

The Amazing Patience of the Prophet Ayub (Job)

by Ibn Kathîr

Ibn Ishaq stated that he was a man of Rum. His names was Ayub Ibn Mose Ibn Razeh Ibn Esau Ibn Isaac Ibn Abraham. Someone else said he was Ayub Ibn Mose, Ibn Rimil Ibn Esau Ibn Isaac Ibn Jacob. There have also been other statements in his lineage. Ibn Asaker narrated that his mother was a daughter of Prophet Lut. It was said, also, that his father was one who believed in Abraham when he was cast into the fire.

The first opinion is the most plausible as he was a descendant of Abraham's offspring as Allah Almighty declared:

"That was the reasoning about Us which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people: We raise whom We will degree after degree: for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge. We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) We guided: and before him We guided Noah and before him We guided Noah and among his progeny David Solomon Ayub Joseph Moses and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good" Quran 6:83-84

Allah the Almighty praised His worshipper Ayub in His Glorious Quran:

"Truly! We found him patient. How excellent a slave! Verily, he was ever oft-returning in repentance to Us" Quran 38:44

Ayub was repentant, remembering Allah with thankfulness, patience and steadfastness. This was the cause of his rescue and the secret of Allah's praising him.

A group of angels were discussing Allah's other human creatures, how those who were humble earned Allah's displeasure, while those who were arrogant incurred His displeasure. One of the angels remarked:

"The best creature on earth today is Ayub, a man of noble character who displays excellent patience and always remembers his Generous Lord. He is an excellent model for the worshippers of Allah. In return, his Lord has blessed him with a long life and plenty of riches, yet he is never haughty or selfish. His family, his servants, as well as the needy and the poor share in his good fortune; he feeds and clothes the poor and buys slaves to set them free. He makes those who receive his charity feel as if they are favouring him, so kind and gentle is he."

Iblis, overhearing all this, became annoyed. He planned to tempt Ayub to corruption and disbelief, so he hastened to him. He tried to distract Ayub from his prayers by whispering to him about the good things in life, but Ayub was a true believer and would not let evil thoughts tempt him. This disturbed Iblis more; thus he began to hate Ayub even more.

Iblis complained to Allah about Ayub. He said that although he was continuously glorifying Allah, he was not doing so out of his sincerity but to satisfy Allah so that his wealth should not be taken away. It was all a show, all out of greed. "If You remove his wealth then You will find that his tongue will no longer mention Your name and his praying will stop."

Allah told Iblis that Ayub was one of His most sincere devotees. He did not worship Him because of the favors; his worship stemmed from his heart and had nothing to do with material things. But to prove Iblis the depth of Ayub's sincerity and patience, Allah allowed him to do whatever he and his helpers wished with Ayub's wealth.

Iblis was very happy. He gathered his helpers and set about destroying Ayub's cattle, servants, and farms until he was left with no possessions. Rubbing his hands in glee, Iblis appeared before Ayub in the guise of a wise old man and said to him:

"All your wealth is lost. Some people say that it is because you gave too much charity and that you are wasting your time with your continuous prayers to Allah. Others say that Allah has bought this upon you in order to please your enemies. If Allah had the capacity to prevent harm, then He would have protected your wealth"

True to his belief, Ayub replied:

"What Allah has taken away from me belongs to Him. I was only its trustee for a while. He gives to whom He wills and withholds from whom He wills"

With these words, Ayub again prostrated to his Lord.

When Iblis saw this, he felt frustrated, so he again addressed Allah:

"I have stripped Ayub of all his possessions, but he still remains grateful to You. However, he is only hiding his disappointment, for he places great store by his many children. The real test of a parent is through his children. You will then see how Ayub will reject You"

Allah granted Iblis authority, but warned him that it would not reduce Ayub's faith in his Lord nor his patience.

Iblis again gathered his helpers and set about his evil deeds. He shook the foundation of the house in which Ayub's children were living and sent the building crashing, killing all of them. Then he went to Ayub disguised as a man who had come to sympathize with him. In a comforting tone he said to Ayub:

"The circumstances under which your children died were sad. Surely, your Lord is not rewarding you properly for all your prayers?"

Having said this Iblis waited anxiously, hoping Ayub was now ready to reject Allah. But again Ayub disappointed him by replying:

"Allah sometimes gives and sometimes takes. He is sometimes pleased and sometimes displeased with our deeds. Whether a thing is beneficial or harmful to me, I will remain firm in my belief and remain thankful to my Creator"

Then Ayub prostrated to his Lord. At this Iblis was extremely vexed. Iblis again called on Allah:

"O my Lord, Ayub's wealth is gone, his children are dead, but he is still healthy in body, and as long as he enjoys good health he will continue to worship You in the hope of regaining his wealth and producing more children. Grant me authority over his body so that I may weaken it. He will surely neglect worshipping You and with this becomes disobedient"

Allah wanted to teach Iblis a lesson that Ayub was a devoted servant of his Lord, so He granted Iblis his third request but placed a condition:

"I give you authority over his body but not over his soul, intellect, or heart, for in these places reside the knowledge of Me and My religion"

Armed with this new authority, Iblis began to take revenge on Ayub's body and filled it with disease until it was reduced to mere skin and bone and he suffered severe pain. But through all the suffering Ayub remained string in his faith, patiently bearing all the hardships without complaining. Allah's righteous servant did not despair or turn to others for help but remained hopeful of Allah's Mercy. Even close relatives and friends deserted him. Only his kind loving wife stayed with him. In his hour of need, she showered her kindness on him and cared for him. She remained his sole companion and comforter through many years of his suffering.

