

Home > An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an vol. 8 > Section 7: Satan's Pride against Man > Surah Isra' – Verse 70 > Why Man Is the Most Superior of Allah's Creatures

Section 7: Satan's Pride against Man

Surah Isra' – Verse 61

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا

61. “And (remember) when We said to the angels: ‘Prostrate unto Adam’; so they (all) did prostrate except ‘Iblis who said: ‘Am I to prostrate to the one You have created of clay?’”

Here, the Qur'an alludes to the unruliness of 'Iblis with regard to the Allah's command, concerning the issue of prostration to Adam, and the viscous fate awaiting him, sums up the story.

Dealing with this issue, following the previous discussions about the obstinate pagans, indeed, reveals the fact that the complete and the total picture of arrogance, paganism, and unruliness has been the Satan. The Qur'an points out as to how his fate ended; hence, the followers of the Satan will meet their doom in just the same way.

At first, He says:

“And (remember) when We said to the angels: ‘Prostrate unto Adam’; so they (all) did prostrate except ‘Iblis...”

This prostration is some kind of modesty and humbleness for the sake of the glorification of the creation of man and his excellence over other beings or else it has been of the sort that has been performed, facing Allah for the creation of such an amazing creature.

The Satan which had been overwhelmed by arrogance and pride, and his egotism and conceit had covered a curtain over his intelligence, and thinking that ‘the earth’, which is the source of all blessings and the origin of all beings, is inferior to fire, addressing his objections to the Lord, the verse says about

him:

“...who said: ‘Am I to prostrate to the one You have created of clay?’”

Therefore, we repeatedly face the issue of the prostration of the angels in the Qur’an, and the unruliness of the Satan in this connection.

’Iblis is of the ‘Jinn’ lot,

“...he was of the jinn...”¹

and has got an army:

“And the host of ’Iblis, all.”²

and has also got infantry battalions as well as a mounting army:

“...and collect your cavalry and infantry against them...”³

and is the cause of all deviations and, finally, his abstinence from prostration, provides a comparison between the earth and fire, where he said:

“...You created me of fire while you created him of clay’.”⁴

Surah Isra’ – Verse 62

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَنَا عَلَىٰ لَيْسَ أَخَرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا حَتَّكَ زُرِّيَّتُهُ إِلَّا
قَلِيلًا

62. “He (the Satan) said: ‘Tell me, is this he whom you have honoured above me? If You respite me till the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly master his progeny, save a few.’”

When the Satan noticed that, as a consequence of his arrogance and unruliness in face of the Lord’s command, he has become an outcast from the Lord’s holy sanctuary for ever, said humbly:

Were I to be given a respite till the resurrection day by You, I shall seduce all the progenitors of this human being, make them perish altogether starting from the scratch, seducing them all except a few of them.

The verse says:

“He (the Satan) said: ‘Tell me, is this he whom you have honoured above me? If You respite me

till the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly master his progeny, save a few.”

The Arabic term /'ahtanikanna/ which is derived from the term /'ihtin ak/ means ‘eradicating’ something or ‘uprooting’. Thus, when locusts perish an entire agricultural land, the Arabs say: “*locusts eradicated the farming.*” This Qur’anic expression, therefore, refers to the point that: I will uproot all of the children of Adam from the path of obedience, except a few of them.

There is the possibility that the Arabic term /'ihtanikanna/ is a derivation of /hanak/, meaning: ‘beneath the throat’.

When the rope or the bridle is placed around the neck of an animal, the Arabs often use the expression /hanak-ad-dabbah/, meaning that ‘the animal was bridled’. In fact, the Satan wants to claim that he will put the bridle of temptation around the neck of all human beings thus leading them toward the wrong path.

Surah Isra’ – Verse 63

قَالَ اذْهَبْ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاؤُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا

63. “(Addressing the Satan), He said: ‘Depart! But whoever of them follows you, then verily Hell will be your recompense, a recompense in full!’”

Man is free in his acceptance of the path of the Lord and/or in pursuing the Satan.

The Lord’s punishment is all-encompassing; the guilty will be provided with both the divine chastisement which is due to their own sins, and the punishment for misleading others in their entirety either.

Incidentally, in order to realize an experimental field for all, and proper means for the education of the true devout believers, which all tend to shape man in the melting pot, and in order to become strong against the enemy, the Satan was provided with the means for survival and activities:

the verse says:

“(Addressing the Satan), He said: ‘Depart! But whoever of them follows you, then verily Hell will be your recompense, a recompense in full!’”

