

السَّلَامُ عَلَى آدَمَ صَفْوَةَ اللَّهِ

Prophets and Messengers:

Adam [A.S]

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be introduced to Adam (as) as the first prophet and the first human being
- Know and compare the Biblical account of the creation of Eve and the Qur'anic one
- Know and compare the Biblical account of the mistake of Adam and Eve with the Qur'anic one
- Discuss the high status that a human can reach, with reference to God's command to the angels to prostrate to Adam
- Review the mistake of Adam and why it was not a sin, explaining the difference between obligatory and guiding commands
- Discuss the reaction of Satan and its basis in pride and the dangers of this

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 5

PROPHET ĀDAM (AS) - THE FIRST HUMAN BEING

All Abrahamic religions (including Muslims) believe that Prophet Ādam (as) was the very first human being created. The details of his creation and the resulting beliefs that come out of this have influenced the core of many religions. For instance, it is the story of Ādam and Eve that is the basis for the Christian belief in the "original sin" or the inferior status of women. Fortunately, from the incredible miracle of the knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, as Muslims we do not believe in these concepts. We shall briefly discuss the story of Adam from the Christian point of view as reported in the chapter of genesis in the Bible and compare and contrast this with the story from the Qur'an. We shall also learn about the misconceptions that have crept into Islam about this story.

THE CREATION OF ĀDAM (AS) AND EVE IN THE BIBLE

The biblical version of the story of Adam (as) has informed a significant portion of the core beliefs of the Christians especially the belief in the 'Original sin'. The summary below showed the biblical belief in the storyⁱ.

- 1- Adam and was created and put in a garden on earth
- 2- He was forbidden from the 'Tree of Knowledge'
- 3- He asked for a helper and God made Eve from his rib
- 4- The Serpent (Satan) tempted Eve and she ate from the tree.
- 5- She gave it to Adam and he ate it too.

- 6- God punished them by expulsion from the garden, the earth is cursed, they would have to struggle on earth and they would be mortal
- 7- Ever was punished by having pregnancy pains, period pains and by having to be dominated by her husband
- 8- Adam was punished by having to live by the 'sweat of his brow'

Christians use the story as a foundation for their belief in the 'Original Sin'. This refers to the belief that all humans are born sinful, and that Jesus' supposed crucifixion is the only this sin can be cleansed.

The obvious problem with this belief is that it indicates that human beings are born sinful through no fault of their own. This of course contradicts the Justice of God.

The Biblical version of the story is also demeaning towards women, both as casting them as inferior to men (created from man), and as temptresses who lead man to sin. Both these beliefs are of course rejected in Islam.

Class Activity

Discuss each of the points above based on the lesson you learnt in level 4 on the story of ADAM from the Islamic perspective. Make notes on the differences of the story as narrated by Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an vs the one discussed above in the bibleⁱⁱ.

STATUS OF PROPHET ADAM IN ISLAM

Unlike the Sunni beliefs of Prophethood, the Shia believe in the sinless nature of the prophets. We believe that although Adam (as) was the first physical manifestation of a Human being created by Allah (SWT), the Soul of our Prophet (and Aimmah) were created prior to this. We also believe that the prophets were all created and chosen by Allah (SWT) to be the best manifestations of the perfection that is possible for human beings. As for Prophet Adam, he was one of these great Prophets and was in fact taught the realities of the universe (in form of the 'names').

We have discussed previously that upon analysis of the story of Prophet Adam, we learn that he did not commit a punishable offenseⁱⁱⁱ. Rather he chose the lesser of two options.

Memorisation Activity

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا

"And He taught Adam the Names, all of them." (2:31)

More importantly, unlike the biblical version, this story demonstrates to us just how high a status human beings are capable of reaching such that it befits the angels to prostrate before a human! Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And surely we have honoured the children of Adam, and carried them on the land and at the sea, and provided them with good things, and we have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over many of those we created." (17:70)

The above applies only to human who humbly submit to the commands of Allah (SWT). In the same light, human beings, by rejecting the Truth and following their own base desires in ignorance and arrogance are considered lower than animals.

