Adam in the Garden – Part 2

The nature of Adam’s training in the garden was one of obedience Allah (SWT) instructs, “O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Garden and both of you eat from it as you wish, but do not go near this tree, lest you be among the wrong doers” (al-Baqarah, 2:35). It was made clear to him that satan, Iblis, who refused to honor Adam, is an open enemy to him and his wife. In spite of this warning, Adam (AS) fell into the trap of satan and so Adam and Eve both ate from the tree and thus disobeyed their Lord. A complete account of this event can be found in surat Ta Ha and al-'Araf.

“And mention (O Prophet) when We said to the angels prostrate before Adam and so they did except Iblis, he refused. And then We said, ‘O Adam! This is an enemy to you and your wife, so do not let him drive you out of the garden and be miserable. You will never feel hungry in the garden nor be naked; you will never be thirsty or suffer the heat of the sun’” (Ta Ha, 20:116-119).

Adam was forewarned. Satan who vowed to sit on their straight path and promised to attack them from the front, the back, the left and the right, is clearly an open enemy. It was made clear that satan is not only his enemy but also his wife’s and by extension, an enemy to all his descendants, “O Adam! This is an enemy to you and your wife.” The warning was clear. Should Adam and Eve become heedless of Allah’s command and succumb to the tricks of satan, they would be expelled from the garden and be in a state of distress and misery. Allah (SWT) warned, “Do not let him drive you out of the garden and be miserable.”

Adam was assured that as long as he obeys his Lord’s commands, they will enjoy everything they need to sustain their life. The four basic needs of human life are food, water, clothes and shelter. All these necessities were provided for in the garden without labor or toil. Should satan trick them and drive them out of the garden, Adam would then have to earn his living by the labor of his hands and the sweat of his forehead. He would, in the heat of the sun, have to till and plow the land, grow trees, fetch water and seek other provisions. He would build his own dwelling and sew clothes to cover and protect themselves. Adam was spared from all this hard work so long as they could honor Allah’s commands, otherwise they forfeit all these gifts and comforts.

In reality, satan caused them to slip out of the garden and be removed from the condition in which they had been. Satan, the master of tricks and deception, was able to deceive Adam and Eve when he succeeded in getting them out of the Garden. How was satan able to deceive them?

Satan first approached Adam, “And so satan whispered to him and said, ‘O Adam! Shall I lead you to the tree of eternity and to a kingdom that never decays?’” (Ta Ha, 20, 120). It appears that Adam didn’t pay much attention to satan. Adam must have thought to himself that he is already in a blissful place that will never perish nor will he be in a state of distress as long as he doesn’t come near the forbidden tree.

Satan, who is adamant on misguiding them, now approaches Adam and his wife Eve (May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon them), and, “Satan whispers to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from their private parts” (al-A’raf, 7:20).
Satan’s plan is to humiliate Adam as he was humiliated in front of all the angels. The idea is to expose their shame and strip them of their modesty (hayya) through repeated and endless suggestions as well as attractive propositions that would lead them into committing sin. If only they knew how to seek refuge in Allah (SWT) from the accursed satan, “Who whispers into the hearts of people” (al-Nas, 114:5).

Satan’s strategy is to influence them to disobey Allah (SWT). “And he said (to them), ‘your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal’” (al-A'raf, 7:20). One may wonder, how did satan speak to them? He must have appeared before them in some form or another.

There is sound evidence from the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that, under certain conditions, the jinn may appear in the form of a human being or an animal. In fact, when the believers fought in the battle of Badr, Iblis was on the side of the idolaters and it is narrated that he assumed the form of Suraqah Ibn Malik and urged the disbelievers to move forward to the battle saying, “There is none who can overcome you today” (al-Anfal, 8:48). Of course, when satan saw the angels fighting alongside the believers, he fled running.

Jinn or demons may also appear in the form of snakes, scorpions, camels, sheep, mules, donkeys, black dogs, black cats, etc. It is possible, according to the biblical account found in Genesis chapter 3, that satan appropriated and used the body of a serpent to carry out his clever idea of tempting Adam and Eve to sin. In truth, God knows best. However, one thing is for sure, Iblis did speak to both of them.

