

النَّفَاثَاتُ فِي الْعُقَدِ
فِي السِّحْرِ وَالْعَيْنِ وَالرَّقِيَّةِ الشَّرْعِيَّةِ

BLOWING ON KNOTS

Sihr, the Evil Eye, and the Prophetic Cure

Anwar al-Ahwāzī

Contents

Author's Preface

All praise belongs to Allah, and may His peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muḥammad, upon his family and his Companions.

This book is the written form of a course I taught at the Ahwazi Youth and Community Centre in Melbourne in 2023, under the title Exploring Black Magic, the Evil Eye and Ruqya. It ran across nine sessions: an introduction to sihr, the types of sihr, the evocation of the jinn, the juristic rulings, sihr and psychology, protection, treatment and eradication with a ruqya workshop, the evil eye, and a closing workshop.

The subject attracts two opposite errors, and the course was built to steer between them. On one side stands the man who denies the whole matter — who reads the verses about blowing on knots and the reports about the Prophet ﷺ being affected, and explains them away as metaphor or superstition. On the other stands the man who sees sihr behind every headache, every argument with his wife, every failure at work, and who ends up in the house of a charlatan paying for a talisman that will cost him his religion.

The first man denies what Allah affirmed. The second denies what Allah has given him — medicine, patience, prayer, and the ordinary means He placed in the world. Both are ruled by the same failure: they will not let the revelation set the size of the problem.

So the aim here is not to frighten anyone. It is to establish what the Qur'ān and the Sunnah actually affirm, to name what the magicians actually do so that a Muslim can recognise it and walk away, and then to spend the greater part of the book where the Sharī'ah spends it: on protection and on the legislated cure.

A word on what this book does not do. It does not teach anyone how to perform sihr, and where the practices of the magicians are named, they are named so that they may be recognised and refused, not followed. Everything in the chapter on evocation is set down as a warning.

I ask Allah to protect the readers of this book and their families, to cure those among them who are afflicted, and to make this work sincere for His face alone. Whatever is correct in it is from Allah; whatever is mistaken is from me.

Keep me, my parents and my family in your du‘ā’.

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About the Author

Anwar al-Ahwāzī is a teacher of ḥadīth terminology and creed based in Melbourne, Australia. He teaches on an ijāzah basis, transmitting the texts he has been authorised in through connected chains back to their authors, and holds weekly and monthly teaching circles alongside a regular programme of lectures and khuṭbahs across Melbourne.

His teaching concentrates on the foundational texts of ‘aqīdah and muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth, taught in English with the Arabic sources read in full. Alongside this course he has taught and written on the Ḥā’iyyah of Ibn Abī Dāwūd, the Forty of al-Bukhārī, and the Shamā’il of al-Tirmidhī.

[Expand or correct this page as you wish — add your teachers, your ijāzāt and your published works.]

Part One: Sihr

1. What Sihr Is

Linguistically

The Arabic root of sihr carries a family of meanings: bewitchment, luring, temptation, deception — and, running underneath all of them, anything delicate and concealed.

That last sense is the key to the word. It is the same root that gives saḥar, the end of the night, and suḥūr, the meal eaten before dawn. What these share is not magic but concealment: the hour when the light is too fine to see by, the meal taken while the world is still dark. Sihr is named for what it hides, not for what it does.

Technically

In the technical usage of the scholars, sihr is an agreement, a recitation, or certain actions performed by a magician which affect the body and/or the mind of the bewitched person without direct physical contact.

Three elements in that definition are worth marking, because the whole subject turns on them. There is an agreement — which is to say a transaction, and we shall see with whom. There is a recitation or an action — a means. And there is an effect on body or mind reached without physical contact, which is what removes the matter from ordinary causation and places it in the unseen.

2. The Jinn

Sihr cannot be understood without the jinn, because in the great majority of its forms they are the instrument through which it works. Seven points establish what a Muslim must hold about them.

First, they were created from a flame of fire, as the Qur'ān states plainly.

Second, the majority position among the scholars is that the jinn are the descendants of Iblīs.

Third, they interact with da'wah and with the Qur'ān. They listened, they were affected, and a group of them believed — which establishes that they are morally accountable creatures and not forces of nature.

Fourth, and following from that, jinn may be good or evil, believers or disbelievers. This single point disposes of a great deal of confusion. There is no such thing as “the jinn” as a uniformly hostile category.

Fifth, they eat and drink.

