

## Story of Iblis – From Quran & Sunnah

The story of Adam AS and Iblis sheds light on the nature of the struggle between man and his archenemy, the Devil (Shaitaan), who tempted his father before him. The Companions RA learned about the various facets of this story through a number of Verses in the Qur'an. For example, Allah said:

*“O Children of Adam! Let not Shaitaan (Satan) deceive you, as he got your parents [Adam and Hawwa (Eve)] out of Paradise, stripping them of their raiments, to show them their private parts. Verily, he and Qabiluh (his soldiers from the jinns or his tribe) see you from where you cannot see them. Verily, We made the Shayaatin (devils) Auliya' (protectors and helpers) for those who believe not.”* (Qur'an 7: 27).

And in other Verses of the same Chapter:

*“(Iblis) said: “Allow me respite till the Day they are raised up (i.e., the Day of Resurrection).” (Allah) said: “You are of those allowed respite.” (Iblis) said: “Because You have sent me astray, surely I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path. Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left, and You will not find most of them as thankful ones (i.e., they will not be dutiful to You).”* (Qur'an 7: 14-17).

The Companions were guided by Allah, they were hearing Verses of the Qur'an freshly as they were being revealed, they had strong faith, and they benefited from the Prophet's company. Thus the Companions lived as if they could see Shaitaan, as if he took form, coming to them from all directions and whispering evil instructions to them. Therefore, they strove to always be on guard, fearing an ambush from Shaitaan at any given moment. They performed many good deeds, which they knew would help defend them from Shaitaan's traps, a lesson they learned from the saying of Allah:

*“So when you want to recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from Shaitaan (Satan), the outcast (the cursed one). Verily! He has no power over those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord (Allah). His power is only over those who obey and follow him (Satan), and those who join partners with Him (Allah, i.e., those who are Mushrikoon- polytheists).”* (Qur'an 16: 98-100).

In some parts of the Qur'an, the story of Shaitaan (Iblis) and Adam

AS is discussed in full detail - as in Sooratul-‘Araaf (Chapter “The Heights,” or, “The Wall With Elevations”). In other parts of the Qur’an, only partial aspects of the story are mentioned; and in yet other parts of the Qur’an, the story is mentioned only in passing ~ and this occurs very frequently in the Noble Qur’an. The Chapter of Ibraaheem is the only Chapter of the Qur’an that deals with the stance Shaitaan will take on the Day of Resurrection vis-a-vis the children of Adam AS, particularly those children of Adam AS who succumbed to his temptations in this world. For example, in Verse number 22 of the Chapter of Ibraaheem, Allah said:

*“And Shaitaan (Satan) will say when the matter has been Decided: “Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me (Satan) as a partner with Allah (by obeying me in the life of the world). Verily, there is a painful torment for the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.).”” (Qur’an 14: 22).*

And in the Chapter of Al-‘Araaf, Allah said:

*“And O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat thereof as you both wish, but approach not this tree, otherwise you both will be of the Zaalimoon (unjust and wrongdoers).”” Then Shaitaan (Satan) whispered suggestions to them both in order to uncover that which was hidden from them of their private parts (before); he said: ‘Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become of the immortals.’ And he [Shaitaan (Satan)] swore by Allah to them both (saying): “Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both.” 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 stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves (in order to cover their shame). And their Lord called out to them (saying): “Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you: Verily, Shaitaan (Satan) is an open enemy unto you?” They said: “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.” (Allah) said : “Get down, one of you an enemy to the other [i.e., Adam, Hawwa (Eve), and Shaitaan (Satan), etc.]. On earth will be a dwelling-place for you and an enjoyment, - for a time.” He said: “Therein you shall live, and therein you shall die, and from it you shall be brought out (i.e., resurrected) .” O Children of Adam! We have bestowed*

*raiment upon you to cover yourselves (screen your private parts, etc.) and as an adornment, and the raiment of the righteousness, that is better. Such are among the Ayaat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah, that they may remember (i.e., leave falsehood and follow truth). O Children of Adam! Let not Shaitaan (Satan) deceive you, as he got your parents [Adam and Hawwa (Eve)] out of Paradise, stripping them of their raiments, to show them their private parts. Verily, he and Qabiluhu (his soldiers from the jinns or his tribe) see you from where you cannot see them. Verily, We made the Shayaatin (devils) Auliya' (protectors and helpers) for those who believe not." (Qur'an 7: 19-27).*