It is by means of this nature that He declares the method of testing and explains the ultimate aim of victory and defeat in this grand Divine trial.

Surah Isra' – Verse 64

وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِم بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي
الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعِدِّهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُّهُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

64. “And startle whomever of them you can with your voice, and collect your cavalry and infantry against them; and share with them in wealth and children and make promises to them; and the Satan makes no promises to them except delusion.”

The Satan, at first, removes man’s instinct for monotheism by means of persuasion. Later, he seeks to invade him with his ammunitions and armies.

The Arabic term /’istfz az/ here signifies ‘stumbling’ or ‘slipping’ with speed and adeptness as well as by way of pushing.

The Satan does not just select one way for deceiving man. On the contrary, he usually entrenches man from all sides, accompanied by a number of other ways using all forms of persuasions, dissuasions, promises, aspirations, temptations, and enticements, which are as its mounting forces and its foot-soldiers, and in this course some people follow him.

We have it in quotations that he who has no fear of anyone in what he says and in what he does, or what he is said about; committing sins or back-biting openly, is a partner to the Satan.⁵

Other cases of forming partnership with the Satan, consist of: having forbidden sources of income, living on illegal money, adultery, raising corrupt and deviant offspring ⁶

And he who regards the Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) of the Prophet (S) as enemies, has allowed the Satan to enter into partnership with him.⁷

Unhealthy production and consumption, hoarding wealth, investment of foreign companies and foreign corporations, creation of scientific, cultural, and artistic centers as well as international games, which are colonial, are kinds of partnership with the Satan.

Anyway, explaining in an interesting and explicit fashion, He exposes the ways and means through which the Satan employs in his temptations. The Qur’an, addressing him, implies: you can provoke them each with your voice, and you can dispatch your mounting and infantry army units against them.

The verse says:

“And startle whomever of them you can with your voice, and collect your cavalry and infantry

against them...”

The Satan possesses numerous aids and assistants who are of his own kind as well as from among mankind who help the Satan in seducing people. Some who are more powerful and speedier in act just like the mounting army; others are weaker and slower in action and behave just like infantry.

The verse, addressing the Satan, continues saying:

“...and share with them in wealth and children and make promises to them...”

Then the Qur'an warns that the Satan does not do anything else except deceiving them.

The verse says:

“...and the Satan makes no promises to them except delusion.”

Surah Isra' – Verse 65

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا

65. “Verily (as for) My servants, you have not any authority over them; and your Lord suffices (as their) Guardian.”

Notwithstanding the fact that all people are the servants of Allah, the Lord, out of respect, has ascribed some to Himself by saying “**My servants**”, as He has also used such a term for proximity concerning the inanimate objects as well as in the case of /bayti/ (My house).

‘The servants of Allah’, have also been introduced with specifications of ‘faith’ and ‘trust’ in another verse, those who are by no means dominated by the Satan. 8

Certainly, the Satan carries out its temptation; establishes contacts, but they become constantly mindful and go on with their resistance. 9

We have it in quotations that ‘prayer call’ and ‘prayers’ are two ways of expelling the Satan. 10

Therefore, serving and worshipping the Lord provides one with insurance against satanic persuasions, temptations and Satanic deployments, for he who joins the Infinite Power, will become impenetrable.

The verse says:

“Verily (as for) My servants, you have not any authority over them; and your Lord suffices (as their) Guardian.”

Anyway, he who becomes the servant of Allah, He will take care of him as his advocate, as his guardian, and as his superintendent.

Surah Isra' – Verse 66

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

66. “Your Lord is He Who makes the ship go for you through the sea that you may seek of His grace; verily He is ever Merciful to you.”

This verse pursues the discussions which we had before about monotheism and about the campaigns against paganism. It enters this discussion through two different ways: by reasoning, and through the way of conscience and the inside or internal system.

At first, the Holy Qur'an alludes to the monotheism through reasoning, saying:

“Your Lord is He Who makes the ship go for you through the sea...”

Obviously, there are numerous benefits for transportation available by sea–routes, including cheapness of traveling, their suitability for being used at all the times by all the general public and for transportation of goods passengers and fishing.

The role of the seas in the field of providing oxygen, production of water vapor, clouds, and rain; developing beds for fishery industries and wanders of material, plants and animals are remarkable. The amazing surprises they present in matters relating to the inanimate objects, plant and animal life are abundant.

We read in the ‘Joushan Kabir’ supplication:

“O! The One Whose wonders of creation are found in abundance at sea!”