Sixth, Shayṭān's aim among human beings is to cause enmity and hatred between them. This is stated as his objective in the Qur'ān, and it is the reason that separation magic is the commonest form of sihr: the magician and the devil want the same thing.

Seventh, the rebellious and disbelieving among both jinn and humans are called shayāṭīn. The word is a description of conduct, not the name of a separate species — which is why the Qur'ān speaks of the devils of mankind alongside the devils of the jinn.

3. The Reality of Sihr

That sihr is real — that it has an existence and an effect, and is not merely trickery or the suggestion of a frightened mind — is established by a series of evidences from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. They are set out here in the order they were taught, because each adds something the previous one does not.

Sulaymān and the teaching of magic

{And they followed what the devils recited during the reign of Sulaymān. And Sulaymān did not disbelieve, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic...} [al-Baqarah 2:102].

Two things follow. Sihr is a body of knowledge — something that can be taught and learned, not a mood or an accident. And its origin is not human: it was taught by the devils to men.

The refuge sought in Sūrat al-Falaq

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ

{And from the evil of those who blow on knots} [al-Falaq 113:4].

Four points come out of this verse. One method of performing sihr involves blowing upon knots. Those who do so possess evil — the verse names their harm directly. A believer is commanded to seek refuge from such forces. And the harm in question is metaphysical: it is placed in a sūrah of seeking refuge alongside the darkness of night and the envier, not among the ordinary dangers of the world.

A thing one is commanded to seek refuge from is a thing that exists.

The magic performed before Mūsā

{He said, “Rather, you throw.” And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him, from their magic, that they were moving} [Tā Hā 20:66].

The wording is precise and it matters: it seemed to him. Mūsā, a Messenger of Allah, was affected in his perception — and with him

thousands of Egyptians. If a prophet's eyes could be reached, no one should imagine himself beyond it.

The magic performed on the Prophet ﷺ

That sihr was worked upon the Prophet ﷺ by Jewish sorcerers is agreed upon between al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Three conclusions were drawn in the course.

The Prophet ﷺ, like Mūsā before him, was subjected to various forms of harm, and sihr was among them. He was protected in his mind and his heart from its impact, and the effects upon him were limited — he was not made to say or believe anything false, which is the protection the message itself required. And he ﷺ said that Allah had cured him, which is a clear indication that there was something real to be cured of.

The majority hold that Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās were revealed in connection with this incident.

Two ḥadīths

There is the ḥadīth mentioning the protective effect of eating seven ‘ajwah dates in the morning — and note that it distinguishes between sihr and poison, treating them as two separate harms rather than one.

And there is the ḥadīth prohibiting sorcery and listing it among the major destructive sins. A thing that does not exist is not made a major sin.

Possession by the jinn

{Those who consume interest cannot stand except as one stands who is being beaten by Satan into insanity} [al-Baqarah 2:275].

Imām al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) said in his Tafsīr that the meaning is that they will be struck and overwhelmed by a madness caused by Satan — meaning by possession by the jinn. He then adds the formula he uses for a settled interpretation:

وَمِثْلُ مَا قُلْنَا فِي ذَلِكَ قَالَ أَهْلُ التَّأْوِيلِ

— and in the like of what we have said concerning this, the people of interpretation have spoken.

Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) said that in this verse there is evidence of the corruption of the position of those who deny possession by the jinn, claiming that it is merely a natural occurrence and that Satan does not enter human beings nor possess them.

The argument being made by both is not that the verse is about possession. It is that the verse uses possession as a comparison — and a comparison only works if the thing compared to is real and known to the audience.

[The deck cited this verse as al-Baqarah 274; it is 275. Corrected here.]

4. The Kinds of Sihr

The classical scholars divided sihr into five kinds. What follows is that division, with the course's assessment of how far each involves the devils.

One: sleight of hand and visual deception

This may involve the shayāṭīn, and often does not. It is worth beginning here, because it establishes how easily human perception is manipulated without anything supernatural occurring at all.

Consider the Müller-Lyer illusion, in which two lines of identical length appear unequal because of the shapes placed at their ends. Nothing is happening but geometry, and the eye still reports something false. A person who cannot be fooled by a line drawn on paper does not exist.

Two: the magic of illusionists

This too may involve the devils. Here the manipulation works on the state of the observer rather than on the object.

The example given in the course was walking along a log. Laid on the ground, anyone can cross it. Laid across a river, the same log with the same width becomes almost impassable for most people. The log has not changed; the mind has. A great deal of what passes for supernatural display works on exactly this principle.

