

KITAB E TAWASIN

Mansur Hallaj (d. 922)

Summary prepared by Muhammad Sabieh Anwar

“Tawasin” is the plural of “Tasin” which are the first two letters (“Twa” and “Sin”)

طَسَّ تِلْكَ عَايَةُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابِ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾

opening Surah *Naml* (27, The Ants). These letters are called the *muqattaat* (abbreviated letters) and no one can be certain of their meaning. Although no surety can ever be claimed in spelling out this hypothesis, yet some commentators hint that the letter “Twa” is connected to creation (23:12):

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

The book comprises seven chapters, each is called a “Tasin”. An English translation by Aisha Abd-ar-Rahman At-Turjamana is available on the web: <http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/Sufism/tawasin.html>.

A sober translation and commentary of the Tawasin is the *Sharh* by Ruzbihan Baqli. Baqli, a contemporary of Rumi, defends the traditional view of Iblis.

Details can be found in:

“Satan’s Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology”, Peter J. Awn, Foreword: A. Schimmel, E. J. Brill Publishers, Lieden, Netherlands, 1983.

Below is a summary of the main points that interested me in each chapter.

Tasin of the Prophetic Lamp

- The Prophet (pbuh) was a light originating from the Light of God – outshining all other luminosities.
- He was close to God and in turn brought people close to Him.
- His name existed before the Pen, he is the Master of all Creation.
- He is the idol-breaker.
- There is no one before “before” and after “after” who is more knowledgeable, wiser, nobler, kinder, aspired, brighter than him.
- All knowledge is only a drop of his ocean; all wisdom is just a handful from his stream and all time is a just a passing hour of his chronology.

Tasin of Understanding

- It is not possible to fully appreciate the reality of Reality and God is even beyond Reality.
- The moth and the candle – the moth finally disappears in the candle. (This seems to be the first example of the usage of this fable, which later on finds overwhelming usage in Indo-Persian literature.)
- “I am His, but I am not He.”
- Reference to the Prophet’s (pbuh) Ascension. Only the Prophet (pbuh) saw the knowledge of Reality but he declared that only God can praise himself in a manner that is worthy of Him.

Tasin of Purity

- Hallaj mentions 40 stations a person has to pass through in his spiritual journey in the quest of an appreciation of the knowledge of Reality. The last station in this trajectory is called the Beginning (*bidayah*).
- I am the bush through which God spoke to Moses (AS). I am near and dear to God.

Tasin of the Circle

- The poet uses a diagram to explain the truth, bewilderment and whatever is forbidden.
- Only the Prophet (pbuh) could truly escape from the forbidden circle and safeguard from the mean reality of the creation, in relation to the Truth.

Tasin of the Point

- People have charged Hallaj with heresy, they are unawares of his spiritual position; they haven’t understood him properly.
- New ‘flyers’ in the air of understanding must cut their wings with the blades of annihilation, so that they drown into the ocean of understanding.
- The poet saw God with the eye of his heart. He asked God who He was and He replied that He was the seer himself.
- God is unconnected with the notion of “whereness”.

Tasin of Before Endless Time and Equivocation

- There are only two missions in the world: one is the mission of Iblis and the other is that of Muhammad (pbuh). After their fall from heaven, Iblis lost his glory and power, while Muhammad (pbuh) was restored to his supremacy.
- There was no worshipper or monotheist in Heavens like Iblis. He didn’t consider Adam or Man worthy of prostration, as God alone commanded the right to worship. His staunch belief in God’s majesty, pure and exclusive, stopped him from obeying God’s command to bow before Adam.
- Iblis considered both God and himself to predate the creation of Man, and the progenitor cannot worship the successor.
- Iblis preferred being distanced from God and dethroned from his supreme spiritual ranks than to worship anyone else than God. For him, desertion from

God meant His companionship, a distance that brings him nearer to appreciating God's uniqueness: "there is no one capable of being worshipped other than God."

- Dialogue between Moses (AS) and Iblis Iblis met Moses (AS) on Mount Sinai and what ensued was an interchange of questions and rejoinders. Moses claims that Iblis had sinned by refusing the Command of God. Iblis retorts that it wasn't a command, rather a test, which he failed well. Moses, on the other hand, as Iblis argues, was unsure and wavering in his faith when he asked for a manifest show of Divine effulgence before his eyes. The levels of trust of Iblis and Moses can now be very easily compared!
- Iblis claims that although he is a wretched, disfigured creature, yet his outward misery does not reflect his inner purity and firm belief in the Unique Unity of God.
- Iblis is still a firm believer in God and worships God as He Is.
- Iblis's refusal to find partners with god speaks of his pristine love for the Creator. He prefers burning in hellfire than making equals to Him.
- Azazyl is the name of Iblis before his downfall.
- Azazyl preached good deeds to the dwellers of Heaven and evil deeds to the dwellers on earth. He had to teach vice so that virtue could become recognizable.
- Dialogue between Iblis, Pharaoh and Hallaj Iblis was proud as he couldn't find anyone comparable with himself in piety and virtue. Pharaoh didn't believe in Moses (AS) and declared himself to be of the highest rank, because he assumed his people had lost the capacity to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Hallaj then goes on to claim that he is a sign (*tajalli*) of God's presence.
- Iblis, Pharaoh and Hallaj ultimately share similar destinies. Iblis was threatened of fire but he didn't take back his declaration and was subject to humiliation. Pharaoh continued his denial of Truth and was drowned to death. Hallaj will also be crucified, but he will not step down from his proclamation.
- Iblis is a martyr who became a means to God's writ being executed.
- Iblis's plight is confusing, because despite his unmatched Unitarianism, he fell victim to the evil of conceit: "I am made of fire and Adam is made only of clay".

Tasin of the Divine Will

- The volition of God is represented by four characters: His Decree and Choice (*masshiya*), His Wisdom (*hikma*), His Power (*quwwa*) and finally his Eternal Knowledge (*'Ilm*). After his knowledge, what exists is He himself.

Tasin of the Declaration of Unity

- All distance emanates from God.
- Tawhid is not an attribute of God, but an attribute of the creation who pronounce it. It connects the professor of Unity with the possessor of Unity.