

The Story of Adam in the Quran: Its Application (Surah al Baqarah)

Surah 2 Verse 30:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ
يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي
أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."

According to Tafsir ibn Kathir:

Allah reiterated His favor on the Children of Adam when He stated that He mentioned them in the highest of heights before He created them. Allah said, and (remember) when your Lord said to the angels,

This Ayah means, "O Muhammad! Mention to your people what Allah said to the angels. Verily, I am going to place a Khalifah on earth.

Meaning people reproducing generation after generation, century after century, just as Allah said,

And it is He Who has made you (Khala'if) generations coming after generations, replacing each other on the earth. (6:165)

And makes you (Khulafa) inheritors of the earth. (27:62)

And if it were Our will, We would have (destroyed you (mankind all, and) made angels to replace you (Yakhlufun) on the earth. (43: 60)

and,

Then after them succeeded an (evil) generation (Khalf)) (7:169).

It appears that Allah was not referring to Adam specifically as Khalifah, otherwise he would not have allowed the angels' statement,

They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood!"

The angels meant that this type of creature usually commits the atrocities they mentioned. The angels knew of this fact, according to their understanding of human nature, for Allah stated that He would create man from clay. Or, the angels understood this fact from the word Khalifah, which also means the person who judges disputes that occur between people, forbidding them from injustice and sin, as AlQurtubi said.

The statement the angels uttered was not a form of disputing with Allah's, nor out of envy for the Children of Adam, as some mistakenly thought. Allah has described them as those who do not precede Him in speaking, meaning that they do not ask Allah anything without His permission.

When Allah informed them that He was going to create a creation on the earth, and they had knowledge that this creation would commit mischief on it, as Qatadah mentioned, they said,

(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood).

This is only a question for the sake of learning about the wisdom of that, as if they said, Our Lord! What is the wisdom of creating such creatures since they will cause trouble in the earth and spill blood.

"If the wisdom behind this action is that You be worshipped, we praise and glorify You (meaning we pray to You) we never indulge in mischief, so why create other creatures" while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You."

Allah said to the angels in answer to their inquiry,

He (Allah) said: I know that which you do not know.

meaning, "I know that the benefit of creating this type of creature outweighs the harm that you mentioned, that which you have no knowledge of. I will create among them Prophets and send Messengers. I will also create among them truthful, martyrs, righteous believers, worshippers, the modest, the pious, the scholars who implement their knowledge, humble people and those who love Allah and follow His Messengers."

The Sahih recorded that;

when the angels ascend to Allah with the records of the servant's deeds, Allah asks them, while having better knowledge, "How did you leave My servants?"

They will say, "We came to them while they were praying and left them while they were praying."

This is because the angels work in shifts with mankind, and they change shifts during the Fajr and `Asr prayers.

The angels who descended will remain with us, while the angels who have remained with us ascend with our deeds. The Messenger of Allah said,

The deeds of the night are elevated to Allah before the morning, and the deeds of the morning before the night falls.

Hence, the angels' statement, "We came to them while they were praying and left them while they were praying," explains Allah's statement, (I know that which you do not know). It was said that the meaning of Allah's statement, (I know that which you do not know) is,

"I have a specific wisdom in creating them, which you do not have knowledge of." It was also said that it is in answer to, (While we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You) after which Allah said, (I know that which you do not know). Meaning,

"I know that Iblis is not as you are, although he is among you."

Others said, :"(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, - while we glorify you with praises and thanks and sanctify You) is their request that they should be allowed to inhabit the earth, instead of the Children of Adam. So Allah said to them, (I know that which you do not know) if your inhabiting the heavens is better, or worse for you."

Ar-Razi as well as others said this.

Allah knows best.

Surah 2 Verse 31

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful."

According to Mufti Taqi Usmani,

"The word 'Ism' has many lexical and intellectual nuances of meaning, the knowledge of which would not be essential for the average reader. It is sufficient to know that this word is translated in English as 'Name'. " (Maariful Quran, Vol. 1 pg. 57)

According to Ibn Kathir, citing Ibn Abbas, the 'Names' refers to:

'Meaning, the names that people use, such as human, animal, sky, earth, land, sea, horse, donkey, and so forth, including the names of the other species.' (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, surah al Baqarah pg. 115)

According to Muhammad Asad (author of The 'The Message of the Quran'), "the names" refers to:

Lit., "all the names". The term ism ("name") implies, according to all philologists, an expression "conveying the knowledge [of a thing] ... applied to denote a substance or an accident or an attribute, for the purpose of distinction" (Lane IV, 1435): in philosophical terminology, a "concept". From this it may legitimately be inferred that the "knowledge of all the names" denotes here man's faculty of logical definition and, thus, of conceptual thinking. That by "Adam" the whole human race is meant here becomes obvious from the preceding reference, by the angels, to "such as will spread corruption on earth and will shed blood", as well as from 7:11

Surah 2 Verse 32:

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾

They said, "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise."