Three: contracts, incantations, readings and spells

This is the central category, and the one the Sharī'ah is most concerned with. It consists of contracts, incantations, readings, spells and blowing on knots, used by magicians to harm or to benefit through communication with the devils.

Its structure is always the same. There is an agreement between the magician and the shayṭān for specific services. The magician seeks assistance and refuge with the shayṭān. And the price is the commission of major sins and acts of disbelief in order to please him.

That last element is what makes this category a matter of creed rather than merely of harm. The devil does not serve for nothing. What he takes in payment is the man's religion.

Four: invoking the powers of the stars

Magic performed by invoking the powers of the stars and the celestial bodies. The Chaldeans are the standing example: they worshipped the seven wandering planets, believing that these governed the world and brought both good and evil.

The course judged this most likely a branch of the third category rather than a separate thing. The reasoning is straightforward. There is no evidence that planets or stars possess spirituality or power of their own. So when a practitioner of this art produces a genuine effect, the effect is coming from somewhere — and the likeliest explanation is that the *shayāṭīn* are supplying it while allowing him to believe it flows from the spirituality of the planets. The deception runs in two directions at once: the magician deceives his client, and the devil deceives the magician.

Five: medicines, herbs and potions

Substances administered to affect the body and the mind of the bewitched person. This is likely to involve the devils as well, and it is the category that most easily disguises itself as medicine.

5. Sihr by Its Effect

The kinds above classify sihr by how it is performed. It is also classified by what it does, and these are the names a student will meet in the books and in the field:

Separation magic

سِحْرُ التَّفْرِيقِ

Madness magic

سِحْرُ الْجُنُونِ

Disease magic

سِحْرُ الْمَرَضِ

Love magic

سِحْرُ الْمَحَبَّةِ

Laziness magic

سِحْرُ الْخَمُولِ

Magic of voices (hawātif)

سِحْرُ الْهَوَاتِفِ

Magic of false vision (takhyīl)

سِحْرُ التَّخْيِيلِ

Bleeding magic

سِحْرُ النَّزْفِ

Magic obstructing marriage

سِحْرُ تَعْطِيلِ الزَّوْاجِ

The list is worth reading slowly, because its shape is informative. Separation, madness, disease, love, laziness, voices, false vision, bleeding, obstruction of marriage — every one of these attacks either a person's mind, his body, or his bonds with the people closest to him. That is the whole of what the shayṭān wants, and the categories of sihr are simply the routes to it.

6. The Evocation of the Jinn

The magician does not act alone, and the means by which he summons and binds his servant among the jinn are known and documented. They are named here — and only named — so that a Muslim who encounters them can recognise what he is looking at.

The methods include al-iqsām, the oath sworn by names the magician invokes; slaughtering, in which an animal is killed for other than Allah; the sufli method; deliberate impurity; tankīs; tanjīm, sometimes called raṣad; the palm method; and others besides.

The important observation is not the variety but what runs through every one of them. Each requires the magician to commit an act that is shirk or grave disobedience — an oath by other than Allah, a sacrifice to other than Allah, a deliberate defilement of what Allah has honoured, an inversion of what the Sharī‘ah has established. There is no clean method. There cannot be, because the transaction is precisely that the devil is paid in disobedience.

This is why the scholars treat learning and practising this art as a matter of creed and not merely a prohibited profession. A person cannot practise it and remain where he was.

7. Fortune-telling and Horoscopes

‘Irāfah and kahānah

Fortune-telling covers claims to knowledge of the hidden and the future: palm reading, reading coffee grounds, and the rest of the family.

The Shari‘ah’s treatment of it is severe, and the severity is not about the accuracy of the prediction. It is about the claim. Knowledge of the unseen belongs to Allah, and to seek it elsewhere is to seek from a creature what only the Creator has.

Reading horoscopes

Here the ruling divides according to belief.

If a person believes that the stars, the celestial bodies and the planets influence people and their actions, he has committed an act of shirk. He has assigned to created bodies a governance over events that belongs to Allah alone.

If he reads and consults them for entertainment, without that belief, he has committed a sinful and disobedient act — and it is reported that his prayers for forty days will not be accepted.

The second ruling is the one people find surprising, and it deserves a moment. Forty days of prayer, for something done “just for fun”. The reason is that the act itself carries a meaning regardless of the actor’s private intention: to consult a source of hidden knowledge is to treat it as one, whatever one tells oneself afterwards.

