

AL ISTIDRAAJ

Deceptive Blessings

Compiled by:

SHEIKH DR. FARUQ POST

‘ISTIDRAAJ’

DECEPTIVE BLESSINGS

All praise is due to Allah; we praise Him, seek His help, and seek His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Him from the evils of our souls and the consequences of our deeds. Whomever Allah guides, none can misguide; whomever He allows to stray, none can guide. To proceed... O servants of Allah, fear Allah as He ought to be feared, for this worldly life deceives, harms, and quickly passes.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ... إِنَّ مِنْ أخطر مَا يَقَعُ فِيهِ الْعَبْدُ أَنْ يَظُنَّ أَنَّ نِعَمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ
عَلَامَةٌ رِضًا وَهُوَ غَارِقٌ فِي الْمَعَاصِي!

O people... one of the most dangerous illusions and deceptions a Muslim can fall into is to think that the constant and consistent material possessions and provisions being bestowed upon him are signs of his success, and Allah’s pleasure- while he is drowning in an ocean of sins and disobedience to Allah. These are the deceptive blessings or ‘punishments disguised as provisions’ that Allah tells us about in the Quran. The abundance of constant and consistent worldly possession that are being rained upon us, while the heedless and sinful one is deeming them as blessings; could actually be punishments from Allah; especially if one is constantly engaged in the impermissible, ‘haraam’ and immoral.

Allah speaks about this in the Quran, when individuals become heedless of themselves and their actions, and start to deny, and reject Allah’s commands and prohibitions; when He says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“We will gradually lead them to destruction from where they do not know.” (Al A’raaf:182)

Al istidraaj brothers and sisters.

الِإِسْتِدْرَاجُ—أَنْ يُمَهِّلَكَ رَبُّكَ، وَيُعْطِيكَ، وَيَفْتَحَ لَكَ النِّعَمَ، وَأَنْتَ مُسْتَمِرٌّ عَلَى الذُّنُوبِ، ثُمَّ تَظُنُّ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ رَضِيَ عَنْكَ وَرَضِيَ بِعَمَلِكَ.

Istidraaj, brothers and sisters is when your Lord gives you time, wealth, and sustenance while you remain in sin, engaged in the haram, and impermissible—yet you believe they are blessings and approval of what you are doing.

Istidraaj is when your Lord consistently increases you with sustenance, provisions, food, drink, and wealth; while you oppose Him with acts of disobedience and are drowning in heedlessness—but because of your heedlessness and carelessness, you deem these provisions as blessings instead of punishments and tests.

Istidraaj is when the doors of blessings are opened while you persist in sin, and you think it is honor—when in truth it is an inconspicuous rope pulling you toward destruction.

‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amir reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

"إِذَا رَأَيْتَ اللَّهَ يُعْطِي الْعَبْدَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى مَعَاصِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ فَإِنَّمَا هُوَ اسْتِذْرَاجٌ ثُمَّ تَلَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: (فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ)"

“If you see Allah giving a servant what he loves from the worldly life and worldly possessions, despite his sinful disobedience, then surely it is luring him to destruction.” Then, the Prophet recited the verse, **“Thus, when they forgot what they were reminded of, We opened the doors of every good thing for them until, as they rejoiced in what they were given, We seized them suddenly with utter despair and unexpectedly.”** (Al An’aam:44) (Musnad Imam Ahmed #17311 with a fair chain of narration)

الْإِسْتِذْرَاجُ عَذَابٌ مُؤَجَّلٌ، وَغَضَبٌ مُسْتَتِرٌ، وَسَيْفٌ يُشَدُّ وَلَكِنْ لَمْ يُسْتَعْمَلْ بَعْدُ

Istidraaj is a postponed punishment, a delayed torment, an inconspicuous deception, a hidden anger, a sharpened sword that has not been taken out of its scabbard.

Al Istidraaj befalls the heedless and inattentive. Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The more one is heedless of Allah, inattentive to His commands, His prohibitions, not concerned about what pleases Him nor what displeases him; the more susceptible he is to be given these deceptive blessings through ‘istidraaj’.

It is only from Allah's complete knowledge and wisdom that people get gradually led astray deeper and deeper into heedlessness, sin, and get lured into constantly following the footsteps of shaytaan, until it leads many to forget about Allah completely, may Allah protect us from such a state of affairs.

Allah mentions how the most heedless of Allah-the disbelievers first and foremost- are gradually led astray, step by step, digging themselves deeper and deeper into immorality, sin, and running behind the footsteps of shaytaan, farther and farther away from Allah. They are enticed by the fleeting enjoyments and pleasures of these worldly things. Many have been deluded and deceived, to believe that this world and the worldly possessions in it is their paradise. However, this sad state of affairs can also affect the believers as well, in varying degrees and levels. All depending upon how cognizant or heedless they are of Allah and themselves.

