

Al-Baqara (The Cow) [2:36]

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا
بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ



Then did Shaytan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get down, all (you people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time."

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

QUR'AN: But the Satan made them both slip from it:

The Satan could have misled them by creating evil thoughts in their hearts, in the same way as he misleads other human beings. But many verses, in the three narratives quoted at the beginning of this commentary, show that the Satan had appeared before Adam and his wife, and had talked to them face to face:

So We said: "O Adam! surely this is an enemy to you and to your wife" (20:117). Allàh had pointed out the Satan to Adam, not by any verbal description but by showing to him the person of the said enemy. (Note the demonstrative pronoun, "this is".)

(The Satan) said: "O Adam! shall I guide you to the tree of immortality . . ." (20:120). The speaker, that is, the Satan, must have talked to Adam face to face.

And he (i.e. the Satan) swore to them both: "Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you" (7:21). Obviously, he was visible to Adam and his wife and swore during his talk with them.

. . . and their Lord called out to them: "Did I not forbid you both from that tree and say to you that the Satan is your open enemy?" (7:22) It indicates that the Satan was visible to Adam and his wife. If the Satan had misled them by creating evil thoughts into their minds without appearing before them, they could have said to Allàh that they were not aware that that thought was put into their minds by the Satan; that they mistook it to be their own thought because the Satan had not appeared before them.

They used to see and recognize the Satan. Likewise, other prophets - all of them covered by Allàh's protection - used to see and recognize him if and when he came to them. Many traditions mention such encounters in the stories of Nùh, Ibrâhim, Musa, 'Isa, Yahya, Ayyùb, Ismà'il and Muhammad (may Allàh bless him and his as well as the prophets).

The above-quoted verses as well as the verse 7:20 (and he said: "Your Lord has not forbidden from this tree except that...") also show that the Satan had visited them near that tree in the Garden. He entered the Garden, talked to them and put evil suggestion before them. He was able to do so because the Garden was not the Garden of eternal abode. The Qur'àn also says that Adam, his wife and the Satan all were removed from the Garden together. (Of course, Allàh had said to the Satan: "Then get down from this, for it does not befit you to behave proudly therein" (7:131). But the pronouns "this" and "therein" may refer to the angels or to the heaven. It may mean: Get down from the company of the angels; or, get down from the heaven as it is a place of honor.)

QUR'AN: and We said: "Get down, some of you being the enemies of others..."

The second person pronouns, used in this verse, are plural, which denote at least three persons. Clearly, it was addressed to Adam, his wife and the Satan. The Satan was turned out of the heaven and/or the company of the angels before (as described above). This verse combines in itself that previous order too; and manifests the firm decree of Allàh establishing enmity between Iblis on one side and Adam and his wife and their descendants on the other. It also promulgates another decree that they shall live in the earth, die therein, and be raised again from it.

It may safely be said that the whole human race (Adam together with his descendants) is covered by the last mentioned decree: Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die, and from it shall you be raised (7:25). This verse comes at the end of the story (in Chapter 7) which begins with the following words: And certainly We created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam"... (7:11). In both verses plural pronouns have been used; and it is an indication that the creation and the decree to live and die in the earth includes more than two, that is, other human beings too besides Adam and his wife.

The story of Adam may have been used by Allàh to represent the rise, fall and rise again of the whole mankind. Adam was the first representatives of humanity, and his life was a symbol, a miniature, of the human beings life-span in this world.

The angels were told to prostrate before Adam, because he was the vicegerent of Allàh in the earth. It has been mentioned earlier that this vicegerency was bestowed on the whole mankind. The angels prostrated before Adam, as he was the symbol of humanity, the representative of his race.

Adam and his wife were placed in the Garden and then were sent down from there because they had eaten of the forbidden tree. Every man may see his own face in this mirror. His soul, before coming to this world, enjoyed the sublime and lofty existence; his abode was spiritually near to his Lord - a place of joy and happiness, of splendor and light; in the company of purified companions and spiritual friends, near to Allàh, the Lord of the worlds. Then he opted for this transient life, and was at once entangled in the troubles and toils of this world; leaving that purified existence, he was attracted to this tedious and odious life.

Adam at once repented and prayed for the mercy of Allàh. In the same way, man may return to Allàh and consequently to the eternal abode of honor and bliss. But if he took the wrong turning, did not try to return to Allàh, and, in short, followed his base desires, he would change the bounty of Allàh into disbelief and ungratefulness, would direct himself to the place of disgrace - to the hell; and how evil that resting place is!

QUR'AN: Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord so He returned to him mercifully:

“at-Talaqqi” (= to receive) signifies “to learn”. It was this learning of the words that paved the way for the repentance of Adam.