8. Modern-Day Matters

Much of what was once called magic now arrives in other clothing — academic, therapeutic, or simply fashionable. Three areas were examined in the course.

Parapsychology

Parapsychology is a field of study that explores paranormal phenomena beyond traditional scientific understanding. The term was coined by Max Dessoir in the early twentieth century. Early researchers such as Frederic W. H. Myers, William James and Edmund Gurney laid the foundations for its study, and Joseph Banks Rhine conducted the experiments at Duke University in the 1930s that gave the field its public profile.

What is useful for the Muslim student here is the recognition, from within the secular academy itself, that there are phenomena which do not reduce to ordinary physical explanation. The Muslim is not obliged to accept parapsychology's framework; he simply notes that the denial of the unseen is not as settled a scientific position as it is often presented to be.

Mediumship and channelling

Mediumship is defined in the Cambridge dictionary as the practice or state of being a medium — a person who says that they can receive messages from the dead. Channelling is described in its own literature as the process of revealing information and energy not limited by our conventional notions of space and time; more plainly, the practice of receiving information from an external source through an individual acting as a channel.

Read those definitions beside the definition of *sihr* given at the outset of this book, and the resemblance is not subtle. An external unseen source, an agreement, a human intermediary, information obtained without ordinary means. The vocabulary is modern and the structure is old.

Yoga, mindfulness and the Asian traditions

These practices arrive presented as exercise and as mental health technique, and this is where care is required — care in both directions, since a Muslim should neither adopt an act of another religion unknowingly nor declare unlawful a stretch or a breathing pattern that carries no such meaning.

The word yoga itself means union — with a god or a spirit. That is its own account of what it is for.

Some of its forms carry that meaning openly. Sūrya Namaskār is the Sun Salutation, and the sun is the god of energy and light in Hinduism. Kundalini yoga is a spiritual practice aiming to awaken a dormant energy within the body; its Mūl Mantra, drawn from Sikhism, states that the creator is truth in the beginning, through all ages until the present, and that Nānak will remain true. Whoever performs these is performing a devotional act of another religion, whether or not he knows it.

The chakra system belongs to Hinduism. Mindfulness meditation was founded by Gautama Buddha.

The question to put to any such practice is therefore not “does it work?” but “what is it?” A movement is a movement; a salutation is worship. The name and the intent of the form decide it.

9. Recognising a Magician

A great deal of harm reaches Muslims not from magicians but from the men they go to for a cure. What follows are the signs by which a so-called healer is in fact a practitioner of sihr. They are set down so that a person can leave the room.

One: he asks for the patient's name and his mother's name.

Two: he requests personal items belonging to the patient — a comb, a garment, hair.

Three: he creates talismans bearing shapes, symbols, disjointed letters, numbers, constellations and the names of astrological bodies.

Four: he recites Qur'ānic verses aloud, then follows them with whispering and mumbling of incomprehensible words and polytheistic invocations which the patient cannot hear. The audible Qur'ān is the cover; the inaudible invocation is the transaction.

Five: he hangs a polytheistic talisman — often called a ḥijāb — around the patient's neck, containing squares of letters, numbers and invocations along with incomprehensible words, and stresses that its seal must not be broken. The insistence on not opening it tells you everything about what is inside.

Six: he instructs the patient to isolate himself in a dark room without sunlight, known as the ḥajbah, for a set period.

Seven: he requests a specific animal with particular characteristics to be slaughtered while a name other than Allah's is pronounced over it, with the blood then applied to the patient or disposed of in a designated place.

Eight: he advises the patient not to touch water for around forty days, or to wear a cross around his neck — indicating a jinn associated with Christianity — or an inverted or broken cross where the jinn or the magician is hostile to it.

Nine: he gives the patient items to bury in the ground.

Ten: he gives the patient papers to burn and inhale the smoke of.

Eleven: he informs the patient of his own name, the name of his country, and describes parts of his body. This is the display that convinces most people, and it is the clearest sign of all: the information is being supplied by something that was watching.

Twelve: he writes disjointed letters on paper or on a ceramic plate and instructs the patient to dissolve it in water and drink it.

Thirteen: he sometimes addresses unseen individuals present in the gathering, seeking their permission and consent to assist, and stressing that the patient has come solely for their sake, while displaying unwavering confidence in their abilities.

A believer who sees any of these has been given his answer, and no benefit that follows can justify remaining. A cure obtained at the price of *tawḥīd* is not a cure.

10. Sihr and Psychological Impairment

The difficulty at the heart of this chapter is easily stated. In both sihr and psychological illness, the causes and symptoms are usually intangible and non-physical. There is no swelling to point to, no fracture on a scan. Two very different afflictions present through the same door.

The course gave two means of differentiating: the indicators, the qarā'in — the surrounding circumstances of the case; and the symptoms and reactions, particularly the person's reaction to ruqya.

Both must be used together, and neither is decisive alone. A person may react to ruqya out of fear, or exhaustion, or because he has been told he will react. And a person may have a genuine psychological illness and be affected by sihr at the same time; the two are not alternatives.

This is the point at which the greatest damage is done in our communities, and it is worth being direct about it. Where there is a medical or psychiatric cause, it is treated medically — that is the ordinary means Allah has placed in the world, and using it is not a deficiency in tawakkul but a part of it. Ruqya is not a substitute for treatment, and no one should be counselled to abandon medication or a doctor's care on the strength of a diagnosis of sihr. The Prophet ﷺ sought treatment and commanded his Companions to seek treatment. A ruqya performed alongside proper medical care contradicts nothing.

[This last paragraph is mine, not from the deck — keep it, cut it, or rewrite it as you prefer.]

11. Waswasah

Not everything that troubles a person's mind is sihr, and not every intrusive thought is from Shayṭān. The chapter on whispers exists to sort this out.

What waswasah is

Waswasah is a hidden suggestion within the self, either by way of an inaudible voice heard only by the one it is directed at, or with no voice at all, as Satan whispers to the servant.

Ibn al-Qayyim, commenting on the closing verse of Sūrat al-Nās — {from among the jinn and mankind} — said that whispering is therefore of two types, human and jinn: the hidden whispering is from the jinn, while human whispering reaches its target through the ear.

From the self or from Shayṭān?

A practical rule was given for telling them apart, and it is more useful than it first appears.

If the soul desires something for itself, it is from one's own self, and one should forbid it. If the soul dislikes something for itself — if the thought is repellent to the person who is having it — it is from Satan, and one should seek refuge in Allah from it.

The reasoning behind the rule is this. The self whispers about the desires people ordinarily have, urging its owner toward a particular sin that it wants. Satan is not necessarily invested in any particular sin; his concern is simply that the Muslim disobey his Lord. That is why his whispers so often take the form of thoughts the person finds horrifying — blasphemous thoughts during prayer, doubts about matters long settled. The horror is the point. He is not trying to persuade; he is trying to distress.

A person tormented by thoughts he hates should take that hatred as evidence of his faith rather than evidence against it.

Treatment

Du‘ā’, and returning to Allah — while being pleased with Him, content, and assuming the best of Him.

Reciting Sūrat al-Nās, repeatedly.

Remembrance of Allah, and sending ṣalāh upon the Prophet ﷺ.

Occupying the time: volunteering, sport, exercise, work. An empty hour is where the whispering lives.

Part Two: The Evil Eye

12. The Evil Eye in the Qur'an and Sunnah

The evil eye is affirmed in the revelation, and three passages establish it.

{And he said, "O my sons, do not enter from one gate, but enter from different gates"} [Yūsuf 12:67]. Ya'qūb, a prophet, took a practical precaution for his sons against the eyes of people — a striking thing to find in the Qur'ān, and the classical commentators take it as guarding against the eye.

{And indeed, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes when they hear the message, and they say, "Indeed, he is mad"} [al-Qalam 68:51]. The verb is precise: they would almost make you slip — with their eyes.

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

{And from the evil of an envier when he envies} [al-Falaq 113:5]. The final refuge sought in the sūrah is from the envier — and note that the harm is tied to the moment of envying, not to any action taken.

From the Sunnah, it is reported on the authority of Jābir that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that the effect of the evil eye may cause the death of a person or the slaughter of a camel — narrated by Abū Nu'aym and Ibn 'Adiyy.

13. Ḥasad and ‘Ayn

Two words are used for what English collapses into “the evil eye”, and distinguishing them clarifies both the diagnosis and the cure.

Ḥasad

Ibn Ḥajar described it as a look tainted with malicious envy from a wicked soul, which may result in harm.

Its cause is hatred and animosity. What it wants is the removal of a blessing from the one who has it — not the acquisition of the same blessing for oneself, but its destruction where it stands. Coveting is bound up with it.

Ibn al-Qayyim explained the mechanism: the envious person with a wicked soul affects the one he looks at by imparting his own malicious and harmful nature. He compared it to a snake that carries venom within itself, which is released when it encounters an enemy. The venom is not manufactured for the occasion. It is already there, and the encounter merely opens the way.

‘Ayn

‘Ayn is a sight that carries a spark of envy, similar to ḥasad but without intentional harm — it may affect someone the person did not mean to harm at all.

Its causes are admiration, astonishment, or amusement. This is the crucial difference, and it is what makes ‘ayn so much more common than ḥasad. It requires no malice. It requires only a soul struck by something and failing to return it to Allah.

Two consequences follow. A person may give ‘ayn to himself, or to his own family — a man may harm his own child by looking at him with amazement. And some scholars held that ‘ayn nonetheless contains certain roots of ḥasad within it, so the distinction is one of degree and intention rather than of kind.

Practically: ḥasad comes from someone who wishes you ill, and ‘ayn may come from someone who loves you.

14. The Cure for the Eye

Two remedies were given.

The first is from the ḥadīth in which the Prophet ﷺ rebuked the one who had struck another with his eye: “Why does one of you kill his brother? Why did you not say, may Allah bless you? Perform ghusl for it.” The one who gave the eye is instructed to wash, and that water is then used for the one who was struck.

Note what the rebuke turns on. The remedy for the harm was available before the harm occurred, and it was a sentence: *bārak Allāhu fīk*. Whoever sees something that pleases him and asks Allah to bless it has already closed the door.

The second is *ruqya*, which is treated in full in Part Three.

A question for discussion

The course put a question to the room, and it is worth putting to the reader: is it good to tell people about our personal achievements — our blessings, our income, and the rest?

The material for an answer has already been laid out. ‘Ayn requires no malice, only admiration. Ḥasad requires a wicked soul, and one cannot know who is listening. Against that stands the command to speak of Allah’s favour upon oneself, and the fact that gratitude expressed openly is itself worship. The judgement lies in the audience, the manner, and the intention behind the telling — which is precisely why it was left as a discussion and not resolved with a rule.

Part Three: Protection and Ruqya

15. Protection

Protection is the greater part of this subject, and it comes before cure in every sense. It divides into the actions of the heart and the actions of the limbs.

Actions of the heart

Correcting the belief system — *tawḥīd*. This is first because it is the foundation of everything after it. A person whose creed is sound has already removed the openings through which most of this harm enters, since almost every one of them requires him to seek from other than Allah.

Depending upon Allah — *tawakkul*, real reliance and not merely the phrase.

Renewing *īmān*, since faith wears thin with neglect and is restored by attention.

Obligations

The five daily prayers.

Abstaining from the major sins, and from what leads to them.

Birr al-wālidayn — dutifulness to parents.

And the rest of what Allah has made obligatory. It is worth pausing on the fact that the first line of protection prescribed here is not an amulet or a formula but the obligations every Muslim already knows. The person looking for a shield he does not yet possess has usually not picked up the one he was given.

Sunan

The *adhkār* of morning and afternoon — performed with attention, which is the condition that carries the benefit.

Sūrat al-Nās, al-Falaq, al-Ikhlāṣ and al-Kāfirūn.

One hundred times: *lā ilāha illā Allāh waḥdahu lā sharīka lah*, and the remainder of the wording.

Remaining in a state of *wuḍūʿ*.

Āyat al-Kursī — before sleep, after the five daily prayers, and in the morning and afternoon.

Qiyām al-layl and witr.

The dhikr for entering and leaving the toilet, before intimacy, and before leaving the house.

That last group deserves a note. These are the moments at which a person is uncovered, distracted, or crossing a threshold — and they are precisely the moments the Sunnah supplies with words. The pattern is not accidental.

16. Self-Ruqya

A method, in order:

Be in a state of wuḍū'.

Place your right hand on your body — on the head or the chest.

Recite. From the Qur'ān: al-Fātiḥah; al-Nās, al-Falaq, al-Ikhlāṣ and al-Kāfirūn; the last two verses of al-Baqarah; al-Baqarah verses 102 and 163; al-A'rāf 117 to 120; and Yūnus 80 to 82, among others.

And from the supplications:

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّاتِ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from the evil of what He has created.