Not only did Iblis introduce the idea of becoming like those angels who are closest to Allah (al-Mala’ikat al-Muqarrabun) and that they will live for eternity, “he swore (by Allah) to them, ‘I am a sincere well-wisher for you both’” (al-A'raf, 7:21). Some scholars suggest that Iblis was asked by Adam to swear by Allah that he is telling the truth. Iblis, who is already condemned to hell has no problem taking an oath while lying. Being his first experience, Adam believed him. And, “So he misled them with deception” (al-A'raf, 7:21). Ibn Abbass (RAA) believes that Iblis deceived them by his oath. How many people are deceived by others who take false oaths?

“So he misled them with deception, then when they tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their shame (private parts) became manifest to them and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden…” (al-A'raf, 7:22). Mission accomplished. Iblis succeeded in tricking them while exposing their shame.

Satan was successful in trapping them. Adam and Eve were lured, ensnared and deceived. Suddenly they found themselves naked. Humans have a tendency to immediately cover their private parts when exposed in public as part of the intrinsic modesty built in human nature. According to Ibn Abbass (RAA), Adam and Eve began covering themselves with fig leaves (God knows best). One may appreciate Allah’s reaction when “...their Lord called out to them (saying), ‘Did I not forbid you both from that tree and tell you, you two, that satan is an open enemy to both of you?’” (al-A'raf, 7:22).

Adam should have known better. Iblis, in the presence of Adam, made it clear to Allah (SWT) that he would sit on their straight path. In other words, Iblis would do his very best to deceive Adam and Eve as well as his descendants by whatever means possible, lawful or unlawful, to make them slip and disobey Allah (SWT). “And so the two ate from it. They became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden. And Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray” (Ta Ha, 20:122).

Unlike Iblis who was arrogant and chose not to admit his mistake nor seek forgiveness from Allah (SWT), Adam regretted what they did and was in a state of utter disappointment and complete remorse. Being his first experience Adam did not know how to express his regret. He could barely identify things by their names. But, “Later his Lord brought him close...” (Ta Ha, 20, 123). “Then Adam received from his Lord words...” (al-Baqarah, 2:37). Both Adam and Eve, in unison, prayed, “Our Lord, we have wronged our souls and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers” (al-A'raf, 7:23). Allah (SWT) “...accepted his repentance and guided him” (Ta Ha, 20, 123). Yes indeed, “He accepted his repentance. For verily, He is the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful” (al-Baqarah, 2:37).

Adam’s training in the garden has come to an end. Adam, although still in his primitive stage, is now ready to assume his role as Allah’s khilafah or vicegerent on earth. ‘He said, ‘All of you descend with mutual enmity to each other. And you shall have on earth settlement and provision for a while.’ He (further) said, ‘In it you will live; in it it will die; and from it you will be brought out’” (al-A’raf, 7:24, 25).

The enmity between Iblis and Adam or more broadly between good and evil will never go away. The struggle between good and evil shall continue until the end of time. Humans among other creation of Allah (SWT) will soon perish. We will all die, some sooner than others but all people will eventually die on the same earth we were created from and made to settle in. Thereafter, the process of resurrection begins and all people shall find themselves standing before their Lord on the grand day of accountability. Some will win and some will lose.

One important lesson we learn from the story of Adam is that, although both Adam and Eve disobeyed Allah (SWT) and both are ac-
countable for their disobedience, Adam is to be blamed, not Eve, simply because, being the head of the household, he made the wrong decision. It is possible Eve may have helped him arrive at the decision however Allah himself testifies, “And indeed, We commanded Adam a while back, but he forgot and We didn’t find him resolute” (Ta Ha, 20:115).

As much as we detest it, the fact remains that satan will make forbidden things attractive to us and will influence people to disobey Allah (SWT). Imagine that Iblis did not exist; obedience to God would be second nature so long as our desires are in check. What makes our servitude to God exciting and meaningful is when our desires or the whispers of satan lure us to commit sins and we find ourselves going through an internal struggle to resist evil and remain faithful to Allah. The story of Adam is the story of each one of us.

May Allah (SWT) make us of His faithful and obedient slaves, ameen.

End