“At-Tawbah” literally means to return; generally it is used for repentance, because when a man repents, he returns to his Lord. This verb is at times ascribed to Allàh (as in this verse), and signifies that Allàh returns or restores the servant to His grace and mercy. In other words, He accepts the plea of the servant and forgives his sins. At other times it is attributed to the servant; then it signifies the servant’s return to Allàh, that is, his repentance from his sins.

At-Tawbah (repentance) of man is flanked on both sides by two tawbahs (mercies) of Allàh. Man can never do without the mercy of Allàh. He needs mercy and help of Allàh to turn away from sins; only then he may return to Allàh, may repent from his sins; then again the mercy of Allàh comes forward, and his repentance is accepted. Therefore, an accepted repentance of man issues forth from the mercy of Allàh, and also ends on His mercy. The verse 9:118 clearly mentions this fact: then He returned to them (mercifully) so that they might return (i.e. might repent).

What were the words which Adam received from his Lord? Some people think that it refers to their invocation reported in Chapter 7: They said: “Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if thou forgive us not, and have (not) mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers” (7:23). But this view is not supported by the sequence of the events. Adam and his wife had addressed that invocation before they were told to get down from the Garden (7:24); and it was after getting that order that he “received some words” from Allàh, as is clear from the verse 2:36-37. Therefore, “some words” cannot refer to that previously uttered invocation.

There may, however, be another explanation: When Allàh announced to the angels that He was going to make a vicegerent in the earth, they said: "Wilt Thou place in it such as shall make mischief in it and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy holiness?" Allàh did not say that their accusation against the would-be vicegerent was wrong; His only answer was that He taught Adam all the names. There must have been something deep, meaningful and relevant in this teaching of the names; otherwise, the angels could not be satisfied, their objection could not be answered. The names taught to Adam must have contained some such thing that would come to the rescue of man if he sinned, would save him from disgrace if he erred. Probably, the words received at the time of repentance were related to the names taught to him in the beginning.

It cannot be denied that Adam (a.s.) did wrong to himself by placing himself in this world - a crossroads of happiness and unhappiness; had he been ensnared by it he would have perished; but he chose to return to his original place of spiritual bliss and was saved; he had to undergo, in this process, untold miseries and unbearable hardships. In any case, he put himself in so much trouble that he became "unjust" to himself. The question arises as to why Allàh selected this hard way to send him from the Garden to the earth. The fact, however, remains that in this process he attained to such heights of eternal bliss and spiritual perfection as would have been impossible to reach without coming down to the earth - and that too with a stigma of mistake.

The events leading to his removal from the Garden and, later, to the acceptance of his repentance showed to him his true reality - how humble, dependent, deficient and servile he was; and at the same time he came to realize that every difficulty of this world leads to manifold ease in the next life; every unpleasantness here results in enhanced pleasantness there; every trouble in the obedience to Allàh brings in its wake the pleasure of Allàh and His unlimited reward; the process continues until the servant reaches the sublime presence of his Lord. Adam knew, through his own experience, taste of many of the beautiful attributes of Allàh: His forgiveness, turning mercifully to the servants, covering their mistakes, bestowing mercy on them, putting them in the shadow of His compassion and grace - these are some of the divine attributes which He has especially reserved for the sinners. Adam could not know and understand them without passing through the stages which Allah had decreed for him.

This, however, was his repentance; it made ordination of a shari'ah essential. It was necessary for Adam and his descendants to know which path they should take so as to reach their destination, the abode of bliss and happiness. His repentance brought him to the stage where promulgation of religion and ordination of the shari'ah was inevitable.

That is why Allàh frequently mentions the repentance before the belief: Stand fast then (in the right path) as you are commanded, as also he who has turned (to Allàh) with you... (11:112); And most surely I am most forgiving to him who repents and believes and does good . . . (20:82). There are many such verses in the Qur'àn.

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

Adam was endowed with infinite potentiality to reach the ultimate through rational thinking and be able to discriminate and choose. Shaytan, the furious and the fiery, obstinate and perverse, devoid of iman, became an enemy of Adam. The stimulating warning of the divine command "not to go near the tree" awakened Adam's latent ambition to march unto those "highest beings" whose status Allah had shown him. To begin this journey, Adam, in a way, apparently gave Shaytan the opportunity to use his guile and rebellious energy in order to take advantage of the situation and get even with his adversary who caused his downfall.

Adam and Hawwa slipped out of the condition of peace and contentment into the realm of struggle where peace and conflict, love and hate, and such opposites are at full play. Thereafter the two opposite groups faced each other. It was a conflict between good and evil, right and wrong. Ihbitu, also used in verse 61 of al Baqarah, means a change from the easy life of joy and happiness to the life of toil, suffering and misery.

