

## Section 3

### Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

**28. "How can you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then again restore you to life, and unto Him you will be returned?" (Therefore, neither your life nor your death is in your will; what you have is Allah's.)**

**29. "It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth; then turned (His Will) to heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens, for He is All-Knowing of all things."**

#### The Mysterious Bounty of Life!

In these couple of verses, through a series of the Divine blessings and some of the marvelous phenomena of creation, the Holy Qur'an attracts man's attention to the Lord of the world and His Magnificent Sovereignty. It very clearly completes the undisputable evidence set forth for the acknowledgment of *Allah's* Omnipotence that was previously cited in verses 21 and 22.

It must be remembered that the correct conception of *Allah* is the basic need for proper faith. This faith serves as guidance from the main generative source (*Allah*) for the whole system of religion.

The most practical method of acquiring this basic knowledge about the existence of the Essence of *Allah*

is to carefully observe and thoughtfully reflect on the creation which is before our own eyes.

This is a point that nobody can deny or express any doubt about. This method is repeatedly impressed and demanded in the Holy Qur'an. The course adopted in the Holy Qur'an to educate man is the most scientific and the most modern one, i.e. of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract.

At first it inquires:

**"How can you deny Allah and you were dead and He gave you life..."**

The Qur'an reminds all individuals that formerly they were inanimate like the pieces of stone, wood, and the like of them. The water of life had not been poured on you and the breeze of vitality had not blown through the garden of your being to open the blossom of your lifetime in the realm of your entity.

Now, you are gifted with the bounty of life and you are actually living. Numerous organs and limbs, and various integral systems of sensing to form conceptions are bestowed upon you. Who has given you this very blessing of life and being? Did you yourself give it to your own self?

It is clear that every rational person will unhesitatingly confess that this blessing is not from his own origin, but it has come from a knowing, mighty source, the *One* Who knows all its secrets and its complicated arrangements; and Who is able to design it totally. In this case there will arise the question of why you deny the ***One Who*** has granted you life.

Today, it has been proven by the scientists of the world that there is not anything more complicated than the phenomenon of life. Man has surprisingly gained a great deal of successful progress in the field of science, in general, and experimental natural science, in particular, but the secret of the riddle of life has not been uncovered yet.

This subject is so mysterious that it has remained inexplicable for millions of learned individuals whose thoughts and efforts have been left fruitless in conceiving it. Possibly, in the future, under the light of further scientific development, man will gradually become more acquainted with the secrets of life.

But the main question is: Can anybody ascribe such an extraordinarily delicate and precise phenomenon, which is full of mysteries and is in need of superior knowledge and power for itself, to the irrational nature, which itself does not have 'life' from its own ?

That is why we say the phenomenon of life, in the world of nature, is the greatest evidence for the affirmation of the existence of *Allah* about which abundant books have been compiled. The Qur'an, in the above verse, emphasizes on the very matter, too.

After the citation of this bounty, it refers to another vivid example, i.e., the phenomenon of death. It says:

**"...then He will cause you to die..."**

Everybody usually sees that his relatives, kinsfolk, acquaintances, companions, and friends die one after another, and their lifeless bodies are buried in the soil.

This actual circumstance is also a station of contemplation: Who took their beings from them? If their beings were theirs by themselves, they would be eternal. When it is taken from them, it is further proof that life is bestowed upon them by someone else.

True, the 'Bestower of life' is the 'Bestower of death', as the Qur'an says:

**"He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed..."**, (Surat-Mulk, No. 67. verse No 2).

The Qur'an, after providing these two clear statements as proof for the Essence of Allah in order to make the soul of man disposed to grasp other problems, refers to the subject of Resurrection and being restored to life after death. It says:

**"...then again restore you to life..."**

This phenomenon of life after death, indeed, is not so surprising because it is not unfamiliar and man has formerly seen the same situation in nature.

Therefore, regarding the first statement, viz. 'the enlivening of the inanimate', the acceptance of raising the dead after the decomposition of the body, it is not so difficult, but it is easier than the first time He created man; (although the easiness and hardness is meaningless for the Essence Whose Power is infinite).