Ibn Asaker narrated: "Ayub was a man having much wealth of all kinds: beasts, slaves, sheep, vast lands of Haran and many children. All those favors were taken from him and he was physically afflicted as well. Never a single organ was sound except his heart and tongue, with both of which he glorified Allah, the Almighty all the time day and night. His disease lasted for a long time until his visitors felt disgusted with him. His friend kept away from him, and people abstained from visiting him. No one felt sympathy for him except his wife. She took good care of him, knowing his former charity and pity for her"

Therefore, Iblis became desperate. He consulted his helpers but they could not advise him. They asked:

"How is it that your cleverness cannot work against Ayub, yet you succeeded in misleading Adam, the father of man, out of paradise?"

Iblis went to Ayub's wife in the form of a man. "Where is your husband?" he asked her.

She pointed to an almost lifeless form crumpled on the bed and said: "There he is, suspended between life and death."

Iblis reminded her of the days when Ayub had good health, wealth and children. Suddenly, the painful memory of yeas of hardship overcame her, and she burst into tears. She said to Ayub:

"How long are you going to bear this torture from our Lord? Are we to remain without wealth, children or friends forever? Why don't you call upon Allah to remove this suffering?"

Ayub sighed, and in a soft voice replied:

"Iblis must have whispered to you and made you dissatisfied. Tell me, how long did I enjoy good health and riches?"

She replied, "For eighty years"

Then Ayub asked, "How long am I suffering like this?"

She said, "for seven years"

Then Ayub told her:

"In that case I am ashamed to call on my Lord to remove the hardship, for I have not suffered longer than the years of good health and plenty. It seems your faith has weakened and you are dissatisfied with the fate of Allah. If I ever again health, I swear I will punish you with a hundred strokes! From this day onward, I forbid myself to eat or drink anything from your hand. Leave me alone and let my Lord do with me as He pleases."

Crying bitterly and with a heavy heart, she had no choice but to leave him and seek shelter elsewhere. In his helpless state, Ayub turned to Allah, not to complain but to seek His mercy:

"Verily, distress has seized me, and You and the Most Merciful of all those who show Mercy. So We answered his call, and We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him (that he had lost) and the like thereof along with them - as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all who worship Us" Quran 21:83-84

Almighty Allah also instructed:

"Commemorate Our servant Ayub behold he cried to his Lord: 'The Evil One has afflicted me with distress and suffering'! (The command was given:) 'Strike with thy foot: here is (water) wherein to wash cool and refreshing and (water) to drink.' And We gave him (back) his people and doubled their number as a Grace from Ourselves and a thing for commemoration for all who have Understanding." Quran 38:41-43

Ayub obeyed, and almost immediately his good health was restored. Meanwhile, his faithful wife could no longer bear to be parted from her husband and returned to beg his forgiveness, desiring to serve him. On entering her house, she was amazed at the sudden change: Ayub was again healthy! She embraced him and thanked Allah for His mercy.

Ayub was now worried, for he had taken an oath to punish her with a hundred strokes if he regained health, but he had no desire to hurt her. He knew if he did not fulfill the oath, he would be guilty of breaking a promise to Allah. Therefore, in His wisdom and mercy, Allah came to the assistance of His faithful servant, and advised him: .

"And take in your hand a bundle of thin grass and strike therewith (your wife), and break not your oath. Truly we found him patient. How excellent a slave! Verily, he was ever oft-returning in repentance to Us" Quran 38:44

Abu Huraira (ra) narrated that the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) said:

"While Ayub was naked, taking a bath, a swarm of locusts fell on him, and he started collecting them in his garment. His Lord called him: 'O Ayub! Have I not made you too rich to need what you see?' He said: 'Yes, O Lord! But I cannot shun Your Blessings" (Bukhari)

The story of Ayub should be a constant reminder for us all. We should read this story often just to remind ourselves. Many of us complain about the little things in life. Allah tested Ayub in ways that we can really relate to. His faith and patience is something that we as true believing Muslims should try and implement in our lives, when Allah tests us in these situations. In the Quraan Allah says,

"Truly! We found him patient. How excellent (a) slave! Verily, he was ever oft returning in repentance (to us)." [Quran:38:4].

During these times we must remember Allah more, pray harder, and be more thankful instead of being dissatisfied with our condition. We should praise and thank Allah for every condition that he tests us with. As we know these are the times when Satan tries to work on us the most by playing with our minds, emotions, and weaknesses. Allah would never forget to reward a servant for such a great task.

"And (remember) Ayub when he cried to his Lord: Verily, distress has seized me and you are the Most Merciful of all who show mercy." [Quraan:21:83]

"So We answered his call, and We removed the distress that was on him, and We restored his family to him (that he had lost), and the like thereof along with them, as a mercy from Ourselves and a Reminder for all those who worship us." [Quraan:21:84]

May Allah give us the faith and the patience when we are tested. Ameen.