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See also: BELIEVER(S); BOOK(S); COLORS; FOOD AND DRINK; GOLD AND SILVER; INTOXICANTS; PARADISE; SABA’; SULAYMĀN, UPON HIM PEACE; YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE.

HASAN SPIKER AND MUZAFFAR IQBAL

CURSE

LA‘NA

The entry comprises of the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. Cursed People; iii. Forms of Divine Curse; iv. Consequences of Divine Curse; v. Curses by Others; vi. Curse in Prophetic Traditions; vii. Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

“Curse” is used in this article for the Qur’ānic term *la‘na*, from the sound trilateral root *l-‘-n* / *la‘ana* - *yal‘anu* - *la‘nan*, which carries the meaning of *ib‘ād*—banishment, dismissal and sending away—and *itṛād*—casting out, expelling—as in the Divine casting out of Iblīs (*q.v.*), for this reason he is called *al-la‘īn* (the eternally cursed). Arabs use the expression *raju-lun lu‘natan* to denote a person who is cursed by other people (Ibn Fāris).

Lexicographers make distinction between a Divine curse and the curse of a human being. Abū-l-Ḥusayn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. ca.502/1108) says, “*al-la‘n* means *tarḍ wa-l-ib‘ād* (casting out, driving away, expulsion) because of the [inherent] anger and discontent (*‘alā sabīl al-sukhṭ*). A Divine curse is, thus, punishment in both the Hereafter and this world. It is the casting out

of someone from His Mercy and His succor; in case of a human [invocation of curse], it is a supplication against someone.”

The Andalusian Mālikī jurist and Hadith scholar Abū-l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Umar al-Anṣārī l-Qurṭubī (578-656/1182-1258) defines Divine curse as “casting out of someone from the Mercy of Allah Most High and His reward, leading to Hell-Fire and punishment” (Al-Mufhim, kitāb al-birr wa-l-ṣila, bāb 20, lā yanbaghī li-l-lmu‘min an yakūna la‘‘anan). Abū-l-Faḍl Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manẓūr (630-711/1233-ca.1312) explains that “*ib‘ād* and *ṭard*” are both used to refer to a curse originating from Allah Most High; when curse comes from a created being, it is [more generally called] *sabb* [*sabba*–*yasabbu*–*sabban*], “to vituperate, to insult”, it is a supplication against someone.

Six derivatives of the stem *l-‘-n* appear 41 times in the Qur’an:

- i. 23 times as Form I verb, *la‘ana*, *yal‘anu*, *nal‘anahum*, *la‘annā*, in most cases with attached pronominal suffixes;
- ii. the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) appears once in the accusative case “*la‘nan*” (Q 33:68);
- iii. the nomen unitatis *la‘natan* appears fourteen times (Q 2:89, 161; 3:61, 87; 7:44; 11:18, 60, 99; 13:25; 15:35; 24:7; 28:42; 38:78; 40:52);
- iv. the active participle is used once (Q 2:159) in the nominative plural form “*al-la‘īnūna*”;
- v. the passive participle is also used once (Q 33:61) in the indefinite oblique case “*mal‘ūnīna*”; and
- vi. the definite feminine passive participle is used once (Q 17:60) to denote the accursed tree (*wa-l-shajarata-l-mal‘ūnata*), a reference to Zaqqūm tree (*q.v.*) (‘Abd al-Bāqī, *sub l-‘-n*). Arabs call every kind of harmful and poisonous food *mal‘ūn* – *accursed* (Fayyūmī).

In addition, certain expressions and phrases can be considered as quasi-synonyms of curse:

- the past passive form of “*qutīla*” in the optative mood (“may he be killed” in Q 51:10; 74:19, 20; 80:17; 85:4) is glossed by a large majority of exegetes as “*lu‘īna* – be cursed” (Ṭabarī; Wāḥidī, *Wajīz*, *sub* Q 51:10), as in the verse *qutīla-l-insān mā akfarahu*, *perished be man; how disbelieving is he* (Q 80:17), where *qutīla* is exclusively explained as “*lu‘īna*—cursed be man”, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (3_{BH}-68/619-688) and al-Ḍaḥḥāk (Ṭabarī; Baghawī; Qurṭubī; Sam‘ānī; Ibn al-Jawzī; Ibn