It is odd that there have been some people who have been doubtful about man's life after death. They believe that the first life has originated "from some inanimate things.

It is interesting that the above verse has made everything, from the beginning to the end, manifest before the eyes of man. In a short argument, it has expressed the advent of life to its last point in this, world, death, and then the Resurrection is illustrated for him.

The objective meaning of the phrase **"Unto Him you will be returned"** is returning to Allah's blessings; that is, you will return to the blessings of Allah in the Hereafter. The witness to this meaning is **Surah Al-'An'am. No.6. Verse 36** which says:

**"...As to the dead, Allah will raise them up; then will they be turned unto Him"**

The objective of **"Unto Him you will be returned"** may be a reality more delicate and fragile than that. It is to say that: all creatures, in the process of development, begin from the station of non-existence, the zero point, and go forth towards 'infinite', which is the Pure Essence of Allah.

Thus, the path of development does not end with death, but, in the Hereafter, man will continue his life

again, miserably, or prosperously with a higher standard of living to pave the path of his further development.

## Conclusion

The Arabic term / kuntum /, (the second person plural), applied in the above verse, may address the human ego which was not as it is now as a conscious entity. The previous state is termed as 'being dead', brought into the present conscious state, by *Allah's* means of 'enlivening'.

The departure of the conscious self from the body is termed death appointed by *Allah*. The state of the human cognitive self, after its departure from the body, is termed as the 'enlivening' and from that state proceeding to the other states, up to the Infinite point of the return to *Allah*.

This shows that once our life begins; there is no reversion or regression. It is the continuous process from one state to the next, dying from the previous state and entering life into the succeeding one. Be the succeeding state pleasant or painful, it is the evolutionary consequence of the preceding state.

Also, this single verse alone denotes the continuous evolutionary transformation and the transcendence of a conscious human entity up to the communion with the Infinite, not in the sense of annihilation or the absorption of the finite into the infinite, but in the sense of the realization of the fact that nothing is real but the One, the Cause of all causes: the Essence of *Allah*, the Exalted.

\*\*\*\*\*

After mentioning the blessing of life and pointing to the<sup>1</sup> Origin and End<sup>1</sup>, it refers to another Divine bounty from among the immense bounties of *Allah*. It says:

***"It is He Who created for you all that is in the earth..."***

In this manner, it specifies the worthiness of the existence of man and his high mastership over all beings in the earth. It is just this very matter that clarifies for us that *Allah* has created Man for a very worthy and magnificent affair.

It is so important, that everything in the world is created for him! What is he created for? Yes, he is the most excellent being in the world of existence and the worthiest of all. A partial explanation will also be provided when commenting on verses 30–33 of the current Surah.

It is not this verse alone that defines the majestic position of Man but there are also abundant verses in the Holy Qur'an that reveal the same and introduce Man as the main goal of the whole world of creation; for example:

***"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on the earth:..."***, (Surah -Al-Jathiyah. No. 45 verse 13).

Some further instances from the verses of the Holy Qur'an are as follows:

**"...Who hath made the ships subject to you,..." (14: 32).**

**"...And the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you..." ( 14: 32).**

**"...And the Night and the Day hath He also made subject to you." (14: 33).**

**"It is Allah Who has subjected the sea to you,..." ( 45: 12).**

**"And He hath made subject to you the sun and the moon,..." (Surah Ebrahim. No.14. verse 33).**

On this subject, we will have some explanations later, too, when commenting upon Surah Ar-Ra'd, No.13, verse 2, and Surah Ebrahim No.14, verses 32 and 33.

Again, it turns to the concept of monotheism and says:

**"...then turned (His Will) to heaven and fashioned it into seven heavens; for He is All-knowing of all things."**

## **The Seven Firmaments**

The word / sama /, as oppose to /'ard / 'the earth', in the lexicon means: 'to be lofty, upward'. This is a collective meaning which encompasses numerous concepts, in which some of the dimensions were formerly mentioned. 1

But what is the objective meaning of the phrase 'seven heavens' here? The Islamic scholars and the commentators of the Holy Qur'an have offered different arguments on the subject, but the important idea, which seems to be the most correct is that the purpose of 'seven heavens' is its very actual meaning of 'seven firmaments'.

