Satan - The Devil (Know your Enemy) Part 2

Allah (SWT) recounts the story of Adam and Iblis in seven surahs of the Qur’an. These are: Surat al-Baqarah, Surat al-A’raf, Surat al-Hijr, Surat al-Isra’, Surat al-Kahf, Surat Ta Ha, and Surat Saad. In terms of the order of compilation of the surahs in the Qur’an, the first story appears in Surat al-Baqarah. However, in terms of the chronological order of revelation, the first story appears in Surat al-Hijr.

It is important that we acquaint ourselves with the Qur’anic ayat mentioning the story of Adam and Iblis from different aspects. Allah (SWT) has told us everything we need to know about our arch enemy Satan, so that we may be able to equip ourselves with the proper ammunition to combat him, lest he prevails over us. The Qur’an as we know is the verbatim word of Allah (SWT), and hence the absolute truth. Any information gained from any other source on this topic can at best be based on vague ideas and speculations.

Surat al-Hijr narrates the story of Adam and Iblis: “We created man out of dried clay formed from dark mud; and the jinn, We created before from the flames of fire”(al-Hijr, 15:26-27). These are two distinct creations of Allah (SWT) made from two different substances; man out of clay and jinn out of fire. Indeed, Allah (SWT) creates what He wills. “…He creates whatever He wills. Allah has power over all things” (al-Ma’idah, 5:17).

Allah (SWT) shared with the angels His plans of going to bring about the creation of man even before actually creating him. “Your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a human being out of dried clay, formed from dark mud.’” (al-Hijr, 15:28). The word used by Allah (SWT) for the human being in this ayah is bashar, and elsewhere the word used is insan. Although the two words are often interchangeably used to mean man, there is a fundamental difference between the meanings of the two words. Bashar is the first stage of Adam’s training. The next ayah tells us, “We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to him when You see Him put on it.’” (al-Hijr, 15:29). Allah then let the angels witness Adam’s creation: “When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him” (al-Hijr, 15:29). Allah (SWT) commanded the angels to bow to man when this occurs (at a future time). The most appropriate and closest translation for the term bashar as a genre or species appears to be Homo sapiens, and Allah (SWT) knows best.

The story in Surat al-Baqarah explains that this bashar that eventually became insan or man (Adam) was to be Allah’s vicegerent or deputy (khalifah) on earth. His duty would be to administer Allah’s kingdom on earth by maintaining law and order among the people, and establishing justice on earth. “When your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am putting a successor on the earth,’ they said, ‘Why put on it one who will cause corruption on it and shed blood when we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?’ He said, ‘I know what you do not know’” (al-Baqarah, 2:30). The angels know only to the extent what Allah (SWT) had made known to them and do not have any knowledge of the ghayb (unseen). So relying on their previous knowledge about the transgression and disbelief of the jinns when they had inhabited the earth before the creation of man, they thought in all sincerity that man having been given freewill like them would also follow in the footsteps of the jinns, and cause corruption and bloodshed on earth like they had done. Allah (SWT) told the angels that He knew what they did not know. It was then that Adam (AS) was chosen among the Homo sapiens and was trained to assume the role of Allah’s vicegerent on earth. “He displayed them to the angels and said, ‘Tell me the names of these if you are telling the truth’” (al-Baqarah, 2:31). In response to this, the angels replied in all humility, “Glory be to You, we have no knowledge except that which You have taught us, You are the Knowledgeable, the Wise” (al-Baqarah, 2:32). Allah then let the angels witness Adam’s knowledge of what He had taught him and made it clear to the angels that it was He alone who had knowledge of everything including what they revealed and what they concealed. “Then He said, ‘Adam, tell them the names of these.’ When He told them their names, God said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you reveal and what you conceal’” (al-Baqarah, 2:33). This was the first stage of Adam’s training. The next ayah tells us, “We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam!’ and they prostrated, with the exception of Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and was one of the disbelievers” (al-Baqarah, 2:34). Iblis’ refusal to bow to Adam is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur’an as well: “We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they all bowed down, but not Iblis: he was one of the jinn and he disobeyed his Lord’s command” (al-Kahf, 18:50). This goes to show that Iblis was arrogant and did not obey Allah’s command.
Reverting to Surat al-Hijr, we find that Allah (SWT) despite being omniscient asked Iblis to find out directly from him as to why he had denied the divine command. “When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him. The angels all bowed down together, but not Iblis: he refused to bow down like the others. He (Allah) said, ‘Iblis, why did you not bow down like the others, and he (Iblis) answered, ‘I will not bow to a human You created from dried clay, formed from dark mud’ (al-Hijr, 29-33).

Instead of repenting and humbling himself before Allah (SWT) who had created him, Iblis in his extreme haughtiness replied that he did not prostrate to Adam as he was superior to him, being made out of fire, while Adam was made out of clay. He thought that he could make a case before the divine majesty with his logical argument not realizing that God’s commands are not to be questioned even if they cannot be executed for any reason. It was his arrogance that led him to his doom. His boastful stand made him incur the wrath of Allah (SWT), who said: ‘Get out from here, you are accursed; rejected until the Day of Judgment (al-Hijr, 15:34-35).

Knowing that Allah (SWT) had proclaimed His divine decree, Iblis understood well that his destiny had been sealed and that he had been accursed forever. Feeling all the more jealous of Adam and his progeny whom he had refused to honor, he pleaded to God to give him respite till the Day of Resurrection. Allah (SWT) granted his request. “Iblis said, ‘My Lord, give me respite until the Day when they are raised from the dead. He (Allah) said: You are granted respite until the Day of the appointed time’ (al-Hijr, 36-38). Seizing this opportunity, Iblis vowed to God that he would deceive the entire mankind except those who were His sincere servants. “He (Iblis) said: Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lure mankind on earth and put them in the wrong except Your sincere servants” (al-Hijr, 15:39-40).

The sincere ones among men are the messengers and prophets of Allah (SWT), and their true followers. By swearing, Iblis meant business. In Surat al-Isra’ he swears by the majesty of Allah that he would leave no stone unturned in beguiling men to their destruction, to which Allah says that He would cast him and his followers into hell. He (Iblis) said: "Do You see this that You have honored above me? Indeed, if You grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly bring his descendants under my sway, all but a few!" He (Allah) said: Go your way! Whoever of them follows you – surely, Hell will be the recompense of you all, a recompense most ample” (al-Isra’, 17:62-63). Allah (SWT) sanctioned Shaytan to use all his tricks of the trade he could, to lure men. “Entice any of them you can with your voice and rally against them your cavalry and your infantry and share with them in their children and their wealth and make them promises! The promise of Shaytan is nothing but delusion’(al-Isra’, 17:64). Thus we see how Shaytan has stirred up men. He lures them with haram ways to make a living—usury, gambling, cheating in business transactions, bribery and other unfair means have been institutionalized. Consuming drugs and alcohol and dealing in intoxicants have become widespread. People have got addicted to gross materialism and conspicuous consumption. They have become enslaved to the ubiquitous entertainment industry that promotes immorality, illicit sex and lewd music, all in the name of liberalism, progress, freedom, art, and culture. However, Shaytan does not possess the power to compel anyone to do wrong. He approaches man stealthily and cunningly, posing to be his friend and well wisher. That’s how he was able to evict Adam and Hawwa out of paradise. We should have the proper knowledge and tools to combat Shaytan lest he gets the upper hand over us and drags us to hell; something which none of us want to happen.

So our first weapon against Shaytan is to be sincere and loyal to Allah (SWT) in our intentions and our deeds. This way, Shaytan would not be able to entrap us in his devious and deceptive ways.

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