The Exalted says:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّنا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرًا لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ لِيُزِدُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

“And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is good for them; We only grant them respite so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment.” (Āl ‘Imrān 3:178).

Allah bestows worldly possessions and sustenance on His creatures sometimes as a reward for good deeds, and other times for a punishment of bad deeds. Allah also grants respite

to those engaged in constant heedless sin so that they may use those material things to increase in sin, to increase in disbelief, to increase in self-conceit and arrogance, and increase in ungratefulness; and because of their heedlessness and carelessness; they continue on indulging in disobedience and forgetfulness of Allah and His commands.

Istidraaj happens to the arrogant, the prideful, the heedless, and the one whose heart is hard and does not repent and return to Allah. Allah snatches their souls while they are indulging in their sins and luxuries that they earned from haram and impermissible ways and means.

This is from the divine pattern of gradual enticement (istidrāj) through Allah's subtle strategy. These careless individuals were punished by being made heedless, negligent, and ignoring Allah's commands and prohibitions. They ignored Allah's signs, his verses, his prophet's authentic ahadith, the advice of knowledgeable scholars; so Allah sealed their hearts and eyes so they were not able to see or realize what they were doing. They mistook the material possessions and wealth that came to them constantly- while they remained in sin and engaging in Haram- as a gift of favor from Allah and did not realize that it was really a punishment and istidraaj from Allah, gradually drawing them in to commit more sins. Thus they persisted in disobedience, in Riba, in Zina, in arrogance, in pride, in buying and selling haram, in belittling others, and rejoiced with the arrogant-only believing that Allah is all forgiving, and not remembering that Allah is also severe in punishment. Their

insight, heart, and mind have been blinded from recognizing Allah's punishment and plan. So the gates of all worldly possession were opened for them, and given to them; and they perceived it as blessings from Allah while it was really a punishment, torment, and the result of sins upon sins.

Allah reminds us in other verses as well:

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ (55) نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ
بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“Do they think that what We extend to them of wealth and children. We are hastening to them as good things? Rather, they do not perceive.” (Al Mu'minoon:55-56)

Allah told His Messenger and Ummah to not be impressed by people's abundance of wealth and children, do not be misled by the deceptive blessings. Allah increases, gives more, and bestows constantly how He wills, to whom He wills, for reasons that He knows, and we do not know. Having millions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of investments, large families; all while constantly disobeying Allah are definitely not blessings and rewards. Rather they do not perceive, as Allah says in the previous verse.

As Allah tells us in other places in the Quran:

فَلَا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِهَا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَتَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ

“Let neither their wealth nor their children impress you; Allah only intends to punish them through them in this world, and that their souls should depart while they are disbelievers.” (Al-Tawbah 9:55).

To not be impressed by people’s wealth and children, as Allah only intends to punish the disobedient through them. May Allah protect us and our families.

Istidrāj does not only affect the heedless, or the non-Muslims, or those carelessly drowning in sin. It also affects tyrants and oppressors. Those who transgresses against people and withholds their rights, they may not be punished immediately—this delay itself is a form of divine istidrāj from Allah.

The Almighty says:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَافِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ
فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ

“And do not think that Allah is unaware of what the wrongdoers do; He only delays them until a Day when eyes will stare in horror.” (Ibrāhīm 14:42).

Allah delays the punishment of oppressors using istidraaj so that the oppressor increases in his oppression, thinking that he will not be caught, deeming that he will not be seen; then

suddenly and unexpectedly while the oppressor is engaged in his oppression, and it is too late for him to repent, and too late for him to restore the rights of those who he oppressed; Allah seizes his soul and he dies while oppressing others. He will reap what he sowed in the Hereafter, in which the punishments are far greater than in this world. The Prophet Muhammad told us:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيُمْلِي لِلظَّالِمِ حَتَّى إِذَا أَخَذَهُ لَمْ يَفْلِتْهُ ثُمَّ قَرَأَ {وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْفُرَى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ}

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Allah gives respite to the oppressor, but when He seizes him, He never lets him escape." Then he recited:-- "Such is the seizure of your Lord when He seizes (population of) towns in the midst of their wrong: Painful indeed, and severe is His seizure.' (Saheeh Al Bukhari #4686)

May Allah protect us from such a state.

Istidrāj also encompasses those given to immorality, sin, and wickedness, as in the Exalted's words:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ * ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ * مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ

“Have you considered: if We grant them enjoyment for years, then what they were promised comes to them, of what avail will be their past enjoyments?” (Al-Shu‘arā’ 26:205–207).