Yet, from the verses of the Qur'an, it is understood that the whole of celestial bodies: planets and fixed stars that we can see, are totally in the first heaven, and there are six other heavens that are not visible to us and even our modern scientific equipment are not able to show them. Therefore, there are, on the whole, seven firmaments which make up the very 'seven heavens'. 2

The evidence to this statement is the words of the Qur'an where it says:

**"...And We adorned the lower heaven with lights'..." (Surah Al-Fussilat, No.41. Verse 12)**

In another occurrence it says:

**"We have indeed decked the lower heaven with beauty (in) the stars..." (Surah As-Saffat, No.37. Verse 6)**

These verses clearly indicate that what we see in the sky, which are generally called stars, are completely located in the first heaven. Beyond this heaven, there are six other heavens about whose details we do not have any exact data at present.

The reason why we said that there are six other heavens which are unknown to us yet, and science may realize them in the future, is that human knowledge is still incomplete. The more developed it becomes, the more new surprising facts about the creation it discovers.

For instance, the science of astronomy has now reached a point where earthly telescopes are incompetent and satellites equipped with powerful radars and specific means for the purpose, are utilized instead.

What the great astronomical observatories and the modern equipment with the help of spacecrafts and scientific excavations have discovered, in the Arc of Descent, is a distance as far as about one thousand million (a billion) light years away from us wherein they have discovered innumerable solar systems other than ours.

The astronomers themselves have confessed that this is just the beginning of the way of the world, not the end of it, and the discovery of further such systems is yet expected with the successful invention of or the enhanced structure of stronger telescopes or more advanced means of celestial excavations.

Therefore, there is no doubt that, in the future, with the further progress in astronomy and science, other galaxies and firmaments, or the like, might be discovered.

## Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 30-33

وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

30. ***"When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am appointing on the earth a deputy', they said: 'Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood, -while we celebrate Your Praise and extol Your Holiness?' He said: surely I know what you know not'."***

31. ***"And He taught Adam all the names, then He presented them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right'."***

32. ***" They said: 'Glory be to You! of knowledge we have naught save what you have taught us. Surely, you (alone) are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise'."***

33. ***" He said: 'O' Adam, tell them their names'. And when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not say unto you that I surely know the unseen things of the heavens and the earth, and (that) I know what you reveal and what you were hiding?'"***

### **Man, Allah's Deputy on Earth!**

Through the previous verses we have understood that *Allah* has created all the endowments on the earth for Man, whereas in these verses the leadership and vicegerency of Man is formally proclaimed. Thus, here, Man's spiritual rank and worthiness of all these merits, are exposed.

In these verses, which begin from verse No.30 and end with verse 39, the creation of Adam (the first human) is referred to and the following three fundamental subjects are set forth:

1. *Allah* informs the angels about man's vicegerency on the earth and their questioning of Him.
2. Angels are commanded to prostrate before the first human, Adam. This situation is referred to in numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an concerning different circumstances.
3. The illustration of the situation of Adam and his life in Heaven and the events causing him to be sent out from Heaven, and then, his repentance and the order that he and his children were to live on the earth, are pointed out.

The verses under discussion speak about the first stage. It was His Will, so He created a being on the earth to be His vicegerent. The attributes of this deputy would be a reflection from the rays of *Allah* Attributes, and his position somehow higher than that of the angels.

It was His Will that the earth and all its endowments, i.e. forces, treasures, mines, and all its potentials be subjected to the will of such a human being.

Such a being must have a vast share of wisdom, intelligence, conception and a special capacity so that he can undertake the leadership and mastership of the earthly beings.

