111596 - He is asking about the way in which Iblees whispered to our father Adam

the question

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, tells us in His holy Book that when Iblees (may Allah curse him) refused to prostrate to Adam, He, may He be glorified and exalted, expelled him from Paradise. I would like you to explain something I am confused about, which is how did Iblees whisper to our father Adam when Adam was in Paradise, at the time when Allah, may He be exalted, had expelled him (Iblees)?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

We do not think that the questioner or any other Muslim should focus too much on the details of the stories that are told in the Qur'an, concerning which there is no sound report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), because if there were any great benefit or wisdom in that, Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, would have mentioned it in His Book, or the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would have taught it to his companions. So the Muslim should not let himself be distracted by that which is less important from that which is more important, or by minor details from the fundamentals.

It was narrated that al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Verily Allah dislikes for you gossip, asking too many questions, and wasting wealth." Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2408) and Muslim (593).

Ibn Hajar said in Fath al-Baari (3/342):

Ibn at-Teen said: It may be that what is meant is asking about issues that are unclear, or about

what one does not need to ask about, therefore he (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do not ask me about details that I have not mentioned to you.” And I say: Interpreting it as referring to ambiguous, unnecessary matters is more appropriate. End quote.

Secondly:

That also includes indulging in discussion of the details of the way in which Iblees (may Allah curse him) whispered to our father Adam and our mother Hawwa’ (peace be upon them both). The Holy Quran only mentions the basics of the incident, without discussing details of the nature of the whispering or the way in which it happened. The clearest texts that speak of that are the verses in which Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Then Shaytaan (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 (Shaytaan (Satan)) swore by Allah to them both (saying): ‘Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both’”

[al-A‘raaf 7:20-21]

And

“Then Shaytaan (Satan) whispered to him, saying : ‘O Adam! Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that will never waste away?’”

[Ta-Ha 20:120].

If we examine the apparent meaning of the verses, it will become clear to us that this whispering was verbal and in the form of a direct address. Some of the scholars narrated that from the majority of commentators. Al-Qurtubi aid in al-Jaami‘ li Ahkaam al-Qur’an (1/312): Ibn Mas‘ood, Ibn ‘Abbaas and the majority of the scholars said: He tempted them verbally, and the evidence for that is the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And he (Shaytaan (Satan)) swore by Allah to them both (saying): ‘Verily, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for you both’”

[al-A‘raaf 7:20-21].

The apparent meaning of the word translated here as swore is that it was done verbally. End quote.

But this apparent meaning does not explain how Iblees was able to address these words to Adam and Hawwa’, and whether he appeared in his regular form or disguised himself to them, and whether he entered Paradise in a real sense or a metaphorical one. All of these are matters of the unseen which we cannot discuss without any proof or knowledge, unless we go by the reports which have been narrated from some of the Sahaabah and Taabi‘een, which Ibn Jareer at-Tabari (1/532) favoured and which originated with Wahb ibn Munabbih and were based on the knowledge of the People of the Book. These reports say that when Iblees wanted to tempt them, he entered the body of a snake, and the snake had four legs, like a camel. It was one of the most beautiful beasts that Allah had created, and when the snake entered Paradise, Iblees emerged from its body. End quote.

Or we may note what was affirmed by Shaykh al-Ameen ash-Shinqeeti in Adwa’ al-Bayaan, where he said:

The commentators mention concerning that the story of the snake, and that Iblees entered its body in order to gain admittance to Paradise, without the angels who were appointed over it realising that. All of that comes from the Israa’eeliyyaat (stories from Jewish sources), and in fact there is no problem with that, because it is possible that Iblees stood outside Paradise, soon after he was expelled, in such a way that Adam could hear his words whilst he was in Paradise. And it is possible that Allah admitted him to Paradise in order to test Adam and his wife, not by way of honouring Iblees. In rational terms there is no problem with any of that, and the Qur’an says that Iblees spoke to Adam and swore an oath to him in order to tempt him and his wife thereby. End quote.

Rather what concerns us in this regard is that we should believe with faith in which is no doubt that this story did indeed happen as Allah has told us in His Book, and that the seed of enmity was sown between Iblees and his troops and Adam and his progeny: “Surely, Shaytaan (Satan) is to man a plain enemy” [al-Isra’ 17:53].

So beware of him as Allah has warned you, and seek help against him by means of sincere devotion to Allah:

“(Iblees (Satan)) said: "By Your Might, then I will surely mislead them all,

‘Except Your chosen slaves amongst them (faithful, obedient, true believers of Islamic Monotheism)’”

[Saad 38:82-83].

Beware, O slave of Allah, lest you be among those who go astray:

“(Allah) said: "This is the Way which will lead straight to Me.

Certainly, you shall have no authority over My slaves, except those who follow you of the Ghaween (Mushrikoon and those who go astray, criminals, polytheists, and evil-doers, etc.)

And surely, Hell is the promised place for them all.

It (Hell) has seven gates, for each of those gates is a (special) class (of sinners) assigned”

[al-Hijr 15:41-44].

And Allah knows best.