ما هي عِلَامَاتُ الْإِسْتِدْرَاجِ

WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF ISTIDRAAJ

-أَنْ تُفْتَحَ لَكَ الدُّنْيَا وَتُغْلَقَ عَنْكَ أَبْوَابُ الطَّاعَةِ

The doors of acquiring worldly possessions open up for you while the doors of obedience to Allah keep closing.

-أَنْ تَزْدَادَ فِي الرِّزْقِ وَتَنْقُصَ فِي الشُّكْرِ وَأَنْتَ مُسْتَمِرٌّ فِي الْمَعَاصِي وَلَا يَخْطُرُ عَلَى بَالِكَ أَنْ تَتُوبَ إِلَى الْغُفُورِ الرَّحِيمِ.

That your wealth increases, but your gratitude decreases while continuously sinning and not repenting.

-أَنْ تَعْصِيَ اللَّهَ وَتَجِدَ الطَّرِيقَ مُيسِّرًا، وَالْقَلْبَ غَافِلًا، وَالْعَقْلَ نَائِمًا، وَالطَّرِيقَ إِلَى الطَّاعَةِ صَعِبَةً.

You find the path of disobedience to Allah very easy, and the heart becomes heedless and inattentive, and the mind is asleep, and the path to obedience is difficult.

-التَّوَسُّعُ فِي الدُّنْيَا بِلَا بَرَكَهٍ-الْمَالُ يَزِيدُ لَكِنَّ الْبَرَكَهَ تَخْتَفِي، فَيُصْرَفُ فِي مَا لَا يَنْفَعُ أَوْ فِي الْأَشْيَاءِ الَّتِي تَجْلِبُ الْهَمَّ وَالْغَمَّ

In increase in sustenance, wealth, and worldly possession without blessings within them — your wealth increases, but the blessings in them disappear, so it is spent on what brings no benefit at all, wasted on haram, or spent on things that only brings worry.”

-الْغَفْلَةُ عَنِ الذَّنْبِ وَعَدَمُ الشُّعُورِ بِالنَّدَمِ- الْإِنْسَانُ يَرْتَكِبُ الْمَعْصِيَةَ وَلَا يَنْدَمُ، بَلْ رُبَّمَا يَفْرَحُ بِهَا أَوْ يَبْرِرها

Not worrying about constants sins, a lack of regret, and a lack of remorse. A person commits a sin and does not regret it; he may even rejoice in it or justify it.

-الْإِعْجَابُ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْغُرُورُ بِالْإِنْجَازَاتِ. يُشْعُرُ بِأَنَّهُ مُسْتَحَقٌّ لِكُلِّ مَا يَحْصُلُ عَلَيْهِ، وَيُنْسِبُ الْفَضْلَ لِنَفْسِهِ بَدَلُ أَنْ يَشْكُرَ اللَّهَ

Self-admiration and arrogance about personal achievements. He feels that he deserves everything he receives and attributes the credit to himself instead of thanking Allah.

-غِيَابُ الْإِبْتِلَاءَاتِ الَّتِي تُوقِظُ الْعَبْدَ- الْإِبْتِلَاءُ رَحْمَةٌ وَتَذَكِيرٌ، وَغِيَابُهُ تَمَامًا مَعَ الْإِصْرَارِ عَلَى الْمَعَاصِي قَدْ يَكُونُ اسْتِدْرَاجًا

Absence of trials that awaken the servant. Trials are a mercy and a reminder, and their complete absence while one persists in sins may be a form of 'istidraaj'.

لِمَاذَا اللَّهُ يَسْتَدْرِجُ الْإِنْسَانَ فِي غَيِّهِ؟

WHY DOES ALLAH GRADUALLY MISLEAD PEOPLE?

-لَآئِنَّمَا أَعْطَاهُ فُرْصًا كَثِيرَةً فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِبْ

Because Allah had given him many chances, numerous signs, reminders, much time; but he refused them, rejected them, and denied them. He chose following his desires, whims, personal views and opinions over what Allah commanded him.

-لَآئِنَّمَا سَمِعَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَعْ، وَعَرَفَ الْحَقَّ وَلَمْ يَتَّبِعْ

Because he heard the Qur'an but did not humble himself, and recognized the truth but did not follow it.

-فَيَتْرُكُهُ اللَّهُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَهَوَاهُ وَمَنْ تَرَكَ لِنَفْسِهِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ هَلَكَ

So Allah leaves him to himself... and whoever is left to himself is destroyed.