Therefore, in the first verse, it says:

***"When your Lord said to the angels:  
'I am appointing on the earth a deputy' ..."***

According to what the leading Islamic scholars and learned men, and experts in , have said, the objective meaning of 'khalifah' (deputy) is the divine vicegerent on the earth, because the question which the angels asked later, – saying that the human race may make mischief and shed blood on the earth while they (the angels) celebrate His Praise,– reinforces this very meaning, that *Allah* vicegerency on the earth is incompatible with these deeds.

Also, teaching the names to Adam, whose explanation you will read in the following verses, is good evidence supporting this claim. Again, the angels' humility and veneration before Adam is another witness to this idea.

However, *Allah* was pleased to create a being above all the creatures of the universe, the best creation, appropriate for being a Divine vicegerent, *Allah's* Deputy on the Earth.

Commenting on these verses, Imam al-Sadiq (as) in a tradition has referred to the same meaning and said that the angels, after recognizing the position of Adam, realized that he and his children deserved to be the deputies of *Allah* on the earth and serve as His guidance among peoples. 3

Then, in the current verse, the angels put forth a question, in order to understand the reality and not to protest, as it says:

***"...they said: 'Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood,"  
"...while we celebrate Your Praise and extol Your Holiness?'"***

But, here in this verse, *Allah's* answer to them is a complicated reply whose details will be given in later verses.

***"...He said: 'Assuredly I know what you know not'"***

As it is realized from their words, the angels had comprehended that this human was not a docile one: he makes mischief, sheds blood, does wrong, etc. But how did they know it?

It is sometimes said that *Allah* had previously told the angels the future of Man in brief, while some others have cited that maybe the angels had comprehended the idea themselves from the term / fil'ard / (on the earth).

They knew that Man would be created from soil; and, because of the complexity of 'matter', naturally it is the center of conflict and difficulties. For, this limited world of matter cannot satiate the avaricious nature of human beings, even if the whole world were given to a single one, he would not be satisfied.

This status can sometimes be the main cause of mischief and bloodshed particularly when there is not enough sense of responsibility.

Some of the other commentators believe that the predication of the angels resulted from the fact that

Adam was not the first human creature on the earth, but, before him, there had also been some other humans who had lived on the earth and had committed corruption and shed blood. This bad record caused the angels' suspicion about Adam and his descendants.

These three commentaries are not so contradictory to one another; viz, they, comprehensively, may have caused the attention of the angels to be attracted towards this subject.

And, incidentally, this fact that they expressed was never denied by their Lord in His answer to them, but, besides this fact, He pointed out that there were some other more important facts about man and his capabilities that the angels did not know.

They thought that if the purpose were only for worshipping and servitude, they would be the best examples, because they were always praising Him and were the most appropriate ones for being the vicegerents!

They did not consider that when lusts, wrath and various desires have no chance to influence on their behaviours and selves, their worshipping is different from the servitude and worshipping of Man whose lusts and desires have surrounded him and Satan's temptations attack him from every side.

What a long distance there is between the obedience of this feeble being and the adoration of those holy and pure angels!

They did not know that in the seed of Adam there would come such great prophets as Mohammad (S), Abraham (as), Noah (as), Moses (as), Jesus (as), and some Imams as the twelve sinless Imams (Ahlul Bayt) (as) in addition to many pious believers, martyrs, and a great many men and women who lovingly donated the whole of their properties in the way of *Allah*.

There would be some off springs of Adam whose one hour of contemplation is equal to years of worshipping of the angels.

It is noteworthy that the angels emphasized on three aspects about their characteristics: / tasbih / (glorification), / hamd / (praise, eulogy) and / taqdis / (sanctification). Undoubtedly, both the first and the second mean: celebrating His Praises and knowing Him and His Glory absolutely pure and perfect, free from any impurity or imperfection or from anything derogatory.

But what is the main objective meaning of / taqdis / 'sanctification'? Some have considered it as the purification of *Allah* from any imperfection which is, in fact, an emphasis again on the very meaning of / tasbih / 'glorification'.

Some others believe that the term / taqdis / is derived from the root / quds / which means: 'to purify the earth from the wicked and corruptors', or 'to purify oneself from anything bad, evil and immoral in order to clarify the soul and body for the sake of *Allah*'.