"And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless" (7:179)

IBLĪS (SATAN) WAS PROUD AND ARROGANT

As we have just read the story of Prophet Ādam (as), we learn that the most significant message to come out of this story was the pride of Iblīs. Pride, known as 'kibr' in Arabic, is one of the most devastating diseases of the soul and can be of 4 basic types^{iv}:

- 1- kibr towards God;
- 2- kibr towards His prophets, messengers, and awliya'
- 3- kibr in regard to the Divine Commandments
- 4- kibr towards the creatures of God

As for the kibr towards God, it is the most abominable, the most destructive, and the highest degree of pride. It is present in stubborn disbelievers, those who contest God's authority, and those who make claims to divinity. Sometimes its traces are seen among some men of faith as well. This kind of kibr signifies the extreme of ignorance

and the absence of knowledge about one's limits and the majesty of the Necessary Being.

As for the *kibr* towards the prophets and *awliya'* of God, it was an attitude, which was more prevalent during their own days. During the early days of Islam, the instances of such pride towards the *awliya'* of God were very frequent, examples of which are still manifested in the behaviour of some people who try to defame our beloved Prophet.

As to the *kibr* towards the commands of God, it is seen among some sinners, such as those who abstain from performing *Ḥajj* as they do not consider the dress of *iḥram* appropriate for themselves; abstain from prayer because they consider the state of prostration as not in accordance with their position and status.

Similarly there are those who would not accept a word of truth if it comes from anybody belonging to the same status as themselves, or lower. Sometimes it happens that one hears something from his colleagues or friends, and vehemently rejects it and derides the speaker, but he readily agrees with it when it is uttered by someone superior to him in religious or worldly status. It is even possible that he would accept it with the same seriousness with which he had rejected it earlier.

As to the *kibr* towards the creatures of God, *kibr* towards men of divine knowledge and scholars is the worst form of it, and its evil effects are graver and its harms more serious than of any other type of *kibr*. Of this category of *kibr* is the pride, which avoids the company of poor people and seeks out prominence in gatherings and meetings, and displays itself on the road and in one's car. Yet this evil is prevalent and inflicts all the classes of society; from the elite to the class of 'ulama and scholars of *ḥadith*; from the rich to the poor and deprived classes; no one can elude it, except for those whom God Almighty saves.

Sometimes it is so difficult to discern between humbleness and humility aimed at popularizing oneself, and between pride, that one should seek refuge in God Almighty, that He may guide us on the right path. If one is eager to reform oneself and tries to reach one's goal, the Holy God guides him with His infinite mercy on the right path and eases one's journey on this path.

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) is reported to have said:

“There is no person who does not have a harness on his head, and an angel who attends to it. Whenever he is proud, the angel says, ‘Be humble, lest God should disgrace you’. Thus, he is the greatest of human beings in his own eyes, whereas in other people's eyes he is the smallest of creatures. When he is humble and modest, God removes the harness from his head and the angel says to him, ‘Elevate yourself, as God Almighty is elevating you’. Thus, he is the smallest of persons in his own eyes, while the most elevated and exalted in the eyes of others.”

THE HARMS OF PRIDE

It is simply enough to read what the Imams have told us about the harms of being arrogancy to know we have to avoid it at all costs!

Imam al-Ṣādiq (as) said:

“Verily the proud [on the Judgment Day] will be created in the form of ants and people will trample them down under their feet until God is finished with the reckoning.”

“Refrain from pride and self-glorification, since pride is God Almighty's mantle, and one who contests with God regarding His cloak, God will shatter him and disgrace him on the Day of Resurrection.”

“Verily there is a valley in hell for the proud called *Ṣaqar*. Once it complained to the Almighty about the intensity of its heat, and requested Him to relieve it for some time so that it may take a breath. As soon as it breathed, its breath filled the entire hell with fire.”

Memorisation Activity

لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ.

