

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

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Lord, I was born a gambling man

Lessons about gambling learned by a Submitter, still a “gambler”

Earlier this year, I was attending a business conference at one of the top hotels on the famous Las Vegas Strip. While Las Vegas offers great tourist and business opportunities, the one thing that it is commonly associated with worldwide is gambling.

Gambling has an mindboggling effect on people. Most people don't win at gambling but when they do, they invariably lose it by putting their winnings back to try and win more. The lure of feeling lucky and winning suddenly is so high that people are willing to give away years of hard earned money in a few moments.

All the grand hotels on the strip are designed to make you pass through their casinos going anywhere in and out of the hotel. Whenever I passed through my hotel casino, I tried to appreciate the blessing of not being like all the gamblers there, waiting anxiously for that magical moment to appear in their lives.

However, while I felt great about knowing that I was not like the gamblers, something inside me kept telling me that my thoughts were perhaps too negative about how I felt towards them. They were probably nice people otherwise, doing good works for

the world and may even be guided to become great submitters someday. Satan can make humans pick one negative action of a person and judge that person's entire personality by that one trait. Besides, who was I to feel any contempt or negativity towards any gambler in the casino when I was just like them in the years before God guided me away from the evil of gambling (4:94). Instead, I should have been more appreciative of God and prayed for their guidance if they deserved it. After all, we do want to forbid evil and have a world full of submitters, don't we?

This realization softened me in preparation for a big lesson God was about to teach me. I call this lesson my “lucky win,” in keeping with the subject of gambling, though we know that nothing happens by chance. Everything is in accordance with God's perfect plan for us.

The biggest “gambler”

During the sermon I was delivering to a dear sister in Submission who came specially to Las Vegas to help me do my Friday Congregational Prayer, it suddenly occurred to me that of all the gamblers in the casino that day, the biggest “gambler” of all was me. Yes, indeed, me and all of us around the

world are the biggest gamblers of all—and here's why! When we opted to witness a demonstration of Satan's claim that he could be a god besides God (33:72), we took on the biggest gamble of our lives. The gamble where the risk and stakes are incredibly high, and the outcome is gigantic and irreversible. This was truly a very important realization for me because our life on Earth is our last and final chance to redeem ourselves where we simply cannot afford the risk of losing. Fortunately, God also made me realize that while we have gambled with our souls, as submitters, our game and gamble is very different from the rest of the gamblers in the world. The table on the next page shows how (for the purpose of explanation, I'm using the term “Worldly Gamblers” for the gamblers in the casino and “Universal Gamblers” for all submitters).

Praise be to God that I learned these lessons in Las Vegas. They were a far greater win for me than my business conference because they reminded me to be more careful about my responsibility on Earth. I could now add these lessons to the lessons God taught me about twenty-five years ago why gambling is evil.

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Worldly Gamblers	Universal Gamblers
Play Currency: Cash. Temporary, depreciating value that doesn't buy peace and happiness.	Play Currency: Righteous works. Life-time, increasing value that buys peace and happiness, now and forever.
Venue: Hotel casino. Play here today or other casinos on few other days if you have the cash to play. Account settled in the casino itself.	Venue: Planet Earth. Play every day from anywhere until death. Needs no cash to play, only righteous thoughts and actions. Account finally settled in the Hereafter.
Prize: Limited by pool collection or capped by house rules. Often shared, while casino commissions or government taxes may apply. You can't ask to get back what you lost and you can't play again till you bring cash to the table. Credit to play more, if approved, must be settled soon or you're in legal trouble. Or dead.	Prize: Unlimited and never shared. No commissions or government taxes on winnings. God's tax (charity) is multiplied manifold and returned. Play for free with no limit on tries as long as your efforts are sincere. Some bad debts can be carried forward for a long time and can eventually be converted to fantastic credit.
Attitude: House is happy for you to lose and may be structured for that. Barring a few techniques, no one can make you win. Most of the time, others have to lose for you to win.	Attitude: "House" wants you to win and helps you win with: > A perfect manual (Quran) > 24x7 Always Online Teacher (God) > Bonuses (messengers, miracles) No one has to lose for you to win. Everyone can win without limits.
Outcome: The deals are random. Card/roulette dealer does not know the outcome. Wins are based on luck. Some technique is used but the outcome is unpredictable because everything depends on the deal.	Outcome: The deal is never random. Every deal is part of a specific process to help you win. Wins are based on efforts not luck. Just being allowed to play is already a phenomenal piece of luck. When you play by God's rules, 'lucky doors' open out of nowhere when you need them the most.
Result: Gambler may be guided to be a practicing Submitter someday. Or may even make it under 2:62, 46:15 in accordance with God's will and knowledge.	Result: "Gambler" is already a Submitter and will win if the game is played correctly. But if the gambler loses, the fall is likely harder because the rules and expectations of the game were already known. Never take God's mercy for granted.