They have considered the term / laka / (for you) in the phrase / nuqaddisu–laka /, we extol Your Holiness (for you)', as its witness. The angels did not say: 'we extol You', but they meant to say: 'we purify ourselves and assist those who obey You, for You, or towards You'.

In fact, they wanted to say: if the purpose is obedience and servitude, they are obedient; and if it is worship, they are always busy doing it; and if the purpose is the purification of themselves or throughout the expanse of the earth, they are doing that too. But this matter–made human is both immoral, himself, and makes mischief on the earth.

To clarify the facts completely for the angels. He set them on trial in order that they themselves might confess that there was a great difference between them and Adam.

## **Angels on Trial**

Adam, being given effective faculties by Divine favour, had an extraordinary receptive potential for the facts of the world of being, and as the Qur'an says:

***" And He taught Adam all the names,..."***

The commentators, from the point of view of their various styles of , have delivered different ideas on the phrase 'teaching names', but it is certain that its aim is not that of teaching some insignificant words or meaningless 'names', because this could not be counted an honour for Adam. The aim is teaching the nature of these names and the concepts and the things that they refer to.

Of course, this acknowledgement of the nature and the facts of the world of creation and the secrets of the world of being with its different properties in different creatures was a great honour for Adam.

It is narrated in a tradition that Imam al–Sadiq (as) was asked about the meaning of this verse and he (as) said:

*" The purpose (of names) is: lands, mountains, valleys, riverbeds (and on the whole, all things). Then he looked at the rug under him and said that even that rug was among the things He taught Adam." 4*

Therefore 'teaching names' has not been something like teaching words but it refers to the philosophy and secrets of the properties and qualities of things. He taught Adam this knowledge in order that he could use the merits and advantages of this world alongside the path of his development towards perfection.

He (s.w.t.) also taught him the capacity of language learning and the skill of writing with its proper application to be able to nominate objects and whenever he needs them, instead of showing them, he merely calls their names.

This is a very great bounty of the Lord bestowed on man. We can comprehend the importance of this

subject when we observe that what modern science and human beings have is under the shade of the existence of language and writing.

All the scientific and cultural, historical ancient records have been kept and preserved as treasures in man's written collections generation after generation. If he could not use language and pen, it would be impossible for him to convey the knowledge and experimental data from old generations to the recent nations and the coming ones.

***"...then He presented them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the names of these if you are right'."***

\*\*\*\*\*

But the angels, who were in lack of such knowledge, failed in that trial and could, not pass the divine examination successfully. So, their response to Him was such:

***"They said: 'Glory be to You! Of knowledge we have naught save what You have taught us...'"***  
***"...Surely, You (alone) are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise".***

They said that they did not know anything regarding this matter and their question was simply because of their lack of knowledge. They were unaware of the capacity and wonderful power of Adam (as), his God-given endowment.

It was a great privilege to him above the angels. They accepted that Adam (as) really deserved to be the vicegerent of *Allah* on the earth and in the world of all beings, where without him, the whole creation would remain incomplete.

\*\*\*\*\*

Then, it was Adam's turn, by the command of *Allah* and in the presence of angels to speak and explain the names and secrets of beings in His creation along with the insight to the knowledge of the realities or the latent properties or the hidden native endowments in each of them.

***"He said: 'O Adam, tell them their names'..."***

***"...And when he had told them their names, He said: 'Did I not say unto you that I surely know the unseen things of heavens and the earth, and (that) I know what you reveal and what you were hiding ?' "***

*Allah*, having the knowledge of all the hidden things of the heavens and the earth, knew also what the angels did hide in their imaginations, which was that they deemed themselves more deserving of the high office of being the Deputy of *Allah* among His creation. This belief of the angels made them inquire into the Divine Will about Adam's being the vicegerent.

But when Adam (as) spoke and the angels observed that surprising glory in him, they respected Adam

for the vast knowledge and immense information and worthiness that radiated from him. Thus, it was made clear for them that it was only Adam (as) who was apt enough to be His deputy on the Earth.

## Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 34-36

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ  
الْكَافِرِينَ

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا  
هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

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

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

35. ***"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'."***

36. ***"But Satan caused them to fall there from, and brought them out from the state (of felicity) in which they had been. And We said: 'Get down all of you, and be enemies one of another, and for you on the earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time!'"***

### 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 (as).

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..."*** (Surah 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 (as) and he should not have been ordered to prostrate himself before him (as). He thought Adam should prostrate before him. The explanation of this idea will be discussed later, in comments referring to **Surah Al-A'raf. No.7. Verse12**.

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 (as), cited in Tafsir-ul-Qummi. 5

## 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', (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 al-Saduq, it is cited that Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Rida (as) said:

*"The angels' prostration was for the adoration of worshipping Allah, on one side, and for the obeisance and respect of Adam (as), on the other side, because we (Ahlul Bayt) were in his seed."* 6

\*\*\*\*\*

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 (as) 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.

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 (as) 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 (as) 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 Almizan 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 –they were sent down to the earth to live therein.

If their eating of the tree, the coveting 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." 7

\*\*\*\*\*

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 (as) and his children stray.

As some other verses of the Qur'an indicate, Satan assured Adam (as) that if he and his wife ate from that tree they would become angels and would live in the Garden forever. Satan even swore to them both that he was their sincere adviser:

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

***"But Satan caused them to fall there from, 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 (as) 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 (as) 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 (as) 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 Tabatabaie pointed out his point of view about this subject concerning Adam (as) 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 (as) 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." 8

For a more detailed explanation about the subject, an expressive narration from Hazrat Rida, the eighth Imam (as), 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 (as). Muhammad Jawad Muqniyyah, in his well-known: 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.

## Surah Al-Baqarah, Verses 37-39

فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعاً فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

**37. "Then Adam received (certain) words from his Lord. And He turned towards him (mercifully). Truly He is Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful."**

**38. "We said: 'Get you down from it, all together; until there shall come to you a guidance from Me, for whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve.'"**

**39. "But those who reject Faith and deny Our Signs, they are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling therein forever."**

### Adam's Return to Allah

After the temptation of Iblis and the removal of Adam from the Garden, Adam realized that he had truly done injustice to himself when he was removed from that quiet environment full of bounties as a result of the temptation of Iblis and was placed on the earth, a grievous environment full of toil and pain. At this time, Adam thought of compensation for his mistake and earnestly attended to the Lord with his whole heart and soul, but with a great deal of regret and penitence.

At the same time, the Mercy of Allah was bestowed on him with 'some effective words' by the means of which Adam repented and He accepted his repentance mercifully; as the Qur'an says:

**"Then Adam received (certain) words from his Lord..."**

**"...And He turned towards him (mercifully)..."**

It did happen because:

**"...Truly He is Oft-Pardoning, the Most Merciful."**

The term / taubah / originally means: 'to return'. In the statements of the Qur'an, it means: 'to return from

sin'. This meaning is applied when it refers to a sinful person. But, sometimes, the term is used when concerning *Allah*.

In this case, it means 'to return to His Mercy'; that is, the mercy which a person was deprived of because of committing sin. When a sinful one returns to the path of obedience and worship, He returns that Mercy to him/her, too. That is why the Lord is attributed as 'Oft-Returning', too.

By the way, it should be noted that the Arabic word / taubah /, which is generally understood as 'repentance', does not imply the mere utterance of any verbal prayers. It demands a real and active change in the behavior as well as the active attitude of the individual towards the purity of his/her life.

It demands a moral conversion with a strong and definite determination on the part of the repenting individual, never again to return to the mistake or the wrong that had been committed before.

In other words, the term / taubah / 'repentance' is a word commonly used both for *Allah* and His servants. When it is used for the servants of *Allah*, it means that 'they have returned to their Lord', because any sinner, in fact, has abandoned his Lord, and when the servant repents, he/she returns to Him.