It is very important for a person to know his history, not so much to console himself as to learn valuable lessons. Among the stories of the Qur'an - they are all historical stories that provide valuable lessons and morals - the story of Adam AS stands out with very special meanings, furnishing information to humans about their beginning; their end destination; their role and purpose on earth; their enemy - the reason for his hatred, his motives, etc.; the way in which they should journey through this world, the obstacles they will face throughout that journey, and the ways in which they can overcome those obstacles.

The Qur'anic Verses that discuss the story of Adam AS and his struggle with Shaitaan taught the first generation of Muslims some valuable lessons, lessons that are applicable to one's outlook, beliefs, and manners. Here are some of those lessons:

1) Adam AS is the first human being: Allah created him from clay, immediately upon his full human form, which did not come about through gradual stages from one species to another, or from one form of creation to another. Allah created Adam AS from clay, after which He blew into him his soul. He thus immediately became a completely formed human being, with all of his flesh, bones, and blood. This outlook is of course diametrically opposed to any of the recent false theories that atheists put forward, theories that debase humankind and that ludicrously claim that man is descended from other species of animals.

2) The fundamental quality of Islam is complete obedience to Allah. When Allah ordered the angels to perform prostration to Adam AS, they did so, as a way of greeting him, honouring him, and acknowledging his status, not in obedience to Adam AS, but in obedience to Allah, Lord of all

that exists. They did so without the least bit of hesitation or doubt, in spite of the fact that they were members of the highest gathering, who worshipped and glorified Allah continuously, while Adam AS had as of then done no deed or act of worship to outdo them or to ostensibly merit greater status.

So the only reason why the angels performed prostration to Adam AS is that the command to do so came from Allah, the Lord of all that exists. When Allah makes a command, one must immediately obey, without any hesitation or opposition, and without first waiting to learn the wisdom behind the command; this is the essence of Islam, and this is the way of the Muslim. The true Muslim obeys Allah's command especially when doing so is contrary to his preconceived notions, desires, and lusts.

3) Every man is susceptible to falling into error: Through the story of Adam AS, the Companions RA gained a heightened sense of awareness about sinning, learning that man, by his very nature, is susceptible to falling into error. Allah has made man have a natural disposition for certain desires and lusts; it is through this weakness in man that Shaitaan finds a way to tempt him. As is clear from the story of Adam AS, one of the many intuitive desires of man is to live forever. Shaitaan preyed upon this weakness in Adam AS:

*“Then Shaitaan (Satan) whispered suggestions to them both in order to uncover that which was hidden from them of their private parts (before); he said: ‘Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become of the immortals.’”*  
(Qur'an 7: 20)

He strengthened his claim in the eyes of Adam AS and Hawwa AS when he swore by Allah that he was a sincere advisor to them. What I stated hitherto does not mean that one should surrender to his desires and lusts; to the contrary, a Muslim must restrain his desires and lusts and limit them to what is permitted in Islam. The story of Adam AS teaches Muslims about their susceptibility to sin not to validate sinning, but to heighten their awareness of their weaknesses, of their enemy, of his plots, and of the ways of overcoming his plots. For the most part, man's desires transgress the bounds of moderation, which is why Al-Hawa, or desire, is disparaged; when Al-Hawa is disparaged, it refers to desire of the evil kind, as occurs in the following Verse:

*“But as for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires, and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be his abode. (Qur'an 79: 40, 41).*

In this Verse, Al-Hawa is mentioned in a general way; those who restrain themselves from Al-Hawa are praised because, as an Islamic term, the word Al-Hawa, upon being used, is primarily understood as meaning not all desire but only evil desire.

4) The mistake of Adam AS teaches a Muslim that it is incumbent upon him to place his complete trust upon Allah. That man is ever susceptible to falling into error, as is illustrated in the story of Adam AS, inspires fear into the heart of a Muslim, thus increasing his level of dependence and reliance upon his Lord' to protect him from the evil of the accursed Shaitaan.

