

An Account of Harut and Marut

Allah says: And they followed what the Shaitans chanted of sorcery in the reign of Sulayman, and Sulayman was not an unbeliever, but the Shaitans disbelieved, they taught men sorcery and that was sent down to the two angels at Babel, Harut and Marut, yet these two taught no man until they had said, “Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.” Even then men learned from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife; and they cannot hurt with it any one except with Allah’s permission, and they learned what harmed them and did not profit them, and certainly they know that he who bought it should have no share of good in the hereafter and evil was the price for which they sold their souls, had they but known this. 2: 102

(In explanation of this holy verse it is said that) Shaitans used to teach magic that was sent down on two angels Harut and Marut in Babylon and these two taught no man until they had said, “Surely we are at trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever.” Even then, men learned from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife.

‘Ali ibn Ibrahim and Ayyashi have in their tafsirs, narrated from Imam Muhammad al-Baqir that every day and every night, angels used to descend for taking up deeds of the middle men (of the residents of the earth). On seeing these deeds, the residents of the heavens began to find fault in the sins being committed by the dwellers of the earth like disobeying Allah and making false allegations against Him. They used to say that Allah is high and above what the dwellers of the world say about Him. At last, a group of angels requested Allah: O Nourisher! Do You not frown upon Your creations who make false allegations against You and who disobey You even though You have prohibited them from doing such things? O Lord! You tolerate them even though all of them are in Your control and are living a life of ease due to Your bounties. So Allah willed to show to the angels what is His perfect Power and how He issues His commandments in the world of His creation, and to make the angels aware of His blessings as they have been created sinless and He has made them distinct among His creations and has made them ever obedient and has not given them the power of sinning.

So He said to the angels: Select two beings from your community so that I may send them to the earth and give them the nature of human beings and put in them desire for eating, drinking, etc. and introduce yearnings in their minds like the children of Adam. Then I will take a test of them in the matter of My obedience and worship. The angels selected Harut and Marut from among them as they were foremost

in finding faults in humans and in asking for Allah's chastisement for the humans. Allah told them: Now I have put all those desires and needs in you which I have created in men. Do not include anyone (do not make any partner) in worshipping Me, do not commit adultery and do not drink wine.

Then He removed all curtains of the skies so that He may make His power visible to the angels. He sent those two angels on earth in the form of two handsome men and made them camp in Babylon. When they came to earth, they saw a very beautiful woman advancing towards them. She was fully adorned and perfumed and her face was unveiled. Now the two angels had a thought about the woman that they were prohibited from. They discussed it between themselves and decided to walk away from the temptation. After walking a few steps, passion overpowered them. They returned to that woman and asked her to allow them to have sex with her. That woman said, My religion does not allow me to lie with you until you adopt my religion.

They inquired her religion. She said, I can only fulfill the desire of the one who worships my Allah and who prostrates before my Allah and she pointed towards an idol saying, this is my Allah. The angels looked at one another and exclaimed: Now two sins (instead of one) confront us viz., one of Polytheism and another adultery. Then they consulted again but desire overtook them. So they said to the woman: We are agreeable. Then she said, As you are prepared to bow before the idol you must first drink wine because prostration without taking wine is not recognized. The angels consulted again and said, Now three sins confront us—drinking wine, having illegal sex and prostrating before an idol. They said to that woman: Verily you have proved a big trouble for us. Still we are ready to do whatever you say. So they drank the wine and bowed before the idol and they readied to lie with that woman when suddenly a beggar entered the place. They asked him: Who are you and why have you come here? He replied, "Your condition makes me doubt your intention. You are fearful and frightened and yet you have brought this woman to a solitary place. Surely you are evil fellows." Saying this he went away.

Then that woman told the two, "I swear by my Allah that this man knows you and is aware of your place and has gone to disgrace both you and me. So I will not draw near to you. You must first kill him so that he may not be able to disgrace us and then come back to me and do whatever you wish." At once, the two ran after that man and killed him. When they returned they did not find the woman there and found that suddenly their clothes had fallen down and they had become naked. They began to bite their fingers with an intense feeling of shame and sorrow.

