuf Ali commented: “*Iblis* in ii. 34 is apparently the Power of Evil, with the root idea of desperateness or rebellion. “Satan” in this verse is the Power of Evil, with the root idea of perversity or enmity.” [1]. The message in these verses can be examined in the light of the computer model [2]. First of all, the verses 2:34 and 7:11 clearly state that Allah ordered the Angels to bow down to Adam and all of them did except *Iblis*. This means that *Iblis* is an Angel and not Power of Evil as Yusuf Ali interpreted. Treating *Iblis* and Satan at par is therefore not correct. They are physically different. Allah warned Adam and Eve of Satan and not *Iblis* as avowed enemy. Further Allah conversed with *Iblis* and not Satan.

It may be recalled here that the Angels are at the command of God executing the orders of God through appropriate programs (see chapter 3). They are also custodians of Allah’s programs. Therefore, it may be presumed that Angel *Iblis* has access to divine programs. Further *Iblis* reiterates that it is with Allah’s permission and power he misleads human beings.

“(Allah) said: “Respite then is granted to you (*Iblis*) till the Day of the Time Appointed.” (*Iblis*) said: Then by Your (Allah’s) Power, I (*Iblis*) will put them all in the wrong except Your sincere and purified servants among them. (Allah) said: Then it is just and fitting and I say what is just and fitting – That I will certainly fill Hell with you and those that follow you – everyone.”

(Q. 38:80-85)

Insofar as the Angels execute Allah's orders as per His instructions (programs) it is reasonable to suppose that "Allah's Power" mentioned in the above verses refers to Allah's programs or commands. It is therefore assumed here that with Allah's permission *Iblis* took possession of certain program and he implanted it in Adam. This program is capable of deviating man from Allah's path by influencing human mind. The Quranic reference to Satan may be construed as reference to this program. In the computer jargon this biomeme may be termed "Satan virus". A computer virus is a small program designed to interfere the functioning of the machine the way its programmer wanted. The intention of *Iblis* was to mislead man from the righteous path. Thus the Satan virus was designed to interfere with the decision-making function of the human *qalb* (mind) by offering tempting (evil) suggestions to it (Q. 7:19-25). Thus we find in the verses Satan putting suggestions to the *qalbs* of Adam and Eve instead of *Iblis*. Although it is not possible to figure out the exact mechanism of Satan's influence on human beings, the virus analogy enables us to visualize how *Iblis* carries out his threat. Thus it can be suggested that it is through the Satan virus and not by direct physical involvement, *Iblis* carries out his mission of misleading man from the divine path. This argument is further strengthened by the use of the word "command" (*amr*) in the following verse to characterize the nature of action of the Satan on human mind (translation in boldface added).

"Oh, you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Satan. If any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he **(it)** will (but) command what is shameful and wrong...."

(Q. 24:21)

The mode of action of a computer virus is also through command (program). Therefore there is sufficient justification in describing Satan as virus biomeme. The Satan virus cannot influence Allah's obedient sincere servants (Q. 38:80-83). Only those who do not resist the temptations fall an easy prey to its temptation and allurements and get themselves trapped and strayed. Allah's sincere servants bring God's remembrance to their minds as soon as they detect the influence of the Satan virus thereby preventing it from advancing further.

"If a suggestion from Satan assails your (mind), seek refuge with God; for He hears and knows (all things). Those who fear God, when an evil thought from Satan assaults them, bring God to remembrance when lo! They see alright."

(Q. 7:200-201)

Although Satan virus was installed in Adam by *Iblis*, it entered Eve's biomemome as Eve was created from Adam's *nafs*. This was why Satan could influence both Adam and Eve in the Garden. The Satan virus being a biomeme exists as stored information on the chromosome. This biomeme is therefore present in each and every cell of human body as it is copied during cell division. In this way its transmission to the gametes is facilitated. This in turn helps to perpetuate itself through generations of mankind till the end of the world. Every human being irrespective of the gender gets infected with Satan virus. Its supposed biomemetic nature and the ability to self-multiply provide good semblance with

computer virus. Thus Satan virus can be viewed as the tool of *Iblis* present in every human being in the form a biomeme to carry out his avowed mission.

The Angel *Iblis* is mentioned in the Quran particularly on the occasion just prior to and immediately following the creation of Adam (discussed above). Understandably, other references in the Quran are mainly to Satan and very rarely to *Iblis* (Q. 34:20; 26:95).

“And on them did *Iblis* prove true his idea and all
except the believers followed him.” (Q. 34:20)

The verse (Q. 34:20) may be interpreted as the success of *Iblis*'s idea of using Satan virus in non-believers. The use of the word *Iblis* in this verse is in not in contradiction with the virus analogy. Yusuf Ali however preferred to use the term Satan in his translation of the verse (Q. 34:20) although the Quran used the term *Iblis* [5]. The use of the word “Satan” instead of “*Iblis*” may not be changing the implied message but it does affect our perception of *Iblis* and the Satan. Wherever *Iblis* (a living being) is used, we can use the pronoun “he” while for “Satan” (a biomeme), “it” is the appropriate one. These modifications are shown in the verses given above (Q. 7:19-25; 24:21) in boldface. The fact that the two are physically different can be further inferred from the use of the plural term of “Satan”, the “*Shayateen*”, at many places in the Quran whereas the term “*Iblis*” is not used in plural. The virus concept recognizes only one *Iblis*, the Angel, and not more. The virus concept also provides an unambiguous explanation to the use of the plural *Shayateen*. Consider the following verse:

“Some He has guided. Others have (by their choice)
deserved the loss of their way, In that they took the Evil
Ones (*Shayateen*) in preference to Allah, for their
friends and protectors and think that they receive
guidance.” (Q. 7:30)

Based on the traditional view, the verse would appear to convey the existence of so many Satans or *Iblis* although it is not possible to explain how a large number of *Iblis* can arise. Viewing from the biomemetic angle, every human being carries the virus. Those who obey its directions are its friends. Effectively each friend represents a Satan. Therefore the use of the plural *shayateen* to describe a group of such people is understandable. It is to be realized that mere presence of the virus biomeme in the body does not make a person Satan but the individual must be an embodiment of evil as a result of his surrender to the influence of the virus. If that were not the case, all of us would have been Satans (*shayateen*) as we are all infected with it. Consider an example. If A meets a group of evil-doers, A will be influenced not only by the Satan virus in his system but also by the viruses residing in the people of that group. That group can function as a collection of Satans or *Shayateen*. The person A *does not see* the virus in others. He takes them as friends. In the traditional view, we have to suppose many *Iblis* to match the term “*Shayateen*” which is clearly wrong. A similar example may be seen in the following verses (use “it” as the pronoun to refer to Satan as given in parentheses and not “he”).

“When they meet those who believe, they say: We
believe; but when they are alone with their evil ones
(*shayateen*), they say: We are really with you: We
(were) only jesting.” (Q. 2:14)

“Oh you children of Adam! Let not Satan seduce you, in the same manner as He got your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their raiment, to expose their shame: for he **(it)** and his **(its)** tribe watch you from a position where you cannot see them: We made the evil ones (*shayateen*) friends to those without faith.”

(Q. 7:27)

The following verse makes it very clear that the word *shayateen* refers to the misled human beings and not many *Iblis*.

“Likewise we made for every messenger an enemy – evil ones (*shayateen*) among men and jinns, inspiring each other with flowery discourses by way of deception. If your Lord has so planned they would not have done it. So leave them and their inventions alone.”

(Q. 6:112)

The virus concept thus explains an important question of the use of plural *Shayateen* in the Quran. It means people who have surrendered to the Satan virus. When the word *Iblis* is used, we do not find the use of its plural form.

“Then they will be thrown headlong into the (Fire) – they and those straying in evil, and the whole hosts of *Iblis* together.”

(Q. 26:94-95)

It is noteworthy that the verse (Q. 26:95) does not use a plural form for the word *Iblis* because there is only one *Iblis*, the former Angel. It may also be noted that the verse uses the phrase “hosts of *Iblis*” to indicate human beings who play hosts to him by being obedient to Satan virus implanted by him. The virus analogy is consistent with the message.

Besides putting suggestions, the Satan virus can also exert evil influence on human mind in a variety of other ways.

“I (the Satan) will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires....to deface the nature created by Allah...”

(Q. 4:119)

And Allah warns us:

“Whoever takes Satan for a friend forsaking God, has indeed suffered a loss that is manifest. Satan gives them promises, and creates in them false desires; but Satan’s promises are nothing but deception.”