The Holy Prophet said:

“Never can the person who possesses a speck of pride inside his heart enter Paradise”

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE PROPHET TO DESTROY PRIDE

The Prophet (saw), whose knowledge was derived from the Divine Revelation, and whose soul was so great that it could preponderate over the spirits of millions upon millions of human beings, who rejected all the practices and customs of the pagan Arabs, who shattered under his feet all the false creeds, abrogated all the scriptures, and the circle of prophet hood achieved its completion in his noble existence; who was the ruler of the world and the hereafter, and who was the master of all the worlds, with the permission of God Almighty; yet his humility towards the creatures of God was more than of any other human being.

He hated to see his Companions stand up in his respect. Whenever he entered a gathering, he used to sit in the lowest place. He used to dine on the floor and used to sit on the floor and used to say, "I am a slave of God; I dine like a slave and sit in the manner proper for a slave." It has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (as) that the Prophet (saw) preferred to ride a donkey without a saddle, preferred to dine in a lowly place with the slaves, and offered alms to beggars with his two hands.

It is written about him (saw) that he used to share with the members of his household the duties of housework. He himself used to milk the sheep, stitch his own clothes and shoes, grind the flour and knead the dough, and carry

ⁱ Teachers are advised to get students to read the chapters of genesis 2 on this story from a version of the bible (King James version)

ⁱⁱ "And [after creating Ādam] Allah taught Ādam all the names. Then He presented those to the angels and said, "Tell me the names of these if you are true. They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are surely the All-Knowing, the Wise." [Then] He said, "O Ādam! Tell them the names of those [persons]." When Ādam told them those names, Allah said [to the angels], "Didn't I say to you that I know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you manifest and what you hide."

And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Ādam." All of them prostrated except Iblis, who refused and was haughty, and [thus] he became one of the unbelievers.

"[After creating Eve], We said, "O Ādam, Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and eat from it [freely] as many [things] as you wish; but do not approach this tree, otherwise you will become one of the dhalimīn الظالمين."

"But the Satan made them slip (زَلَّوْهُمَا) from that [Garden by luring them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree] and thus got them out from the state [of felicity] in which they had been."

So We said [to Ādam, Eve, and the Satan that, "All of you] get down [from the Garden to the earth] some of you being the enemies of the other, and there is

his belongings himself. He liked the company of the poor and the destitute and used to dine with them.

Review Questions:

Q1. Outline briefly the consequences of the beliefs of the Christians as a result of their version of the story of Adam.

Q2- Critically analyse to what extent the Christian beliefs have permeated Islamic thinking in the west

Q3. Give three examples of a type of pride that can destroy ones beliefs

on the earth your abode and the necessities [of life] for a [fixed period of] time." [Ādam felt ashamed and intended to ask Allah's forgiveness.] So Ādam learnt some words from his Lord, and Allah turned to him mercifully (تَابَ عَلَيْهِ). Surely He is the Most- Forgiving, the Merciful. We said, "All of you get down from the Garden. [Once you are on the earth], a guidance will certainly come to you from Me: whosoever follows My guidance, there will be no fear for them nor shall they grieve. But those who disbelieve and reject Our revelation, they are the inmates of the Fire, in it they shall abide."

ⁱⁱⁱ Allah (SWT) created Eve (not from the rib of Adam) and they lived in a Garden (not in heaven) but on Earth. They were asked not to approach a tree. This was a recommendation not an order. In Islam, there are two types of commands Allah (SWT) gives to His creation:

a. Legislative command (Al-'amr al-mawlawi): Where Allah (SWT) decrees a command which has to be fulfilled and failure to do so results in punishment. (eg. Salaat)

b. Guiding command (Al-'amr al-'irshadi): Where Allah (SWT) decrees a command but the action to be done is not Wajib, rather the command is simply a guiding command which is meant to make life for that person easier. Not doing that action does not result in sin but may have natural consequences. This is the kind of order Prophet Adam (as) got regarding the tree.

^{iv} <http://www.al-islam.org/forty-hadith-an-exposition-second-edition-imam-khomeini/fourth-hadith-pride-kibr>