Allah revealed, "I sent you only for a while on earth to live with My creation, but in this little time you committed all the sins from which I had prohibited you from. You did not feel ashamed before Me, though it was you who were more than all others against the dwellers of the earth due to their disobedience and wanted that they should be punished. It was due to this fact that I had given you such a nature which did not entertain any wish to commit sin and it was I who had protected you from disobeying Me. Now when I lifted my protection from you and left you to your own you behaved like this. Now it is up to you to select for yourself either a worldly punishment or the other worldly chastisement." One of the angels said, "Since we have come to the world we might as well enjoy our desires fully until

we get the punishment of the Hereafter.” Another said, “The worldly punishment is limited which will end some day. But the chastisement of the Hereafter is everlasting. It is much harsher which we do not prefer.” So they opted for this world’s punishment and continued to teach magic to the people. They did so for a long time and when they perfected that teaching they were hung upside down in the air and will remain like that until the Day of the Resurrection Day.

Ayyashi has reported with another chain that once Amir al-Mu’minin ‘Ali was giving a sermon from the pulpit of the mosque of al-Kufah when one ‘Abdullah bin Al Kawaa said, Enlighten us about the red star that is Venus. said, Once Allah Almighty made the angels see the condition of human beings who were busy in disobeying Allah. The angels named Harut and Marut said, These are the people whose great grandfather Adam was the one whom You had created with your hand and it was he to whom you had asked the angels to bow before. Now they are disobeying you like this! Allah replied, “If I send you to in the earth with awareness of passions and desires you also will sin like them and disobey Me.” They claimed, “By Your Honor! We will never disobey You.”

Allah entangled them in passions and desires like humans and sent them down on the earth with the order that they should never make anyone His partner (shirk), never kill anybody wrongfully, never indulge in adultery and never drink wine. Then they began to guide and direct people on the earth. This star (Venus) was a very beautiful woman. She had gone to one of those two angels for obtaining some kind of decision. At the very first sight of her that angel fell in love with her and told her that truth is with you (and my judgment will be in your favor) but only when you give me control over you. The woman promised to do so and fixed a time for them to meet. Then she went to the other angel. The same thing happened with him too and she gave him also the same promise and fixed a time for them to meet. When both the angels reached the venue at the appointed time and saw one another their heads bowed in shame. But soon decency went away from them they said to one another: I have come here for the same purpose for which you have come. Both asked the woman to allow them to have sex with her. She made them prostrate before her idol, made them drink wine, got a beggar killed by them and finally told them that she will not be pleased with them until they teach her the way of going up to the heaven. Now these two angels used to decide people’s disputes during the day and go up to the heaven at night. They refused to teach the woman how to go to the heaven and she in return did not fulfill their desire. At last the angels agreed to the last wish of the woman also and taught her how to go up in the heavens. In order to experiment she uttered the words taught by them and at once reached the heavens while the two stood wide-eyed. Allah turned the woman into the form of a star. ¹

While explaining this verse Imam Al-Hasan al-’Askari has said that Imam as-Sadiq said that, after the time of Nuh, many people began to deceive others through magic (sorcery etc). Allah sent two angels to the Messenger of that time so that they may show the people what was magic and to explain to them why Allah had prohibited its use. It was like a doctor (physician) telling somebody that such and such thing is poisonous and therefore fatal and that its effect can be removed through such and such medicine. As Allah Almighty says: (Meaning: that Prophet asked those angels to appear like men and

teach the people what Allah had shown them. So those two angels were teaching the people magic and the ways of making it ineffective. But before that they would inform the people that: We are a means of test and trial for the slaves of Allah so that they may obey Allah and nullify magic by what they learn, but not indulge in magic themselves and not become 'Kafir' (unbelievers) by harming others through magic. You are encouraging people by creating an impression that you are equal to Allah by killing or enlivening through magic. These things are Kufr (blasphemy–unbelief). (Even the men learned from these two, magic by which they might cause a separation between a man and his wife).

Said that the desirers of magic learned the magic of Satan which they had buried beneath the throne of Solomon (Sulayman) and attributed its magic to Sulayman. By doing this they were obtaining benefits from both the charms (enchantments) and from what was in possession of Harut and Marut. Through it they started making conspiracies and mischief, and causing conflicts and separations between people. They also indulged in backbiting. They would write things about a certain thing or person and then burn it at different places so that it would result in enmity or amity between the two parties. (And they cannot hurt anyone with it except with Allah's permission). Allah says here that those who learn that thing cannot harm anyone except by Allah's will and those whom Allah left on his own and had He wished He would have debarred him from His Mercy due to that person's evil deeds or if He willed He would have stopped them per force. (And they learned what harmed them and did not profit them). said, After learning chants or magic they used to harm others through it. Thus they were learning only that which was destroying their religion and which did not give them any benefit in the Hereafter. Rather they were getting out of the religion of Allah due to that. (And certainly they know that he who bought it should have no share of good in the Hereafter). (And evil was the price for which they sold their souls; had they but known this 2:102). Thus they gave up their share from Paradise because they believed that there was no Allah, nor Hereafter, nor any life after death.