Surah 2 Verse 33:

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

He said, "O Adam, inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed."

"The 'names' that the previous two verses are referring to include the totality of thoughts, actions, desires, knowledge, and concepts which human beings are capable of as mortals. It seems that the angels are not capable of certain deeds such as feeling

pain and suffering and biological functions such as passing gas and sexual reproduction, things which are required for viceregency on Earth. As well, the word 'angels' can also be indirectly applied to all of creation, such as the sky, mountains, air, plants, animals and jinn kind. Human beings are generally superior to these different creations in different and unique ways, allowing human kind to be better qualified as the viceroys of the Earth."

Surah 2 Verse 34:

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

And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.

"The prostration of the angels to Adam is obviously a sign of his superiority over the angels, jinns, plants, animals, mountains as well as the rest of the subjected creation. It is also symbolic of their unique function around humankind. 'Adam' here refers to all of humankind including the prophet Adam himself. Iblis also refers to all that follow him, jinn or human.

Surah 2 Verse 35

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



And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers."

Regarding the word "Paradise", Muhammad Asad writes:

"Lit., "the garden". There is a considerable difference of opinion among the commentators as to what is meant here by "garden": a garden in the earthly sense, or the paradise that awaits the righteous in the life to come, or some special garden in the heavenly regions? According to some of the earliest commentators (see Manar I, 277), an earthly abode is here alluded to namely, an environment of perfect ease, happiness and innocence. In any case, this story of Adam is obviously one of the allegories referred to in 3:7."

Furthermore, T.O. Shanavas writes:

"Most contemporary Muslims across the world believe that Adam and Eve were created in Paradise (Jennat-ul-Khuld) but were expelled for eating fruit from the forbidden tree in the garden. Early Muslims carried on great debates about the location of the garden. According to the two foremost exegetes of the Quran, Ibn Kathir (died in 1372) and arRazi (died in 1209), four interpretations of the location of the garden prevailed: that the Garden was Paradise itself, that it was a separate Garden created especially for Adam and Eve, that it was located on Earth, and the view that it was best for Muslims not to be concerned with the location of the Garden. Unorthodox as it seems for our time, more reasons lead us to believe that the garden was on Earth rather than in Paradise."

A case in point:

At this point, one might ask "what is the purpose of the story of Adam if this event occurred on the Earth?" Who were Adam and Eve? The purpose of the story of Adam is

to relay a simple moral idea that many scholars have overlooked. This story is an allegory of humankind's continuous destiny on the Earth. Though Adam was the first prophet, his name nonetheless signifies all of human kind. Thus the story of Adam can be applied to the whole of the human race and is thus an allegory of human kind's continuous destiny on the Earth. Namely, a human being is born on the Earth, lives on it (Dwell in Paradise), lives according to a law (eat of its fruits from wherever you wish but do not approach this tree [the tree signifying the limits placed on mankind's desires and actions, limits if a person were to cross, would harm him/her self]), learns the names of things (And He taught Adam the names – all of them), is superior to all of creation (Glory be to you, we have no knowledge save what you have taught us) / is prostrated to by all creation (prostrate to Adam), is repelled by the Satans (all prostrated save Iblis), makes mistakes (then caused them to slip the Satan), is reproached by God (Go down, all of you) feels shame and seeks forgiveness (Then received Adam words of repentance from his Lord), is forgiven by God (Then Allah turned towards him as He is the most Merciful, the most Kind), is advised by God (Go down. Whosoever follows my guidance now will have nothing to fear but those who reject my signs will suffer) and finally returns to his previous state (Dwell O Adam [humankind], you and your mate in Paradise and eat of its fruits from wherever you will, but do not approach this tree lest you be wrongdoers).

Surah 2 Verse 36

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time."

"Something happened among the first group of people that caused disappointment from God through their prophet who was Adam. When the early people disobeyed God, God banished them out of the Garden of Eden to the surrounding area of the Earth. Little did they know (as explained in the next verses), God wanted this condition to happen so that they would seek forgiveness and learn how to repent, a quality that

helps humans redeem themselves before God as well as reach an infinite number of higher levels with God. These states and their varieties are applicable to the whole of the human race.”

Surah 2 Verse 37

فَنَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

‘God forgave Adam and his people while informing them that their true purpose of creation was to be vicegerent of the Earth and thus this situation was created for their own benefit so that they would populate the world and rule the Earth under God’s law.’

Surah 2 Verse 38

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

We said, "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.

“The command is sympathetic in nature. Earlier the command to ‘Go Down’ was a punishment, but now the command is in the form of a mission granted to humankind. Interestingly, as God forgave humanity as He is the most Merciful, he returned the once lost Paradise by granting them the Earth as inheritance. Thus the command mirrors the

earlier command i.e. 'Dwell O Adam, in Paradise, and eat of its fruits from wherever you will but do not approach this tree (the tree once again signifying limits which God will place on successive generations).

Surah 2 Verse 39

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those will be companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally."