

Surah 4. An-Nisaa

Asad: and shall lead them astray, and fill them with vain desires; and I shall command them - and they will cut off the ears of cattle [in idolatrous sacrifice]; and I shall command them - and they will corrupt God's creation!"¹⁴¹ But all who take Satan rather than God for their master do indeed, most clearly, lose all:

Malik: I will create in them false desires and order them to slit the ears of cattle. I will order them to tamper with Allah's creation." Therefore, whoever takes Shaitan as a guardian instead of Allah, has indeed become a clear-cut loser.

Pickthall: And surely I will lead them astray, and surely I will arouse desires in them, and surely I will command them and they will cut the cattle's ears, and surely I will command them and they will change Allah's creation. Whoso chooseth Satan for a patron instead of Allah is verily a loser and his loss is manifest.

Yusuf Ali: "I will mislead them and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of cattle and to deface the (fair) nature created by Allah." Whoever forsaking Allah takes Satan for a friend hath of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest. **629 630 631**

Transliteration: Walaodillannahum walaomanniyannahum walaamurannahum falayubattikunna athana alanAAami walaamurannahum falayughayyirunna khalqa Allahi waman yattakhithi alshshaytana waliyyan min dooni Allahi faqad khasira khusranan mubeenan

Khatab:

I will certainly mislead them and delude them with empty hopes. Also, I will order them and they will slit the ears of cattle¹ and alter Allah's creation." And whoever takes Satan as a guardian instead of Allah has certainly suffered a tremendous loss.

Author Comments

141 - Cf. {7:16-17}. The pre-Islamic Arabs used to dedicate certain of their cattle to one or another of their idols by cutting off or slitting the ears of the animal, which was thereupon considered sacred (Tabari). In the above context, this reference is used metonymically to describe idolatrous practices, or inclinations, in general. The allusion to Satan's inducing man to "corrupt [lit., "change"] God's creation" has a meaning to which sufficient attention is but seldom paid: Since this creation, and the manner in which it manifests itself, is an expression of God's planning will, any attempt at changing its intrinsic nature amounts to corruption. - For the wider meaning of the term shaytan ("Satan" or "satanic force"), see first half of note [16] on [15:17](#).

Slitting the ears of cattle dedicated to idols was a superstitious practice before Islam.

629 - Satan's deceptions are with false desires, false superstitions, and false fears.

630 - Slitting the ears of cattle is just one instance of the superstitions to which men become slaves when they run after false gods. Astrology, magic, and vain beliefs in things that do not exist lead men away from Allah, the one true God.

631 - To deface the (fair) nature created by Allah; there is both a physical and a spiritual meaning. We see many kinds of defacements practised on men and animals, against their true nature as created by Allah, partly on account of superstition, partly on account of selfishness. Spiritually the case is even worse. How many natures are dwarfed or starved and turned from their original instincts by cruel superstitions or customs? Allah created man pure: Satan defaces the image.

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