Narrators of traditions said to Imam Al-Hasan al-'Askari that some people say that Harut and Marut were two angels whom Allah had selected when men indulged in extreme rebellion; that Allah sent those two angels with other angels and that those two angels fell in love with Venus and desired to commit adultery with her. They drank wine, killed a man unlawfully and therefore Allah has kept them chastised in Babylon. That magicians were learning magic from those two angels. That Allah metamorphosed that woman into a star (Venus). (Imam said, I seek protection of Allah from such words because angels are sinless and have been saved from disbelief and evils by the Grace of Allah, as Allah has said about them: (They do not disobey Allah in what he commands them, and do as they are commanded. 66: 6) At another place He says that those who are near Allah, that is, angels, do not feel proud in the matter of worshipping Allah, nor do they tire but remain engaged in hallowing and praising Him day and night without fatigue.

Again He says: There are some of My precious slaves who make no excess in talking about Allah and do whatever Allah asks them to do. Had it been as people say then Allah would have appointed those angels as His caliphs on earth and they would have been Prophets and Imams in the world. Is it possible

for any Prophet or Imam to kill anybody illegally and to indulge in adultery? Do you not know that Allah has never left the children of Adam any time anywhere in the world without a Prophet or an Imam? Have you not heard that Allah says that: We, before you, did not send towards them anyone but one from among the residents of the city on whom We sent revelation. So this is an evidence to prove that angels have never been sent on earth as leaders and rulers of men. Rather Allah has sent His (human) Prophets. The narrator said, Then on this ground of argument, Satan should also not have been an angel. replied, “He was also not an angel but was a jinn (genie) as He says, Verily he was from the jinn and at another place He says, And the jinn we created before from intensely hot fire. (15:27) Surely my great grandfather has, through my elders, narrated to us that the holy Prophet said, ‘Allah Almighty selected Muhammad and his progeny from the worlds and did not appoint angels who were near Him to do jobs about which he knew that they would not be able to perform, but who would, due to that, get away from Allah’s friendship and love and would also lose inerrancy and would enter a group which has earned Allah’s anger.’”

Narrators have said that some people asked Imam if it was true that when the holy Prophet specifically declared the Imamate (leadership) of Amir al-Mu’minin and Allah presented his Imamate to the angels many of them did not accept it? And Allah turned many of them into frogs? Imam said, “May Allah protect us, they have made a false allegation against them. Angels are the Messenger of Allah. Just as the Messengers can never disbelieve, the angels too cannot. Their grace is very high. They are pure of such things.”

Inshallah, we will describe all the events of angels and their inerrancy in another book ‘*Ruh al-Arwah*’. Thus, we conclude this volume here.

1. Sunnis have also written this in their commentaries and that many Sunni and Shi’ah scholars have denied this story because what is said in this story is against the nature of angels (the nature as mentioned in authentic hadiths). Rather they say there were two angels whom Allah had sent on the earth for taking a test of men so that they may teach them the difference between magic and miracle and so that they may keep away from the former. They told the people that: We are not teaching this to you so that you can make it a means of earning in your world and become disbeliever by adopting magic. The angels did not commit any sin. They remained on earth for a long time and then went back to the heavens. And some say that the two were not angels but were two residents of Babylon who were famous for their virtues and hence were called angles. Some others say that this behavior is not contrary to the nature of angels because they have an angelic nature only up to the time they are in their original status of inerrancy and that they were no more angels after Allah turned them into the form of men. It is possible that their inerrancy had vanished. Though these statements do have weight yet many hadiths contradict them. Thus they conform with the common peoples and the Jewish traditions but against the belief of Shi’ahs. Hence it is better to remain noncommittal in this matter. Therefore the explanation of this verse is mentioned in the commentary of Imam al-Hasan al-‘Askari (to be seen in the text in the following pages).

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