Then the Qur'an adds that the aim of all these preparations are that you benefit from His blessings in matters relating to your travels, to the transportation of your goods, merchandise, and to whatever else which is of help to your religion as well as to your worldly life, for the Lord is kind to you.

The holy verse says:

“...that you may seek of His grace; verily He is ever Merciful to you.”

Surah Isra' – Verse 67

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَّاهُ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُ إِلَى الْبَرِّ
أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا

67. “And when affliction touches you in the sea, away will go those on whom you call except him; but as He delivers you to the land, you turn away (from Him); and man is very ungrateful.”

One of the reasons as to why monotheism is inherent in human nature is the fact that man turns to an invisible point to save him when he is caught in distress and despair.

A man, who was an atheist, once asked Imam Sadiq (as) to provide him with a proof for proving the existence of the Lord.

The Imam asked him:

“Have you ever embarked a ship which has been wrecked?”

“Yes,”

He answered:

“Only once. We were once ship wrecked and I used a piece of wood.”

The Imam (as) then asked:

“Were you then focusing on a power to save you?”

He answered:

“Yes,”

He (as) continued:

“That very invisible power is the Lord, the Almighty.”

Therefore, when at loss in a sea and winds stop blowing or the sea waves threaten you, etc, all your objects of worship will be forgotten, except the only Lord. In such a circumstance, it is Allah Who can save you, to Whom you appeal and you call on no one else.

However, as you were saved by Him from drowning; and felt safe, you will turn away from Him and refuse to believe in Him and to obey Him being ungrateful, and man does this too often.

The verse says:

“And when affliction touches you in the sea, away will go those on whom you call except him; but as He delivers you to the land, you turn away (from Him)...”

Certainly, worldly interests are so enticing that man tends to forget everything shortly, after being saved of the affliction and neglecting Allah after being saved is an explicit example of ungratefulness.

The verse continues saying:

“...and man is very ungrateful.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 68

أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيلًا

68. “Do you then feel secure that He will not cause the shore to swallow you up, or send on you squall of pebbles? Then, you will not find protector for yourselves.”

The annihilation of the former nations has been completed in various ways. The Lord has made the earth bury some of the violators and enemies, while He has made others drown at sea. Some have been stoned in landslip, and others have been perished in thunderbolts.

Therefore, the Lord is evermore capable of annihilation of the pagans. If today you are saved from a ship-wreck at sea, landing safely, do not feel to be safe in other circumstances, or that you are secure from future punishments.

This same feeling of security from chastisement provides grounds for our negligence and unruliness. Man is at Allah’s power whenever and wherever he is; whether be it at sea or on a dry land; makes no difference for Allah.

The verse says:

“Do you then feel secure that He will not cause the shore to swallow you up, or send on you squall of pebbles?...”

Therefore, Do you think that Allah is unable to inflict severe punishment on you, whether at sea or on land? Do you then feel safe if there is a tornado in which you get caught, stoning you to death? Such a chastisement is harsher than being drowned at sea.

Thus, why do you not look out for a protector to guard you off all dangers?

The verse concludes:

“... Then, you will not find protector for yourselves.”

Surah Isra’ – Verse 69

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَىٰ فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُم بِمَا
كَفَرْتُمْ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا

69. “Or do you feel secure that He will (not) send you back into it (the sea) another time, and then send on you a fierce gale then drown you for your disbelief; then you will find no prosecutor for you against Us?”

The Arabic term /hasib/ refers to a storm in land and the Qur’anic word /q asif/ here refers to a sea-hurricane, and it is a tornado with a severe sound as if the things are broken up.

The Qur’anic term /tabi’/ which is a derivative of /taba’/, refers to the person who seeks for blood-price and retribution, and follows up his appeal processes for lawsuit. Thus, He implies in this noble verse that:

You the oblivious! Are you of the opinion that this was the last time that you went on a sea journey? Or do you feel safe and secure if going on such a journey next time and a pounding tornado will not be sent to you to inflict punishment on you for your lack of gratefulness? Then, you shall find no savior facing Us?

The verse says:

“Or do you feel secure that He will (not) send you back into it (the sea) another time, and then send on you a fierce gale then drown you for your disbelief; then you will find no prosecutor for you against Us?”

Thus, we must not feel proud when having temporary comfort. The danger is always near us. By being saved from an affliction, the danger is not done with for good forever. Neglecting Allah after being saved serves as a good example of ungratefulness towards Him. No power can face the Lord, and Allah is not responsible to anyone.

