



The Infallibility of Prophets

LESSON 3: THE CASE OF PROPHET ADAM

A Vicegerent on Earth

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ
فِيْهَا مَنْ يُّفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ
وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

"And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I shall instate a vicegerent on earth'. They said, 'Will you instate therein one who will cause corruption therein and shed blood while we exalt you by praising you and proclaim your sanctity?'"

Quran 2:30

Into the Garden

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

**AND WE SAID TO ADAM, 'DWELL WITH YOUR WIFE IN THE
GARDEN AND EAT FROM IT FREELY WHEREVER YOU
DESIRE BUT DO NOT APPROACH THIS TREE, LEST YOU BE
AMONG THE WRONGDOERS.'**

QURAN 2:35

Into the Garden

فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكَمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ
فَتَشْقَى

"SO WE SAID, "O ADAM, INDEED THIS IS AN ENEMY TO YOU AND TO YOUR WIFE. THEN LET HIM NOT REMOVE YOU FROM PARADISE SO YOU WOULD SUFFER."

QURAN 20:117

Into the Garden

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَىٰ

"IN IT YOU WILL EXPERIENCE NO HUNGER OR NAKEDNESS, AND YOU SHALL NOT BE THIRSTY THEREIN NOR SHALL YOU FEEL THE HEAT OF THE SUN."

QURAN 20:118-119

WHY WAS ADAM PLACED IN THIS GARDEN?

- God accomplished two very important purposes:
 - **1. He set up a perfect training ground for Adam and Eve.**
They needed to learn that there are consequences for acting against God's instructions. They also had to learn the true nature of their archenemy Satan
 - **2. He gave them a taste of what they could hope for in paradise.**

DECIEVED BY SATAN

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةٍ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ

Then Satan whispered to Adam: Shall I lead you to a tree that will give you immortality and a dominion that shall never perish?"

Quran 20:120

DECIEVED BY SATAN

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْءَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا
عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ
النَّصِيحِينَ

But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said, "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal.

And he swore to them, "Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors."

Quran 7:20-21

DECIEVED BY SATAN

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ
فَغَوَىٰ

"And Adam and his wife ate of it, and their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred."

Quran 20:121

DECIEVED BY SATAN

وَلَقَدْ عَاهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِن قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا

"And certainly We gave a commandment to Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find in him any determination."

Quran 20:115

DECIEVED BY SATAN

وفي الكافي عن الباقر عليه السلام في هذه الآية قال انّ الله قال لآدم وزوجته لا تقرباها يعني لا تأكلا منها فقال لا نعم يا ربّنا لا نقربها ولا نأكل منها ولم يستثنيا في قولهما نعم فوكلهما الله في ذلك الى انفسهما والى ذكرهما.

God said to Adam and his wife: Do not approach it (the tree) (meaning do not eat from it). They replied: Yes Lord! We will not approach or eat from it. And they did not make any exception in their statement (they did not say 'God willing). So God left them to themselves and their memories..."- Imam Al-Baqir

Two Types of Divine Commands

1. Legislative Command أمر مولوي

Such orders must be implemented; and, if someone disobeys such a command, then he is committing a sin and is liable to be punished. For example, the command to “say the daily prayers” or “do not eat the pork” is of such nature. Neglecting the daily prayers or eating of the pork is a sin and Allah can rightly punish the sinner.



Two Types of Divine Commands

2. Advisory Command أمر إرشادي

Such orders are of advisory nature; their purpose is to inform the people about its consequences. However, if someone disobeys such an order, then he is not committing a sin; of course, he will have to face the consequences of not following the advice.



Did Adam Commit a Sin?

In case of Adam and his wife, the consequence they faced was cancellation of their tenure as guests of God in the Garden and its comforts. Remember that they were not supposed to stay in the Garden forever; they were created for the earth, and their stay in the Garden was meant to be temporary.





Did Adam Commit a Sin?

The Garden is not the place for test and trial. It is this earth on which human beings have been destined to go through test and trial by obeying the commands of God. The concept of sinning in case of human beings is connected to the worldly life.

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

قُلْنَا أَهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ
تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

"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."

Quran 2:38

A decorative Islamic geometric pattern featuring interlocking lines in black, blue, and gold on a light beige background. In the center, there is a small square containing the Arabic calligraphy 'وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ' (There is no god but Allah).

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

- Those who believe that Adam committed a sin, describe the eating of the forbidden fruit as the “sin” and Adam's expulsion from the heaven as the “punishment”. However, this relationship between the sin and its punishment is not valid because of two reasons:

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

- Firstly, Adam was destined to come to the earth anyway. God had declared even before creating Adam that “I want to place a vicegerent on the earth.” So coming of Adam to the earth is not a punishment; whether or not he ate the forbidden fruit, Adam would have come to the earth anyway. So that was not a punishment.



Did Adam Commit a Sin?

- Secondly, if coming of Adam to the earth was a “punishment” of eating the forbidden fruit, then he should have been returned to the paradise after God “forgave” him. Forgiveness means “canceling the punishment”—Adam should have been taken back to the Garden. This did not happen, which proves that Adam's coming to the earth was not a “punishment”; and eating was not a “sin”.

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

یافت گفت ای ملک چون کرد آمدن خلق موجب پادشاهی
مخلوق را برای چه پریشان میکنی مگر سپه پادشاهی نداری
همان بر که لشکر بجان بروری که سلطان باش که گزید سپه روی
ملک گفتا موجب کرد آمدن سپاه و رعیت چیست گفت
پادشاه را کرم باید تا بر و کرد آید و رحمت تا در ملکش
ایمن نشینند و تر این هر دو نیست
نخند جو ریش سپاهینه که نیاید زگرگ جو پاپینه
پادشاهی که طرح ظلم کند نخ دیوار ملک خویش بکند
ملک را پسند وزیر ناصح موافق طبع نیاید روی از نخش در هم
آورد و بزندانش فرستاد بسی بر نیاید که نبی شهنشاعت خاستند

- **What about the words in the story Adam that imply that he committed sin?**
- After studying the issue of '**ismah** from the Quranic point of view, if we come across such words we have to interpret them in a way that they are in harmony with the other verses of the Qur'an. Now let us look at three such words that have occurred in the story of Adam.

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

- First: the word "الظالمين" is from "ظلم".
- This word has four meanings:
 - to put something in a wrong place;
 - to oppress;
 - to make haste
 - to come to harm

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

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

"And we said to Adam, 'Dwell with your wife in the garden and eat from it freely wherever you desire But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers. **(meaning those who come to harm themselves or make haste)**

Quran 2:35

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

- Second: the word عَصَى means “disobeyed”. This does not necessarily imply sin because disobedience can be attributed to two types of commands: al- amr al-mawlawi (a legislative command) or al-amr al-irshadi (an advisory command). If a person goes against the advisory command, then he has “disobeyed” but not “sinned”.



Did Adam Commit a Sin?

If Adam did not commit a sin, then why does God talk about repentance for Adam?

Firstly, When a prophet like Adam commits at-tarku 'l-awla, it is quite appropriate for him to ask Allah for pardon—not necessarily for a sin but for an inappropriate behaviour. So “repenting” does not necessarily mean that Adam must have committed a sin; it is quite appropriate rather advisable even after committing at-tarku 'l-awla.

Did Adam Commit a Sin?

If Adam did not commit a sin, then why does God talk about repentance for Adam?

Secondly, the use of harsh words by God in describing the story of Adam is acceptable by keeping in mind the status of Adam. Although Adam did not commit a sin, it was improper for him to adopt an inappropriate behaviour. The people with high ranks are expected to live by the standard that is higher than that of the normal human beings.