Intoxicants and Gambling Prohibited

[5:90] O you who believe, intoxicants, and gambling, and the altars of idols, and the games of chance are abominations of the devil; you shall avoid them, that you may succeed. [5:91] The devil wants to provoke animosity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, and to distract you from remembering GOD, and from observing the Contact Prayers (Salat). Will you then refrain?

How gambling is an abomination of the devil.

There was a time when horse racing was a big part of my life. I was born into a racing family from both my parents' sides and we owned many successful race horses. While betting did not interest me much, I loved the whole concept of horse racing. The graceful animals thundering down the track, the unique racing colors of owners, the visits to the stables planning the race with the trainer and jockey for days before a race, all had me passionately engaged in that life.

Yet, all along, something instinctively made me feel that all this was not right. My "very religious Muslim family" justified racing as a business because they

believed they applied deep strategy to the sport, similar to how they made investments in other businesses.

I tried to apply this justification for myself, but it was only after I became a submitter that I began to really understand why the negatives of gambling far outweigh any benefit gambling provides. Finally, it took me two full seasons after becoming a submitter to become certain that the horse race track is not a venue for submitters to play their gamble.

Animosity, hatred and distraction from the remembrance of God.

The greed of instant money and fame that horse racing provides is so high that it truly breeds animosity and hatred among people, and distracts you from the remembrance of God.

1. If you win, you pride yourself in picking the clear winner, even if the win was by the tip of a nose. Of course, you never count the times you didn't pick the winner (which was more often than not). You rarely hear people praise God for a win, unlike submitters, who are happy to give God credit for all the good in their lives. (Gambling fires up the ego and does not encourage remembering/praising God.)

2. No one is really happy if you win, because for you to win, they had to lose. Dignity is also at stake because it means you knew how to pick the winner and they didn't. Congratulations are fake social gestures which you can easily recognize from their body language. (Gambling kicks in ego, vanity, jealousy.)

3. The anxiety rush is so high just before and after the winning post, it can make you completely forget about God and cause you to shout out arrogantly, often using foul language. (Gambling can make you disregard God and make you behave disrespectfully.)

4. When you lose, you are instantly suspicious and accusative. "They pulled the horse, they misled us on the chances, the trainer didn't do his

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job,” and so on. People rarely acknowledge a win on merit of the horse and jockey. However much people claim to be good friends, when instant money is at stake, everyone abandons years of trust and friendship in seconds, replacing it with bad thoughts and words about one another. (Gambling breeds animosity, hatred, anger, greed, suspicion, jealousy, foul language—all sorts of bad behavior.)

The sinfulness of gambling definitely outweighs any benefit anyone may perceive. (Read more about the damaging social and financial effects of gambling from Abdullah Arik’s article titled “Gambling: You can’t lose if you don’t play,” Submitters Perspective September, 2011.)

In the Hereafter, no excuses will be accepted.

In conclusion of these lessons I learned about the evils of gambling, I’d like to encourage submitters to remember this.

1) We must watch our own behavior at all times. Sometimes we can become as preoccupied with this world or behave as badly as our worldly gambler counterparts—if not worse—when things don’t work out as planned. Being a submitter is a privilege to play by God’s rules—it’s not a right to play by our own rules.

2) God teaches every submitter through unique experiences. However, this does not mean that we can choose evil knowingly or blame God for the evil we experience because God does not advocate evil. For example, while I had to learn about the evils of gambling the hard way, I cannot blame God for it. I have to take full responsibility for my past and seek God’s forgiveness for it. I’ve learned from it, and I’ve also learned that it is important for submitters to realize that they must be very careful when passing judgment on other submitters who may be going through a specific test or adversity that God may use to make them better submitters. Instead of condemnation and alienation, submit-

ters should try and see the positive side of all things and use wisdom and compassion to help submitters who may be sincerely trying to deal with the situation they are in.

3) Lastly, there is an important lesson in why I chose the title for this article “Lord, I was born a gambling man.” It’s about never taking our Submission for granted.

Soon after my ‘gambling lessons’ in Las Vegas, the words of the song ‘Ramblin’ Man’ by the Allman Brothers Band began to play often in my head. The song starts with, “Lord, I was born a ramblin’ man, trying to make a living the best I can. When it’s time for leaving, I hope you’ll understand, that I was born a ramblin’ man.” The only difference is that in my mind, I was singing ‘gambling’ instead of rambling, as the two words sound similar.

Until God blessed us with a messenger in this era, few people probably knew the purpose of their lives on Earth. The truth is that for most of us, life was an aimless rambling before God guided us to go down the right track. Even now, our race may not be a smooth flat race but a rambling steeplechase where we have to overcome several obstacles Satan will try to place in our path.

