



SAFAR

This piece is based upon the book, *Lata'if al-Ma'arif fi ma li Mawasim al-'Am min al-Waza'if* written by Hafiz Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad ibn Rajab – more famously known as Ibn Rajab al-Hambali.

Abu Hurayra narrates that the Messenger of Allah said, “There is no such thing as a contagious disease, nor such a thing as taking and evil omen (from an owl), and nor such a thing as safar.” (al-Bukhari, 5770 and Muslim 2220).

The concept of contagious disease is also discussed in another hadith when a Bedouin asked how scabies infected camel could by intermingling with a healthy camel make it infected. The Prophet replied, “Who is the one that caused the first animal to be affected?” In fact, another hadith is even more explicit, “There is no such thing as contagious disease.” Yet there are other hadith which speak on the face of it, contrary to this view. For instance the Prophet is reported to have said, “Flee from a leper as you would flee from a lion.” In fact, we find another narration similar to the first which explains the understanding behind whether a disease can be contagious or not. It is recorded by al-Tirmidhi in which the Prophet explained to the Bedouin that everything happens through the decree and decision of Allah. So in summary no animal contracts a disease except through the will of Allah, however He has established biological, physical and chemical laws which are the means by which His Will manifests itself.

As for, “there is no such thing as safar,” there are two views:

- 1) Safar is a stomach illness which causes tapeworms to exist within the stomach and intestines. Many people believed these to be contagious and the Prophet refuted this belief.
- 2) Safar refers to the second month of the calendar. There are two opinions on this view:
 - a. In the times of Jahiliyya they would move this month forward and backwards as Muharram was a month in which fighting was permissible and Safar was sanctified – This is Imam Malik’s opinion.
 - b. They used to take this as a bad month and would make statements like, “This is a cursed month.” So the Prophet refuted this. This opinion is regarded the most correct of the three.

To take a month as an evil omen is a practice which the Prophet was forbidding. This is similar to the view of the Jahilliya that getting married in Shawwal is bad luck. There is a view that the origin of this is that a plague struck sometime in history and many people died. As the brides who had got married in Shawwal also died and the people’s attention was on them, they perceived that more brides died than other people, hence they took it as an evil omen for marriage.

Therefore, it is incorrect to associate any bad omen to a time, place or thing. In fact, in reality a bad omen or bad luck is actually associated with the disobedience of Allah. Abd Allah ibn Mas’ud says, “If there is any bad luck in anything, it is in what lies between the lips, i.e. the tongue.” He also said, “There is nothing that requires more imprisonment than the tongue.”



The Prophet said, “A good natural disposition is a cause of increase. An evil natural disposition is bad luck.”

Aisha narrates that the Messenger of Allah said, “Bad luck entails having a bad character.” (al-Musnad, 24424)

Therefore, these issues which befall an individual are calamities which are predestined from Allah. However, lawful adhkar, words containing the remembrance of Allah, can be used to repulse these calamities. ‘Uthman narrates that the Messenger of Allah said, “When a person says the following in the morning and the evening no calamity will afflict him -

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَا يَضُرُّ مَعَ اسْمِهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (ثَلَاثًا)

Bismillahilladhi la yadurru ma 'asmihi shay un fil ardi wala fis sama i wa huwas sami 'ul 'alim (3x)

In the name of Allah with whose name nothing is harmed on earth nor in the heavens and He is the All-Seeing, the All-Knowing.

This will either reduce the effect of the calamity or remove it altogether or delay it.

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