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ وَهَامَّةٍ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ عَيْنٍ لَآمَةٍ

I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allah from every devil and every venomous creature, and from every harmful eye.

Then recite upon water — with oil, optionally — and drink it, and perform ghusl with it.

The Qur'ānic passages chosen are not arbitrary. Al-Baqarah 102 is the verse of Sulaymān and the teaching of magic; al-A'rāf 117–120 and Yūnus 80–82 are the passages in which the sihr of Pharaoh's magicians is swallowed and destroyed. The recitation is putting the case of the magicians and its outcome before the affliction.

17. Treatment and Eradication

Possible signs of sihr

These are indicators, not proofs, and they are to be weighed together with everything in the chapter on psychological impairment above.

Withholding from the spouse. Intensive false memory. A significant reaction to ruqya. Trouble breathing or shortness of breath. Frightening visions and nightmares. And others besides.

No single item on that list means anything on its own. Every one of them has ordinary explanations that are far more common than sihr, and a person who reasons backwards from one symptom to a diagnosis will be wrong most of the time.

One: extraction

Locating the material of the sihr, then destroying it — burning it, and cleaning away the impurities associated with it.

Two: ḥijāmah

Drawing out the sihr by applying cupping to the affected part of the body.

Three: ruqya

Ruqya is specific words recited to cure a person by Allah's permission. It has three conditions, and all three must hold.

It must be free of shirk and of anything unlawful.

It must be in Arabic, or in words whose meaning is understood. Nothing incomprehensible — which is the exact line that separates ruqya from the mumbling of the magician described earlier.

And the one performing it must believe that it is only a means, and that the cure is from Allah alone.

What satisfies these conditions is the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Nothing else is required, and nothing else is safe.

18. Performing Ruqya

Before

Clear the house or the room of unlawful objects — images of faces and the like.

Remove unlawful items from the afflicted person; a man wearing gold, for instance.

Dispose of any materials of sihr that have been found.

Ask the afflicted person about their symptoms — nightmares, animals chasing them in dreams, and so on.

Be in wuḍū', with adhkār and repentance.

Ask a woman to cover properly and to be accompanied by a maḥram; and do not touch a non-maḥram woman.

During

Place your hand on the afflicted person's head — except in the case of a non-maḥram woman — and recite the verses and supplications with tartīl.

Follow the correct procedure if a jinn appears and speaks.

Repeat the ruqya three times where needed.

After

Remind the person to fear Allah and to repent.

Perform the five daily prayers in congregation.

Wuḍū' and adhkār before sleeping.

Maintain a connection with the Qur'ān.

Keep good company and a good environment.

For women, maintain proper ḥijāb and modesty.

And follow up with further ruqyas.

The shape of the post-ruqya list is the lesson of the whole book in miniature. Every item on it is something the person should have been doing anyway. The cure ends where the protection begins, and a person returned to health and then returned to neglect has simply been sent back to the place he was found.

19. Why a Supplication Is Not Answered

The course closed on an image, and it answers the question every afflicted person eventually asks: I have made du‘ā’, so why has nothing changed?

Think of an arrow fired at a target. Three things must hold for it to strike.

The arrow itself must be sound and sharp — this is the supplication: whether it is made with presence of heart, in words that are legislated, seeking what may rightly be sought.

The arm drawing the bow must be strong — this is the suppliant: his food and earnings, his sincerity, the state of his heart, whether he calls in ease as well as in hardship.

And the path must be clear of obstacles — the wall standing between the archer and the target: sins persisted in, wealth from unlawful sources, wrongs done to others and not made right, haste in expecting the answer.

A person whose du‘ā’ appears unanswered should examine all three before concluding anything, and should know that the answer may already have been given in a form he did not ask for.

Appendix: The Recitations

Collected here for use, as they appear in Chapter 16.

From the Qur'an

Sūrat al-Fātiḥah.

Sūrat al-Nās, Sūrat al-Falaq, Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ, Sūrat al-Kāfirūn.

The last two verses of Sūrat al-Baqarah.

Al-Baqarah 102 and 163.

Al-A'raf 117–120.

Yūnus 80–82.

From the supplications

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّاتِ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ
أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ وَهَامَّةٍ، وَمِنْ كُلِّ عَيْنٍ لَامَّةٍ

[The course map lists a session on the juristic rulings — the ruling on the magician, and on learning and practising the art. The summary deck carries no slides for it, so no chapter has been written. Send me those slides or your notes and I will add it.]