But whereas in the song, the rambler’s expectation was to be forgiven for being born a rambler and not knowing the truth, it does not work the same way for submitters. We already know the rules in Quran, and we have to play the cards God lays out for us the best we can. We have to even out our “gamble” and win against the odds (most people will not make it, 12:103-106). When it’s time for leaving and we win (God willing), it is because we worshiped God alone and lived a righteous life. But if we lose, we will have no excuse. We just cannot tell God, “I hope you’ll understand that I was born a gambling man.”

Kais Rahimtulla

(“Universal Gambler” trying to Ace his game with God’s help)

Interesting connection between Las Vegas and the Hereafter

As per the Internet, it appears (currently) that the famous Las Vegas Strip where all the main gambling hotels and casinos are located, is not actually in Las Vegas but in a town adjoining it called “Paradise”, Clark Country, Nevada. Its ironic that one of the most renowned places for gambling on Earth is called Paradise! On the Day of Judgment, those who came to find paradise here and failed to make it to Heaven, will regret losing the biggest gamble of their lives. They will beg for the dice to be rolled just once more, but it will be too late, because all bets are now closed.

And for anyone who may wish to know (and hopefully loves the Allman Brothers Band like I do), two of their members, including Duane Allman, one of the greatest blues guitar players ever, died under the age of 40. They are now enjoying the best music of their lives in Paradise.

Kais Rahimtulla

[2:82] As for those who believe, and lead a righteous life, they will be the dwellers of Paradise; they abide in it forever.

[19:60] Only those who repent, believe, and lead a righteous life will enter Paradise, without the least injustice.

[3:142] Do you expect to enter Paradise without GOD distinguishing those among you who strive, and without distinguishing those who are steadfast?

[11:108] As for the fortunate ones, they will be in Paradise. Eternally they abide therein, for as long as the heavens and the earth endure, in accordance with the will of your Lord—an everlasting reward.

[4:124] As for those who lead a righteous life, male or female, while believing, they enter Paradise; without the slightest injustice.

[26:85] “Make me one of the inheritors of the blissful Paradise.”

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CONFERENCE REPORT 2016

[3:8] *"Our Lord, let not our hearts waver, now that You have guided us. Shower us with Your mercy; You are the Grantor."*

The 31st annual conference of the United Submitters International was held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada July 29-31, 2016. The Friday sermon was delivered by brother Omar from the Vancouver community. He offered several valuable reminders for us to remember to use our hearing, eyes and brains, not to follow blindly, to be aware of how fleeting this life really is, and especially to remember that God is running everything and we must always give Him the credit and the thanks.

We enjoyed, in the next few hours, greeting old friends and meeting new ones. The new submitters shared with us their journeys to submission. It's always wonderful to see how excited they are. Some had been in submission for years, but this was their first opportunity to attend a conference. They were all bubbling with enthusiasm. And then we spent some time in small groups getting to know people outside our own communities and share the idea of "Ten things we all have in common."

By God's grace the talks were inspiring, delivered from the heart. We were treated

to a very wide range of topics: Understanding our ego and how best to fight it; that we are all a work in progress; health and God's kingdom; being appreciative of our blessings and aware that we can lose them if we're not; a look at all the things in the world that are being done "in the name of God;" the Quran is a messenger, it's complete and fully detailed; as submitters we are gifts to one another. These are only a few of the speeches. There were so many inspiring and thought-provoking ones. We could all draw inspiration from different talks to carry with us for the year.

The zikr was led by many beautiful singers among us, and it was so enjoyable. It lifts your spirit to share with so many others your joy of worshiping God and striving in His cause. It is truly a unifying experience to commemorate our Lord. [13:28] *They are the ones whose hearts rejoice in remembering GOD. Absolutely, by remembering GOD, the hearts rejoice.*

Vancouver is a lovely city and by God's grace it was a great place to hold our conference. The Vancouver community put together a pre-conference event in which the public was invited to a seminar on Islam being a misunderstood religion in today's world. Several submitters spoke on topics such as terrorism and women's rights in the hopes of helping non-submitters understand what Submission (true Islam) is really all about.

And the grand finale was a wonderful

barbecue at Rukhsana's home. A huge crowd gathered to enjoy good food, music, laughter and joy. We were all so exhilarated we just didn't want it to end. It's a feeling we can keep on enjoying for the whole year. That's the blessing of the conference—it energizes us to continue striving in the cause of God every day. And when we do, then God promises us a great reward.

God's Promise: Kings and Queens on Earth

[24:55] *GOD promises those among you who believe and lead a righteous life, that He will make them sovereigns on earth, as He did for those before them, and will establish for them the religion He has chosen for them, and will substitute peace and security for them in place of fear. All this because they worship Me alone; they never set up any idols beside Me. Those who disbelieve after this are the truly wicked.*

Nargis and Lydia

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