In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Satan - The Devil (Know your Enemy) Part 3

After Satan was cursed and cast out of heaven because of his disobedience to Allah (SWT), he swore by Allah’s majesty and honor that he would do whatever he could within his means to deceive the progeny of Adam. “Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful” (al-A’raf, 7:17).

Allah (SWT) had revealed to the angels that he would be making a khalifah on earth. “And (mention) when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth’…” (al-Baqarah, 2:30). This khalifah would be Adam. A khalifah is one who represents God on earth by acting according to the Divine Will, by upholding and maintaining God’s kingdom here on earth, and by ruling justly among people. Imam al-Qurtubi and other scholars infer from this ayah that the role of a khalifah among other responsibilities is to pass judgments between people on matters of dispute, to aid the oppressed against the oppressor, to forbid evil and to implement the Shariah. While khalifah literally means a successor, by extension, it also means one who acts justly among people in accordance with the truth. In addressing Dawud (AS), He (SWT) says, “O Dawud! We have made you a vicegerent (khalifah) on earth, so judge between people in truth and do not follow vain desires, lest it divert you from the Way of Allah…” (Saad, 38:26). It is in that context the khilafah of Adam may be understood.

Allah (SWT) implanted the seed of knowledge in Adam by teaching him the name of things. “He taught Adam the names of all things…” (al-Baqarah, 2:31). That was Adam’s encounter with his use of intellect. Adam’s assignment on earth required him to be trained for the task. This training began when Allah (SWT) provided Adam and his wife Hawwa with a heavenly abode in the form of a garden full of provisions and delights. They had the permission of their Lord to avail themselves of all that was at their disposal except for a tree that they were not allowed to approach. Their training was to obey this command. “We said, O Adam, live in the Garden, you and your wife, and eat freely from it wherever you will. But do not approach this tree or you will both become wrongdoers” (al-Baqarah, 2:35).

Satan did not spare a moment in the pursuit of his avowed goal of leading humans away from the straight path. He went straight ahead to plot against Adam and his wife. He enticed them into eating from the forbidden tree. “But Satan made them slip, and removed them from the state they were in…” (al-Baqarah, 2:36). He posed to be their well wisher. “And he swore to them, ‘I am indeed your well-wisher’ (al-A’raf, 7:21). He whispered suggestions to them. “…Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you from becoming angels or immortals” (al-A’raf, 7:20). He further said, “O Adam, shall I lead you to the tree of everlasting life and a kingdom that will never decay?” (Ta Ha, 20:120).

In these ayat, we find that Allah (SWT) commanded man to do certain things and to abstain from certain things. Satan was deceitful and fooled Adam and Hawwa into disobeying Allah (SWT) by eating from the tree. Adam was undergoing his probation and one may say that an intellectual evolution had begun whereby man had to use his faculties of reasoning and not get enchanted by the seemingly innocuous and logical but actually vile and devious scheming of Satan. “He lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the garden to cover themselves. Their Lord called unto them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy? (al-A’raf, 7:22). What is significant from this ayah is that when one commits a wrong deed, it becomes manifest. Hence their shame was manifest and noticeable. Allah (SWT) immediately reminded them of the prohibition He had imposed on them and their transgression thereof. Adam and Hawwa were full of shame and ignominy. Their instinctive sense of shame and honor prompted them to cover their private parts with leaves from the garden. They began searching for words to show their remorse and sorrow and to make repentance for their folly to their Lord. Allah (SWT) taught Adam what to say. “Adam then received words from His Lord, so He forgave him; He is the Forgiver, the Merciful” (al-Baqarah, 2:37). They both began to invoke Allah (SWT) with the words they received from Him. “Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, then we will be of the losers!” (al-A’raf, 7:23).

In His infinite mercy, Allah (SWT) forgave them and accepted their repentance.

There is great wisdom in every ayah and word of Allah (SWT). It is to be noted that while both Adam and Hawwa were guilty of
disobedience and were searching for words to repent to their Lord, we learn from ayah 37 of Surat al-Baqarah that it was only Adam who received the words to be uttered for making repentance and seeking forgiveness from Allah (SWT). That is because Adam was primarily responsible for whatever happened as he was the head of the household. This phenomenon is further clarified from the ayah, which states, “Men are overseers over women…” (al-Nisa’, 4:34). Man, by virtue of his headship of the household becomes directly responsible and accountable for whatever may go wrong in the family.

Allah (SWT) under His grand design of planning and executing gave some useful instructions and guidelines to Adam, “Go down from here as enemies to each other! You will have residence on earth and enjoyment for a time” (al-Baqarah, 2:36). “…On it you will live and on it die and from it you will be brought forth” (al-A’raf, 7:25). “…Then when guidance comes to you from Me, those who follow My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (al-Baqarah, 2:38).

It has been explained by many scholars that the garden (jannah) in which Adam and Hawwa dwelt was not the eternal paradise (jannat al-khuld) in which the believers will be admitted to in the hereafter. It was a location on earth. This is so because Adam’s training had to be conducted in the same place where he would assume his responsibility of khilafah. This premise is further supported by the fact that there is not a single prohibition in paradise. Therefore, the prohibition of not going near the tree must have been a place on earth. Moreover, had Adam’s dwelling place been paradise, how was it possible for Satan to find an entry into it when he had already been expelled from it. So, in all likelihood, the garden referred to in the story of Adam was on earth; and Allah knows best.

On the analogy of the story of Adam to whom everything was permissible except the forbidden tree, the rule for us also is that all is permissible except what is unlawful. But commands made by Allah (SWT) have to be understood properly. At times there is a specific prohibition—the prohibition of eating pig’s meat for example. This means that if one were to touch the pig, it would not be a sin. However, there are certain types of prohibitions where one is asked not even to approach them. In order to plug illicit relationships, for example, the Qur’an urges believers not even to approach adultery and fornication. “Do not even approach adultery (and fornication). It is indecent and an evil act” (al-Isra’, 17:321). This is why all doors that may prompt one toward this evil path must be closed. This is in line with Allah (SWT)’s injunctions in which believing men and women are both commanded to lower their glance when encountering the opposite sex. “Say to the believing men to lower their glances and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. Allah is well aware of everything they do” (al-Nur, 24:30). “Say to the believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal…” (al-Nur, 24:31). All avenues to promiscuity are automatically closed once these instructions are complied with in letter and spirit.

It was discussed in a previous sermon on this topic that the name Iblis (Satan) is derived from the Arabic word ablasa which means the one who despairs or the one broken in spirit or the most frustrated and miserable one. After being cast out of heaven and cursed by Allah (SWT), Satan has lost all hope. In his enmity and jealousy against man, he has declared war against Adam and his progeny. Adam was the first victim of his deceit and falsehood. But that was the beginning. He will remain our enemy till the end of times, because Allah (SWT) has granted him respite till the Day of Judgment. We have to be on our guard against Satan’s machinations. Seeking refuge in Allah (SWT) from the accursed Satan is the most potent weapon against him and his agents. May Allah (SWT) protect us all from all evil, Ameen.

Adam and Hawwa were the first victims of deceit.

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