AYATULLAH KAMAL FAQIH IMANI AND SEVERAL SCHOLARS

Adam in the Garden

In the former statements, the high rank and glory of Man was discussed. Now, in these verses, another aspect of the subject is dealt with. At first, to call upon our minds, the Qur'an says:

" And when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves before Adam.' They all prostrated themselves except Iblis; he refused and was full of pride, ..."

Yes, he was proud and it was for this very pride that he became one of the unbelievers:

"...and so he became one of the infidels".

It should be noted that the above verse is the most valid piece of evidence and a vivid witness to the magnificence and nobility of Man whom, after his being created, all the angels were commissioned to make obeisance and pay homage to, and bow before that splendid creation. He was really appropriate for the position of being the divine deputy and His vicegerent on the earth. This one, who had such a high glorious rank, that was apt to bring up, from his seed, some refined and respectful children, some of whom would be prophets, was worthy of such obeisance and honour.

You may consider the position of an ordinary learned person who knows some definite formulas in a branch of science, and think of how immensely we respect him. Then, the position of Adam with all of his glory and vast knowledge about the world of being, is obvious.

Explanations:

Why did Iblis Disobey?

We know that 'satan' is a common noun that envelops both the first Satan and all other satans. But, 'Iblis' is a proper noun which refers to the same one that tempted Adam (a.s.). According to the verses of the Qur'an, Iblis was not of the same nature as the angels, but he was from a different genus i.e. of the Jinn, of the nature of matter, who had been assembled among the angels. One of the verses wherein Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn is as follows :

" And when said We unto the angels: 'Prostrate ye unto Adam': then they (all) prostrated but Iblis; he was of Jinn,...", (Sura Kahf, No. 18, verse 50) .

His motive in this disobedience was pride and a special bigotry which had dominated his behaviour. He imagined that he was superior to Adam (a.s.) and he should not have been ordered to prostrate himself before him (a.s.). He thought Adam should prostrate before him. The explanation of this idea will be discussed later, in comments referring to Sura Al-A'raf, No. 7, verse 12.

The cause of his blasphemy was also that he considered the wise command of Allah rather inappropriate. He not only disobeyed practically, but also protested theoretically. Thus, his pride and self-conceit annulled a life-time of his worshipping and rendered it worthless! Beware, pride has many effects of 'this kind' !

The phrase: "...so he became one of the infidels" shows that before this command, too, he had changed his path from the path of angels and obeying the command of Allah, and had had ideas resulting from pride in mind. Perhaps, he had told himself that if the order of obeisance were given to him, he would certainly never obey it. The phrase: "...what you conceal", in verse 33, may hint to this meaning. This idea is also referred to in a tradition from Imam Hassan 'Askari, the eleventh Imam (a.s.), cited in Tafsir-ul-Qummi.

Was the Prostration for Allah or for Adam ?

There is no doubt that /sajdah/ or a formulated prostration with the purpose of worshipping is deserved by none but Allah alone and the meaning of 'Unity of Worship' means the same: that we worship and make obeisance to none else other than Allah, or it will be 'shirk',

Tafsir Almizan, vol. 1, p. 126

(i.e. associating the object with Allah) . Therefore, it is beyond doubt that the infallible beings like the angels prostrated themselves for Allah, but it was for the creation of such a splendid being, Adam, that they obeyed Him by prostrating. Or, if they prostrated for Adam, their prostration was a kind of 'obeisance' not an act of worshipping. In the book ' Uyun-ul-Akhbar ' by Shaykh Saduq, it is cited that Imam Ali-ibn-Musa-r-Rida (a.s.) said:

"The angels' prostration was for the adoration of worshipping Allah, on one side, and for the obeisance and respect of Adam (a.s.) , on the other side, because we (Ahlul-Bait) were in his seed."

However, after that episode with Iblis and the trial of the angels, Adam was ordered that he and his spouse ought to abide in Paradise:

" And We said: ' O' Adam, dwell you and your spouse in the Garden and eat of the plentiful therein (both of you) wherever you desire, but do not approach this tree, lest you become one of the unjust '."

It is understood from the verses of the Holy Qur'an that Adam (a.s.) was created to live on the earth, this very terrestrial globe, but, at the beginning He had temporarily placed him (and his wife) in a beautiful and prosperous Garden, bountiful with blessings and free from any trouble and incommodity. This arrangement occurred, maybe, because Adam was not acquainted with the process of living on the earth.

It was difficult for him to tolerate immediately all the troubles therein. Therefore, at first, he was to obtain some more information about the kind of life to expect on the earth, and hence, it stood to reason that he should remain for a length of time in the Garden and learn the necessary skills there in order to find out that life on earth is accompanied with accepting some responsibilities and performing some duties whose accomplishments would bring his felicity, development and continuity of blessings, whereas, their refusal would cause him to be involved with pain and hardship.

Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 1, p. 58; & Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 11, p. 139

Also, he must know that although he has been created free, this freedom is limited. He cannot do whatever he wishes, but he must do without some of the things existing in this world for his own good. And again, he need know that it is not so that if he does a wrong or an err all the doors of felicity and happiness will be closed to him.

He can return and repent and promise not to do anything against the order of Allah, and in such a case, when his repentance is accepted, he will return to the divine blessings.

Adam (a.s.) had to remain in that environment to gain some experience in order to be able to recognize his friend and his enemy, to learn how to live on the earth. Yes, there were a series of skills which were necessary for him to learn before stepping onto the earth. Those were the things that both Adam (a.s.) and his children needed for their future lives. Hence, the one who was created to be the vicegerent of Allah on the earth might stay in the Garden, perhaps, so that some instructions could be given to him for his information and practical use.

The following enlightening paragraph cited in Al-Mizan upon the idea may also be mentioned here.

It should not be overlooked that even when Allah pardoned them (the couple) after their repentance, He did not return them to the Garden but they were sent down to the earth to live therein. If their eating of the tree, the covering of their private parts and the life of this world were not a confirmed divine plan, and an irrevocable predetermined decree, they would have been returned to their place in the Garden as soon as they were forgiven for their mistake.

In short, it was the divine plan that they should spend some time in the Garden to get them prepared for the life in this world; and their removal from the Garden, according to the causal relation decreed by Allah, was caused by their eating from the forbidden tree and becoming aware of their nakedness, and this happened because they listened to the whispering of Satan.

Al-Mizan, vol. 1, p. 181 (English version)

Adam found himself in a position that it was best for him to follow the instruction of Allah about restraining from eating of the forbidden tree. The whisperer, Satan, had sworn to be busy whispering and making Adam (a.s.) and his children stray. As some other verses of the Qur'an indicate, Satan assured Adam (a.s.) that if he and his wife ate from that tree they would become angels and would live in the Garden for ever. Satan even swore to them both that he was their sincere adviser:

"...Most surely I am a sincere adviser to you", (Sura Al-A'raf, No. 7, verse 21) .

" But Satan caused them to fall therefrom, and brought them out from the state (of felicity) in which they had been. ..."

Yes, they were removed from the Garden where they had been in ease and tranquility, far from any pain and trouble. This event took place as the direct result of the effect of Satan's deceit.

Then the Qur'an says:

"...And We said: ' Get down all of you, and be enemies one of another,...". In this enmity, Satan was on one side, and Adam (a.s.) and his wife were on the other side.

"...and for you on the earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time '."

It was at this time that Adam (a.s.) realized that he had really done injustice to himself, because he was removed from the Garden for his submission to the whispers of Satan, and was to sojourn in a place full of pain, toil, and trouble. True that Adam (a.s.) was a prophet and was immaculate, but, as we will discuss later, if a prophet commits an err, Allah will react severely towards him as if an ordinary person had committed it. It is the same for the ordinary people when they commit sins.

The Heavy Forfeit Paid by Adam

The Late Allamah Tabatabai pointed out his point of view about this subject concerning Adam (a.s.) and his spouse as follows:

The injustice or wrong that they had done was against their own selves; it was neither a sin (as this term is used in the Shari'ah) nor an injustice against Allah. It shows that the prohibition was in the nature of advice, pointing out to them what was good for their own comfort; it did not have the force of an ordained law. Adam and his wife did wrong to themselves, because their disregard for that divine advice caused their removal from the Garden.

When a man commits a sin (i.e. offence, from the Shari'ah point of view) , he is given a punishment. Then if he repents and his repentance is accepted, the punishment is completely removed, and he is returned to his previous position as though he had not committed the sin at all. If Adam (a.s.) and his wife were guilty of such a sin, they should have been returned to their place in the Garden soon after their repentance was accepted. But it was not done. It clearly shows that the prohibition did not have the force of an ordained law; it was only advice. Even so, neglecting it had its natural effect on both of them and they had to leave the Garden. But this removal from the Garden was not a punishment for any sin or crime; it was the natural consequence of the wrong they had done against their own selves."

For a more detailed explanation about the subject, an expressive narration from Hadrat Rida, the eighth Imam (a.s.) , mentioned in 'Uyun-ul-'Akhbar, p. 108 & 109 which is also referred to in Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. 11, pp. 78 & 104, can be studied, as well as another one on p. 156 from Imam Baqir (a.s.) . Muhammad Jawad Muq-niyyah, in his well-known commentary: At Tafsir-ul-Kashif, vol. 1, pp. 84-86 has also cited some considerable details upon the matter. All of these references can surely be helpful in clarification of the meaning.