Allah commanded the angels to perform prostration to Adam AS to show his lofty status and ranking with his Lord #; He # expelled Shaitaan from Paradise when he refused to perform prostration to Adam AS. Allah made Adam AS and his wife to inhabit Paradise, permitting them to enjoy all of the fruits and pleasures of Paradise, though giving Adam AS a clear order to stay away from one particular tree. Allah said:

*“And O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat thereof as you both wish, but approach not this tree otherwise you both will be of the Zaalimoon (unjust and wrongdoers).” (Qur'an 7: 19).*

Allah even warned Adam AS and his wife about Shaitaan, informing them that about his plots and deceptive ways. Allah said:

*“And (remember) when We said to the angels: “Prostrate yourselves to Adam.” They prostrated (all) except Iblis (Satan), who refused. Then We said: “O Adam! Verily, this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not get you both out of Paradise, so that you be distressed in misery.” (Qur'an 20: 116, 117)*

But in spite of that warning, Shaitaan ended up deceiving them, and they ate from the forbidden tree. Because of their sin, Allah removed them from Paradise.

The mistake of Adam AS inspired a sense of fear in the hearts of the Prophet's Companions; they remained on their guard against their enemy, but they knew that, without help and guidance, they could not resist his evil whispers. And so they turned to Allah, placing their complete trust in Him and

seeking His help against the accursed Shaitaan, whose sole occupation is to tempt man and drag him into the mires of evil and sinning. These are the meanings that the Companions understood from the following two Verses:

*“Verily! My slaves (i.e., the true believers of Islamic Monotheism), you have no authority over them. And All-Sufficient is your Lord as a Guardian.” (Qur'an 17: 65)*

*“Verily! He has no power over those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord (Allah).” (Qur'an 16: 99)*

Therefore, the Shaitaan has neither influence nor power over those whose faith in Allah is strong; as a result of their strong faith, they are made to see and understand Shaitaan's plots for what they really are; their dependence upon Allah at once strengthens them and weakens Shaitaan, whose limited power is no match against strong Eemaan (faith).

5) Repentance and paramount asking Allah for forgiveness are of Importance in the life of the Muslim.

The Companions RA learned this lesson from the story of Adam AS. After they sinned, both Adam AS and his wife hurried to repent to Allah and to ask for mercy from Him. Allah said:

*“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 stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves (in order to cover their shame). And their Lord called out to them (saying): “Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you: Verily, Shaitaan (Satan) is an open enemy unto you?” They said: “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.” (Qur'an 7: 22, 23).*

Their repentance was accompanied by severe regret, which is understood from their saying, “We have wronged ourselves”; it was also accompanied by a sense of hope that Allah would forgive them, which is implied in their saying, “If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.”

Adam and his wife had to repent even though they enjoyed a high ranking with their Lord; this suggests that others, who do not enjoy that status, have all the more reason to repent from their misdeeds.

6) The story points to two evil characteristics that Muslims must

avoid adopting: Jealousy and pride. Iblis (Shaitaan) fell so low from so high because of his jealousy and pride.

Iblis was too proud to perform prostration to Adam AS, thus making pride the first sin. About pride and arrogance, the Prophet said, *“He who has in his heart an atom’s weight (or the weight of a small ant) of pride, will not enter Paradise.”*!

The Noble Qur’an abounds with Verses in which pride and proud people are disparaged, and in which the evil destination and outcome of proud people are clarified. The definition of pride consists of two parts:

- 1) To reject the truth, to not submit to the truth, and to be too arrogant and intransigent to accept the truth;
- 2) To look down upon people, and to feel contempt for them.

There is no greater show of rejecting the truth than refusing to obey Allah’s commands; for since rejecting the truth is, by definition, the meaning of pride, there is no greater truth one can reject than one that is sent down as a command from Allah. The Prophet’s Companions RA were at a safe and far distance from the diseases of jealousy and pride, the dangers of which they understood from the saying of Iblis, *“I am better than him,”* a saying that is rife with feelings of pride and jealousy.