When servants fail to obey their Lord, it seems that they cause Him, also, to turn away from them. When *Allah* is attributed with / taubah /, it means that He returns His Mercy and Favour to them.

It is true that Adam, indeed, did not do any unlawful thing against the Lord, but that very mistake was counted a. '**a comparative wrong**' regarding him. Adam (as) immediately felt his condition and returned to his Lord. He repented by the means of the 'words' he received, and his repentance was accepted. But what the nature of the 'words' was will be discussed separately under the title of 'Explanation'.

\*\*\*\*\*

Anyhow, Adam's repentance was accepted but not abstaining from the use of the fruit of the prohibited tree which had a potential innate effect ultimately resulted in the form of his settlement on the earth. This consequence remained unchanged for the couple, as the above verses say:

***"We said: 'Get you down from it, all together; until there shall come to you a guidance from Me, for whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be upon them, nor shall they grieve.' "***

***"But those who reject Faith and deny Our Signs, they are the inhabitants of the Fire, dwelling therein forever."***

### **Explanation: The ' Words' Adam (as) Learnt from the Lord**

Commentators have cited different ideas commenting on the quality and the meaning of the '**words**' that *Allah* taught Adam (as).

Mere common sense suggests that what was bestowed upon Adam by the All-Knowing, All-Merciful Lord could not have been anything of an ordinary prayer. It must have been something very special or extraordinary which the All-Merciful Himself bestowed upon him by means of which Adam (as) or anyone could unfailingly invoke the Mercy of the Lord after having displeased Him.

It is popularly accepted that the 'words' were the same words and meanings revealed in **Surah Al-'A'raf. No.7. Verse 23** thus:

***"They said: 'Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost'."***

A group of commentators have said that the purpose of the 'words' might have been this invocation:

*"O' Lord! There is no deity but You! Glory be to You, and Yours is the Praise! O' my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me! For Thou art the Best of those who forgive". Or, "...And have mercy upon me: for Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!" Or "...And turn unto me (in Mercy); for Thou art verily the Oft-Returning, Most Merciful!"*

This idea has been cited in a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir (as), the fifth Imam. 9

Some phrases similar to the above ones have occurred in the Qur'an. For example, Jonah (Yunus) (as), asking *Allah* to forgive him, says: ***"...Glory to Thee: I was indeed wrong!"*** (Surah Al-Anbiya. No.21. verse 87). And, about Moses (as), the Qur'an says:

***"He prayed: 'O' my Lord! I have indeed wronged my soul! Do Thou then forgive me! 'So (Allah) forgive him..."*** (Surah Al-Qasas No.28. verse 16).

Many Islamic traditions narrated from Ahlul Bayt (as), such as Tafsir-i-Durrul-Manthur, denote that the objective meaning of the 'words' taught to Adam (as) by Allah was the holy names of the Holy Five; viz: the holy Prophet Muhammad (S), his cousin and son-in-law Hazrat Ali, his daughter Fatimah, and his sons (i.e. grandsons) Hassan and Husayn (as). Adam (as) relied on these 'words' and asked Him to forgive him. Then, *Allah* accepted it and forgave him.

These three commentaries do not contradict one another since the entirety of the 'words' might have been taught to Adam (as) in order that, through their (the 'words') reality, depth, and innate nature, he could obtained a pure perfect spiritual change in his heart and soul totally so that *Allah* would shower him with His Grace and Guidance.

---

1. For the word / Sama/ in the sense of 'atmosphere', look at the on verse 22, Surah Baqarah, this vol., pp. 113-114

2. An imaginary, approximately similar meaning to this idea is seen in Milton, Paradise Lost, iii 56, 481. The same imagery will be found in Dante.

3. Tafsir-i-almizan, vol. 1, p. 121

4. Majma'ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 76
5. Tafsir Almizan, vol. 1, p. 126
6. Nur-uth- Thaḡalayn, vol. 1, p. 58; & Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol. II, p. 139
7. Almizan, vol. 1, p. 181 (English version)
8. Almizan, vol. 1, pp. 185–186 (English version)
9. Majma'ul-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 89

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-1/section-3>