وَيْلٌ لِّذِي نِعْمَةٍ فِي مَعْصِيَةٍ

Woe to the one given blessings while sinning

يَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ... لَوْ رَأَيْتَ رَجُلًا يُعْمَسُ فِي النِّعَمِ وَهُوَ يُحَارِبُ أَمْرَ اللَّهِ، فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ مُكْرَمًا، بَلْ هُوَ مَمْكُورٌ بِهِ

O servants of Allah... if you see a man showered with blessings while he wages war against Allah's commands, know that he is not honored, but deceived.

وَاللَّهُ، لَيْسَ أَخَوْفَ مِنْ قَلْبٍ يَقْسُو وَنِعْمَ تَزْدَادُ

By Allah, nothing is more frightening than a hard heart accompanied by increasing blessings.

Some of the righteous predecessors used to say:

«إِذَا رَأَيْتَ نِعَمَ اللَّهِ تَتَابِعُ عَلَيْكَ وَالطَّاعَةَ تُفَارِقُكَ، فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ مَمْكُورٌ بِكَ»

“If Allah’s blessings pour on you while obedience leaves you, know you are being deceived.”

يَا مَنْ تَفَرَّحَ بِالرِّزْقِ وَتَنَسَّى الرَّازِقَ... أَمَا خِفْتَ أَنْ يَكُونَ هَذَا قَبْلَ السَّفْطَةِ؟

O you who rejoice in wealth and forget the Provider... have you not feared that this may be right before your capture by the angel of death?

يَا مَنْ تُعْطِيكَ النِّعَمُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ... أَلَا تَخْشَى أَنْ تَكُونَ هَذِهِ سِتْرًا قَبْلَ الْإِنْكَشَافِ؟

“O you who are surrounded by provisions and sustenance in every direction—do you not fear that these things may be deceptive blessings, and when the curtain is lifted the truth will be exposed and it will be too late?

تَمْشِي مُطْمَئِنًّا بَيْنَ نِعَمٍ لَمْ تَحْمَدْهَا... وَتَنَسَى أَنَّ الْمُنْعَمَ إِنْ أُعْطِيَ ابْتَلَى، وَإِنْ أَمْهَلَ فَقَدْ يَأْخُذُ أَخْذًا عَزِيزًا

“You walk confidently amid blessings for which you have not offered gratitude, forgetting that the One who bestows them may be testing you, and the One who grants respite may ultimately take you unexpectedly at anytime”

يَا مَنْ لَهَتْ بِهِ الدُّنْيَا عَنْ رَبِّ الدُّنْيَا... أَلَا تَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ تُنَادَى فِيهِ فَلَا تُجَاب

“O you whom the worldly life has distracted and led gradually astray from the Lord of all worlds—do you not fear the day when you will be called to go back to Him, but will not be able to answer the call?”

لَا تَقْعُوا ضَحِيَّةَ الْاِسْتِدْرَاجِ يَا إِخْوَتِي وَأَخَوَاتِي-حَاسِبُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُحَاسَبُوا
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

Don't fall victim to Al Istidraaj brothers and sisters...Take account of yourselves before you are taken account of by Allah.

If you are constantly engaging in the haram and impermissible, then know that you need to repent today. Allah is telling us that the heedless and careless will be misled slowly and gradually into the pit and web of sins, one sin after the other, step by step, adorning for you sins upon sins; until your heart becomes hard, dead, and unreceptive to any types of reminders. Take heed today, repent before it is too late.

May Allah open our eyes, hearts, and minds to come back to Allah and repent.

REPENTANCE... REPENTANCE BEFORE HEEDLESSNESS

Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

“Indeed, Allah loves those who repent and those who purify themselves.” (Al Baqarah: 222)

Allah also says:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ

“O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of Allah’s mercy.” (Az Zumar:53).

اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَجْعَلْ نِعَمَكَ عَلَيْنَا اسْتِذْرَاجًا

O Allah, do not make Your blessings upon us a form of istidraaj.

وَاجْعَلْ نِعَمَكَ عَلَيْنَا عَوْنًا عَلَى طَاعَتِكَ، لَا غُرُورًا وَلَا فِتْنَةً

Make your blessings upon us an aid to be more obedient to you, not a deception to fall into more disobedience.

اللَّهُمَّ نَبِّهِ قُلُوبَنَا إِذَا زَاغَتْ، وَرُدَّنَا إِلَيْكَ رَدًّا جَمِيلًا

O Allah awaken our hearts if they start to go astray, help us return to you in a beautiful way.



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PO BOX. 4152

Hagerstown Md 21741

www.imacd.org

240-347-3774