*“Those who avoid great sins and Al-Fawahish illegal sexual intercourse, etc.) except the small faults, ~ Verily, your Lord is of Vast Forgiveness. He knows you well when He created you from the earth (Adam), and when you were foetuses in your mothers’ wombs. So ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows best him who fears Allah and keep his duty to Him [i.e., those who are Al-Muttaqoon (pious)].” (Qur’an 53: 32)*

The Companions learned from this that all human beings come from the same background and are created in the same manner; therefore, no one has the right to feel proud and superior because of his lineage; superiority results only from piety, acts of obedience, and good deeds - all of which must be performed with the intention of pleasing Allah. Iblis, who fell from the heights of obedience to the lowest levels of ignominy, felt that he was superior to Adam AS because of his background:

*“You created me from fire, and him You created from clay.” (Qur’an 7: 12)*

- 7) From Verses that were revealed in Makkah, the Companions

repeatedly learned that Iblis (Shaitaan) is their archenemy. When Iblis refused to perform prostration to Adam AS, Allah cursed Iblis and banished him from His Mercy. From that point onwards, Iblis became an enemy of Adam AS, his wife a, and all of their descendants. Allah said:

*“And surely, Hell is the promised place for them all.” (Qur’an 15: 43)*

In another Verse Allah said:

*“[Iblis (Satan)] said: “See? This one whom You have honoured above me, if You give me respite (keep me alive) to the Day of Resurrection, I will surely seize and mislead his offspring (by sending them astray) all but a few!” (Qur’an 17: 62)*

Here, Iblis announced his resolve and his plan to tempt the children of Adam AS and lead them astray; furthermore, he asked Allah to give him respite until the Day of Resurrection, so that he could have time to execute his plan. The following Verse also points to the severe and unmitigated enmity between Iblis and humankind:

*“[Iblis (Satan)] said: “O my Lord! Give me then respite till the Day they (the dead) will be resurrected.” Allah said: ‘Then, verily, you are of those reprieved, Till the Day of the time appointed.’”*

*[Iblis (Satan) said: “O my Lord! Because you misled me, I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth, and I shall mislead them all. Except Your chosen, (guided) slaves among them.” (Qur’an 15: 36-40)*

Thus the Companions believed with certainty that the nature of their relationship with Shaitaan is that of unmitigated hatred, which in no way can be changed to a more cordial relationship.

Negotiations, peace pacts, treaties - none of these can be enacted between mankind and Shaitaan to bring about peace between them. In fact, Shaitaan is afflicted with the worst form of monomania: his one deep obsession, his raison d'etre, is to lead human beings astray by any means necessary. Allah said:

*“When Our Torment reached them, why then did they not believe with humility? But their hearts became hardened, and Shattaan (Satan) made fair-seeming to them that which they used to do.” (Qur’an 6: 43)*



As in the previous Verse, as well as the following one, Shaitaan's main method is to make evil deeds fair seeming in the minds of people. Allah informed us that, when speaking about Queen Sheebah, Hudhud said to Sulaimaan:

*"I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allah, and Shaitaan (Satan) has made their deeds fair-seeming to them, and has barred them from (Allah's) Way, so they have no guidance." (Qur'an 27: 24)*

For all of the above-mentioned reasons, the Companions took Shaitaan to be their enemy, and thus obeyed Allah's command in this Verse:

*"Surely, Shaitaan (Satan) is an enemy to you, so take (treat) him as an enemy. He only invites his Hizb (followers) that they may become the dwellers of the blazing Fire." (Qur'an 35: 6)*

The Companions learned that they had to speak to one another in the politest and best of ways, in obedience to the command of Allah:

*"And say to My slaves (i.e., the true believers of Islamic Monotheism) that they should (only) say those words that are the best. (Because) Shaitaan (Satan) verily, sows disagreements among them. Surely, Shaitaan (Satan) is to man a plain enemy." (Qur'an 17: 53)*

Not only did Allah inform Muslims that Shaitaan is their archenemy; He also told them how to protect themselves from Shaitaan's plots, one such plot being to sow the seeds of dissension among Muslims. So the Companions learned that if they did not speak to one another with good and polite speech, Shaitaan would kindle the flames of enmity among them.