(Q. 4:119-120)

Given the role of Satan in misleading man from Allah’s path, a question may be raised whether Adam and Eve (and of course, every other human being) would have disobeyed Allah in the absence of Satan? A clear-cut answer to this issue appears impossible but we can certainly say that Satan virus indeed forces man to commit evils. What Satan suggested to the first human couple was something beyond their experience, i.e., immortality, for which they fell. Going by the Quran, they had not approached the *Tree* until Satan influenced them. This means they disobeyed Allah under the spell of Satan. Now the question is whether man is able to deviate himself from the righteous path in the absence of Satan; or to put it differently, whether man will exercise his freedom of

discretion (freewill) against Allah in the absence of Satan? A qualified answer is man may still disobey God in his own interest seeking pleasures of life but not with the same intensity and urge as in the presence of Satan virus. This is because he is not under compulsion to go against God's directives. However we cannot prove beyond doubt what the actual scenario will be in the absence of Satan because we do not have a real situation, i.e., a human being not infected with the virus, nor can we simulate such a condition. In the first human test in the Garden, Adam and Eve approached the *Tree* defying Allah's ban only when Satan started wooing them. If this is taken as an indication of human reaction or how a person uses his freewill, perhaps in the absence of Satan virus, one may tread only the righteous path shown by Allah. Such an interpretation is also possible from the fact that it is by *deceit* Satan brought their fall (Q. 7:19-25). There is also a similar implication in the following verse.

“So set you your face steadily and truly to the Faith: (establish) Allah's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah. That is the standard Religion: but most among mankind understand not.”

(Q. 30:30)

This verse has the connotation that Allah created man true to the faith. Hence in the absence of Satan man will be inclined to follow the religion. In the real situation, what can be concluded is that man is given freewill to choose between good (directions in the Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad) and bad (tempting suggestions from Satan against God's interests). It is his choice to accept either. To choose the right, one has to fight the stupendous power of Satan virus. This is amply made clear in the following verse (Q. 24:21).

“Oh, you who believe! Follow not the footsteps of Satan. If any will follow the footsteps of Satan, he (**it**) will (but) command what is shameful and wrong: And were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, not one of you would ever have been pure: but Allah does purify whom He pleases: and Allah is one who hears and knows (all things).”

(Q. 24:21)

The virus is immensely capable of misleading human beings. In the end it will reveal the truth about its mission to its followers, says the Quran:

“And Satan will say (to men) when the matter is decided: It was Allah Who gave you a promise of Truth: I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you but you listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls (*nafs*). I cannot listen to your cries, nor can you listen to mine. I reject your former act in associating me with Allah. For wrong-doers there must be a grievous penalty.”

(Q. 14:22)

Thus the mission of *Iblis* will end by disowning his role in misleading human beings and holding the individuals themselves accountable for their deeds. Incidentally it may be mentioned that while explaining the cause of his arrogant behaviour to Allah, *Iblis* says

he was misguided by Allah (Q. 7:16). Secondly, he says I will mislead humanity foreseeing that he will be able to mislead Adam and Eve in the Garden, they will be ousted from there by Allah and sent to the earth where he will mislead generations of their descendants. How did he foresee all these? This is a very difficult issue to understand. The Quranic story may be allegorical. All the events appear to have been programmed by Allah so. This is further evident from the Quranic message that it is with Allah's permission and power, *Iblis* set out to mislead man (Q. 38:80-85). Further Allah states (Q. 38:85): "that I will certainly fill Hell with you (*Iblis*) and those that follow you – everyone." Given his thermal origin, will the life in Hell be as much a punishment to *Iblis* as it is to human beings? If so, in what way it will afflict him? There are a few questions of this kind to which answers are hard to find. All such issues lie in the domain of *ghayb*.

Thus it can be seen that the bioprogram of human species (Adam's *nafs*) is infected with Satan virus to mislead man from Allah's path. Further, Satan virus will be absent in our biomemome of our next life and we will be free of evil influences. As the mission of *Iblis* would be over with the end of this world as he was given respite by Allah till that day and Satan was introduced into human bioprogram to make the test more effective, the biosoftware of the resurrected people will not be carrying the Satan virus.

References

1. Ali. A. Y. 1983. *The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Amana Corp, Maryland, p. 25, n. 52.
2. Wahid, P.A. 2006. *The Computer Universe: A Scientific Rendering of the Holy Quran*. Adam Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, India.