

Islam on Superstitions & Bad Omens

A superstition is a 'belief that is not based on reason, but something that usually occurs because of ignorance and fear.' An omen is 'an event regarded as a portent of good or evil.' Friday 13th, black cats, walking under a ladder, broken mirrors and lucky mascots are all examples of superstitions and omens that we hear about often in this day and age. Even the pagan Arabs held onto superstitions and omens. For example, they used to view owls with great suspicion, because they believed they came from the graves of the dead. Sometimes they would determine the course of their travels purely on the movement of some birds.

In the west, belief in superstitions is increasing not decreasing. People regularly consult horoscopes, astrologers and fortunetellers. Airlines see mass cancellations of seats on Friday 13th. This shows their ignorance; day by day, they believe less in God because it is 'supernatural', because 'we cannot prove His existence' and because it is 'against reason'. But then the same people will avoid walking under a ladder because they firmly believe it will bring bad luck.

Islam on superstitions.

*The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made it abundantly clear that there is no such thing as superstitions and bad omens. They have no basis. The success of one's exam paper is not dependent on which socks the person wore on the day of the paper.

*More importantly, belief in superstitions is dangerous because it is a replacement for prayer. When a Muslim is faced with an important job interview, supplications and prayers are more important than consuming a 'lucky meal'.

*Superstitions erode one's trust in Allah (*tawakkul*). All affairs are in His hands. A true Muslim does not depend on luck and omens but in Allah Almighty.

*Belief in superstitions wastes time and money in useless pursuit. In the USA, some astrologers earn more than doctors. It can even lead to fatalities. In India in 1999, a Hindi woman committed suicide after two astrologers predicted she would become a widow.

*Perhaps most damaging, belief in superstitions is a form of *Shirk*. The person starts to believe that the superstition can actually cause harm and benefit, though in reality, only Allah can.

What should Muslims do when they feel a bad omen?

*The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) taught us have optimism. A bad omen should not prevent a person from doing good.

*If the bad omen persists, then there is a supplication one can read:

Allahumma Laa Ya'ti bi'l-Hasanaate Illa Anta Wa Laa Yad'fa as-Sayyi'aate Illa Anta Wa La Hawla Wa La Quwwata Illa bi'llahi

O Allah! No one brings good except You. And no one can repel evil except You. And there is no power or might except with Allah.

Conclusion.

For those non-Muslims who believe in superstitions, we should remind them that they are actually *closer* to believing in Allah than they think. How?

If they are willing to accept that the success and failure of an act is not in their own hands, but in the lucky socks they are wearing, then they are accepting that they are not in control of everything. They are acknowledging that external factors other than one's self can affect the outcome. So why can't they take one more step, a leap of faith, and believe that it's not in the hands of the lucky socks, but in the hands of Allah? We as Muslims say nothing is in our hands, it's all in Allah's. No leaf falls without His permission.

To all, Muslims and non-Muslims, this world is full of mystery, uncertainty and occasional fright. Whereas Muslims take solace in Allah to counter this, others attempt to empower themselves with a false sense of control – a rabbit's foot instead of a prayer.

Superstitions show the shallowness of belief in the 21st century. People do not believe in God because it is unscientific, unproven, irrational and so unlike the 21st century. But then they'll read their horoscopes every morning and believe them. It seems that people in the west are experiencing religious feelings which are unenlightened or misdirected, and this results in superstitions. When people stop believing in God, they start believing in anything.

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