*"Surely, Shaitaan (Satan) is to man a plain enemy."*

Because Shaitaan is man's plain enemy, he wants nothing more - and nothing else, for that matter - than for harm to befall him. The Prophet trained and cultivated his Companions. to deal with people with the noblest and best of manners. Allah said:

*"Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best-Acquainted with the things they utter. And say: 'My Lord! I seek refuge with You from the whisperings (suggestions) of the Shayaatin (devils). And I seek refuge with You, My Lord! Lest they may*

*attend (or come near) me.' (Qur'an 23: 96-98)*

*"Repel evil with that which is better."*

Means: with the best of qualities - forgiveness, politeness, kindness, and in general, noble manners. It is in this manner that one should combat a person who does evil by him, for by doing so, that person's enmity will turn into friendship, and his hatred will turn into love.

*"And I seek refuge with You, my Lord! Lest they may attend (or come near) me." (Qur'an 23: 98)*

Means: I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they come near to me in any of my affairs. For the very purpose of driving away the Shaitaan, Muslims are commanded to remember Allah at the beginning of all of their affairs.

Allah said:

*"The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e., Allah ordered the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly), then verily! He, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of the happiness in the Hereafter, i.e., Paradise and in this world of a high moral character). And if an evil whisper from Shaitaan (Satan) tries to turn you away (O Muhammad) (from doing good, etc.), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower." (Qur'an 41: 34-36)*

Allah's saying:

*"Repel evil with that which is better."*

Means: Defend yourself from the person who wronged you by treating him well and by showing him good manners. If one does this, then the person who wronged him will have a change of heart: As Allah says:

*"He, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend." (Qur'an 41: 34)*

By treating well the person who treats you badly, you will win out in the end; your acts of kindness towards him will infuse love for you in his heart, until he, with his reciprocal feelings of compassion and acts of kindness, will be as a close friend to you. Allah then said:

*“But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient, and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of the happiness in the Hereafter, i.e., Paradise and in this world of a high moral character).” (Qur’an 41: 35)*

No one will apply Allah’s command to do well by those who do one harm, except for one who is endowed with the quality of patience, for it is among the most difficult of things for the soul to follow this particular command. But if one does apply this command of Allah, he will have a great share of happiness in this world and the Hereafter.  
In the following Verse Allah said:

*“And if an evil whisper from Shaitaan (Satan) tries to turn you away (O Muhammad) (from doing good, etc.), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.” (Qur’an 41: 36)*

What this means is that if the Shaitaan whispers to you, commanding you to reciprocate the harm that is done to you and to gain revenge, then seek refuge in Allah from Shaitaan’s evil whisperings. Unlike human beings, Shaitaan does not change his stance or attitude when someone tries to treat him kindly; in his mind, the only way a person can win him over is by obeying his command to disobey Allah. Human beings, on the other hand, are open - at least in many cases - to being won over through kind acts of affection. This is why Islam encourages Muslims to treat well those human beings who treat them badly.

The Shaitaan too treats Muslims badly, by ordering them to do evil, but the only way they can protect themselves from his harm is to seek refuge in Allah from Shaitaan’s evil. Throughout the Noble Qur’an, a clear explanation is given regarding the reality of the relationship between man and Shaitaan, mainly in terms of this world and how Muslims should go about protecting themselves from his evil, but also in terms of the Hereafter, as in the following Verses:

*“And they all shall appear before Allah (on the Day of Resurrection) then the weak will say to those who were arrogant (chiefs): “Verily, we were following you; can you avail us anything from Allah’s Torment?” They will say: “Had Allah guided us, we would have guided you. It makes no difference to us (now) whether we rage, or bear (these torments) with patience, there is no place of refuge for us.” And Shaitaan (Satan) will say*

when the matter has been decided: *“Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me (Satan) as a partner with Allah (by obeying me in the life of the world). Verily, there is a painful torment for the Zaalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.).”* (Qur’an 14: 21, 22)