Surah Isra’ – Verse 70

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ
وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

70. “And, indeed, We have honored the children of Adam, and We carried them on the land and the sea; and We provided them with sustenance of the good things; and We preferred them greatly over many of those We created.”

As attaching importance to the personality of individuals is one way of educating and guiding them, following its discussion concerning pagans and deviants in the previous verses, here the glorious Qur'an deals with the highly valued personality of humankind and Allah's blessings regarding them.

So that, noting this extraordinary high value, he should, not spoil such a precious material easily, selling it at a cheap rate.

The noble verse says:

“And, indeed, We have honored the children of Adam...”

Afterwards, the Holy Qur'an refers to the three aspects of Allah's blessings to man, implying that He transported them at sea and on land by the different means of transportation which He made available to them.

The verse says:

“...and We carries them on the land and sea...”

And, the other one is that:

“...and We provided them with sustenance of the good things...”

It continues saying:

“...and We preferred them greatly over many of those We created.”

Why Man Is the Most Superior of Allah's Creatures

The answer is not very complicated for we know that man is the only being that is formed of different potentialities, whether material and spiritual, bodily and mentally, and he can grow up within contradictions. Man is unlimited from the point of capacity and development.

There is a famous tradition quoted from Hadrat Ali (as) which is a clear evidence for this claim, where he says:

*“Allah has created all creatures into 3 different categories: Angels, Animals and Human Beings. The angels have got reasoning without any passion or fury but without intellect. The animals are collections of passions and fury. But, man is a collection unity of both; one of which must prevail. If his reason overcomes his passion, he will be superior to the angels, and if his passions dominate his reason, he will be just inferior to animals.”*¹¹

As for the human dignity, which is at times spiritual and acquired and is with Allah, such as that kind of dignity (or honour) which is exclusive to the men of virtue.

The Qur'an says:

“Verily the most honourable of you with Allah is the most virtuous one.”¹²

At other times, human dignity (or honour) is found in the process of creation, like:

“...in the best make.”¹³

which has been mentioned about the creation of man.

The objective of /karramn a/ in this verse, perhaps, is the second aspect of it. Man's dignity is both in his creation, intelligence, intellect, and talents, and in having the Divine laws, the leadership of the 'immaculate' and of being prostrated to by the angels.

Incidentally, though man has been excelled to all creatures by Allah, even to the angels, his failure in selecting the right path, and his indecent acts bring him down to the lowest possible positions:

“...the lowest of the low”¹⁴,

which equates those of the animals and even lower than them.

“...is as the likeness of the donkey...”¹⁵

The examples are:

“...so his parable is like the parable of a dog...”¹⁶

and

“...they are as cattle, rather they are more astray...”¹⁷,

or

“...as stone or even worse...”¹⁸

This verse refers to both dignity (or honour) and virtues. The differences of the two may consist of:

Honour: can be considered as advantages which are lacking in others, while, virtues, consist of positive points which are also found in others.

Honour refers to the Allah-given blessings which exist within man with no struggles, while, virtues concern the blessings which have been gained by the effort of man accompanied with the Divine succor.

Honour concerns the material blessings, while virtue relates to spiritual blessings.

In conclusion, traveling is one of the necessities of human life for meeting his needs and acquiring of experiences, which the Lord has provided for man in land and at sea, calling it as one of His graces.

Then, there are the 'good things' which are of several kinds: The 'clean life', the 'clean offspring', the 'clean sustenance'.

Imam Baqir (as) says:

"The clean sustenance is the same useful knowledge." 19

-
1. Surah Al-Kahf, No. 18, verse 50
 2. Surah Ash-Shu'ar a, No. 26, verse 95
 3. Surah 'Isr a', No. 17, verse 64
 4. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 18, verse 12
 5. Tafsir-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn
 6. Bihar, vol. 101, p. 136
 7. Kafi, vol. 5, p. 502
 8. Surah An-Nahl, No. 16, verse 99
 9. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 201
 10. Bihar, vol. 63, p. 268
 11. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 3, p. 188
 12. Surah Al-Hujurat, No. 49, verse 13
 13. Surah At-Teen, No. 99, verse 4
 14. Surah Al-Hujurat, No. 95, verse 5
 15. Surah Al-Jumu'ah, No. 62, verse 5
 16. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 176
 17. Ibid, verse 179
 18. Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 74
 19. Tafsir-Kanz-uld-Daqayiq

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/enlightening-commentary-light-holy-quran-vol-8/section-7-satans-pride-against-man>