



THE ADAMIC REALITY:
The Beginning of "I"

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Surah al Fatiha

**AL-HAMDU-LI-LLĀHI, MUQALIBA-L-QULŪBI WA-L-ABSĀR.
ALLĀHUMMA THĀBIT QULŪBANA ʿALA SIRĀTIKA-L-QAWĪM,
WA-JʿALNĀ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHĪN, WA ʿSALLI ʿALA-Sh-ShAFĪʿI-L-HABĪB,
RAḤMATIL-ʿĀLAMĪN, WA MANĀRI-L-NAJIYĪN, WA MARSĀ-L-ʿĀRIFĪN**

Praise be to Allah, the Turner of the hearts and sight.
O Allah, fix our hearts on the best of Your ways,
and make us face You in our way, and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
the mercy of all the worlds, the lighthouse of the survivors, the harbor of the knowers.

**YĀ MAWJŪDAN ʿINDA-Sh-ShADĀĀʾIDI YA KHAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YĀ LATĪFA-S-SUNʿI
YĀ HALĪMAN, LĀ YAʼJILUQDI ḤĀJATĪ BI-RAḤMATIKA, YĀ ARḤAMA-R-RĀḤIMĪN.
SUBḤĀNAKA ʿALĀ ḤILMIKA BAʿDA ʿILMIK. SUBḤĀNAKA ʿALĀ ʿAFWIKA BAʿDA QUDRATIK**

O Existent One, O Thou Who are Present in all difficulties. O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle making.
O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need, with Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the Mercifuls.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to approach the discussion of the Messengers of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*): historically, theologically, metaphorically, or inter-culturally, just to name a few. When we speak of Hazrat Adam and Hawa (on them both be peace), we speak also of the story of our own creation, the story of all humanity. We speak of the greatest gifts bestowed on humanity by Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) and of our deepest flaws: flaws of arrogance and forgetfulness. Most importantly, we speak of humility, repentance, the immensity of Allah's Mercy, and the far-reaching plan and design of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). Hazrat Adam was the first in a long line of messengers, all bringing a consistent message through time, to the peoples and nations of this world. The relevancy of a consistent and yet dynamically

changing (appropriate) message for time, place, and people is a facet that I will, *inshaa'a-Llaah*, touch on today, albeit and ironically, without having the time to explicate in detail.

We can ask questions like, “Why has humanity had so many messengers? Who is the recipient of the message? Why does the message appear, on one hand, clear and concise; and on the other hand is limited to a single group?” And perhaps the most important question: “Why is the message not heeded, time and again, even though it originates with Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta‘aalaa*) and is presented by His designated and chosen Messengers?” The intricacies of the message, the language of the message (it has been in every language if Allah sent a warner to every community), and the method or form of delivery are all worth considering, even before we attempt to speak about our Father and Mother: Adam and Hawa. As we lack the time to fully explore this, I will just touch on a few aspects and move on.

Inherent in the story of all messengers and warners is the reasonable and rational truth that Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta‘aalaa*) is Just, and leaves not one community out of the network of potential believers, but offers guidance to every single soul in His creation. As He says in Surah al-Isra:

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**MANI IHTADĀ FA'INNAMĀ YAHTADĪ LINAḤSIHI WA MAŅ DALLA FA'INNAMĀ YADILLU
‘ALAYHĀ ... WA MĀ KUNNĀ MU‘ADH-DHIBĪNA ḤATTĀ NAB‘ATHA RASŪLĀ.**

Whoever is guided is guided only to his own good, and whoever goes astray strays only to his own loss... We would never punish [any individual or community] until We send them a Messenger to give warning. (17:15)

Within this context, it is worthwhile to contemplate the value of choice and action in the destiny of humanity. Guidance is sent to humanity, but choice and personal responsibility remain key parts of the equation—from the time of Hazrat Adam (*‘alayhi-s-salaam*) and Hawa (*‘alayhaa-s-salaam*) to now. As Allah reminds us in Surah al-Zalzalah:

**FA-MAŅY-YA‘MAL MITHQĀLA DhARRATIN KhAYRAŅY-YARAH.
WA MAŅY-YA‘MAL MITHQĀLA DhARRATIŅ SHARRAŅY-YARAH.**

**And so whoever has done an atom’s weight of good shall see it;
And whoever has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it. [99:7-8]**

If we had not been sent messengers and given warnings, we would not know what is good and what is evil, and so could not be held accountable. But every individual will be called to account for good and evil deeds, and every group of people have been sent a Messenger.

WA LAQAD BA^cATHNĀ FĪ KULLI UMMATIR-RASŪLAN ANI U^cBUDŪ ALLĀHA WA-JTANIBŪ AT-TĀGHŪTA.

For We assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger with (the command), "Serve Allah and eschew evil." [16:36]

That message is a base-line of knowledge that we are all responsible for. It is the message that Allah (*Subhānahu wa ta^caalaa*) gave directly to Hazrat Adam (*^calayhi-s-salaam*) and Hawa (*^calayhaa-s-salaam*) when He created them; and it is the message to all their progeny, from that day until this day, a message carried by thousands of prophets and messengers, through time. So, as usual, I begin at the end today: with the message, and its repercussions, and reflections in our own lives; and will end at the beginning: with the creation of Hazrat Adam and Hawa.

PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

It is said in Islam that there were 124,000 prophets, but few are known; and of them only 28 are considered messengers. The Quran gives us the names of all 28 (*as-salaam ^calayhim ajma^ceen*), from Adam (*^calayhi-s-salaam*), the first, to Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ^calayhi wa sallam*), the last. We do not know where the very first prophet carried out his mission. We do know a little about the location of Abraham. We know that, at some time, he was probably in some part of Anatolia, Syria, and Babylon. Lot was associated with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, around the Dead Sea; Shu'ayb with Madyan, and Musa with Egypt; Yahya (John the Baptist) and Zakariyya (Zechariah) with Mediterranean countries. They may have crossed to Anatolia, since Christians link Mary and Jesus with Ephesus. But these associations are not certain, and are not based upon any strong evidence. What is certain is that for every people there is a messenger.

WA LIKULLI UMMATIR-RASŪLUŅ FA'IDhĀ JĀA'A RASŪLUHUM QUDĪYA BAYNAHUM BI-L-QISTI WA HUM LĀ YUDhLAMŪN.

And to every community a messenger [has been sent]. And when their messenger comes, [all matters] will be judged between them fairly and no one shall be oppressed. [10:47]

When we look historically at these messengers and their message, beginning with Hazrat Adam (*^calayhi-s-salaam*), we see a remarkable consistency in the message. Allah has made clear the main goal for the creation of mankind saying:

WA MĀ KhALAQTU-L-JINNA WA-L-'IŅSA ILLĀ LIYA^cBUDŪN.

I did not create jinn and mankind except for My worship. [51:56]

Changes and abrogations in the revelations have certainly taken place over time; there are many examples of that. One of the conclusions we can draw is that these changes in the Divine Revelation are somehow according to what is best suited for a specific time, and place, and for different stages of human

development. The messages and the laws presented by the prophets throughout the history were based on the same principles and goals, though they differed in other elements, or points, concerning law, duty, and responsibility, which were bounded by time, circumstance, and the period of human history. At the same time, one has to distinguish between these messages and see where they meet along this unified concept of the truth that we call Islam. Recognizing those principles that don't change and are constant is our duty. One has to go back and look at the aim of the Divine Message to recognize the essence of what these messengers were trying to relate to people—not just structurally, but contextually, as they are reflected in the Qur'an, and exemplified in the lives and teachings of the prophets, especially Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).

One thing that most people can agree about is that these messages have a common belief, which is the infrastructure on which all religions are based. Every messenger came with the same general concepts about the universe, the Creator of the universe, how life was constructed, of the oneness of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), and the belief in His messengers, His angels, in His scriptures and in the Hereafter. These, among others, are points around which all the messages are unified.

In this seven-part series we will explore and learn about the greatest of these messengers and the lessons we can learn for today from their stories. Each one of whom was raised up by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) and sent to humankind as a channel of communication between us and Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). It is through them that Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), in His Infinite Mercy, provided men and women with guidance to follow the right course, and so make this world a happy and peaceful place to live in. For those who accept and follow that guidance, the reward in the life after death is much greater and more desirable than the fleeting pleasures of this world. Each of these Messengers was sent both with glad tidings and with warnings.

WA MĀ NURSILU-L-MURSALĪNA ILLĀ MUBASHSHIRĪNA WA MUŔDHIRĪNA.

And We do not send the Messengers save as bearers of good news and as warners. [18: 56]

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-Aas (*radiya-Llaahu 'anhu*) reported that the Prophet (*Salla-Llaahu 'alayhi wa-sallam*) said: ***“There was never a Prophet before me except that it was a duty upon him that he should guide his nation to every good that he knew, and warn them against every evil that he knew...”*** [Muslim eng. trans. 3/1025 no. 4546]

This was the duty of the Messengers: that they should guide to every good and warn against every evil. Where did they start? What did they begin with? And on what did they concentrate when calling people to Allah, awakening people to their capacity to see and to hear and to accept the proof? This was the mission of every Messenger, to bring the people out from darkness and into light. There are so many examples in Qur'an: in Surah Ankabut, Surah Anfal, Surah Ambiyaa. We find that all these messages advocate *akhlaaq* (good conduct). They call people to piety and to righteousness, and they all talk about the *at-tazkiyyat* (the purification of self). All the messages encourage us to base our lives on the truth and on justice, and on the truth to fight against injustice and corruption, to follow the example of the prophets, who embodied the highest of these ideals and nobility.

As we dive into this series on the Great Messengers, I hope to do more than just re-tell the stories of these great men, but to illustrate this subtlety: the messenger is the message. The perfected being of the Messenger is, in itself, the embodiment of the Message and that perfection is the manifest attributes of Allah (*Subḥānahu wa taʿālaa*), as they actualize in the *dunya*, in the medium of the messenger. The Divine Will and the impulse of those attributes originate in the *ghayb* (the unseen world), through the will (*iraadah*), and the Names and Attributes seeded in each individual. This is the core or essence of the message, and sources of the admonitions for good and the warnings against evil. The messenger exemplifies the “message” to the degree that the two are inseparable. Communication theorist, Marshall McLuhan, once said, “The medium is the Message.” He described the tetrad of four categories (enhancement, reversal, retrieval, obsolescence) that determine the effect of and means of messaging. In this case, the medium is the prophet, it would seem; but the medium is also the heart of the recipient, as well as the Qur’an.

What does the medium enhance? (The lives and awakening of the children of Adam). What does the medium make obsolete? (The distortions and *fitna* of the past, of messages lost). What does the medium retrieve that had been obsolesced earlier? (The essence of the Divine Message; the heart of the believer that has been closed can be reopened.) What does the medium turn into when pushed to extremes? (The day will come when all that will be left of the Qur’an will be the ink on the page). I wish I had the time to use this model in detail; but I believe it becomes self-evident in the Prophetic realities, if you carry on the beginning guidelines that I just articulated. I bring in McLuhan only to point out that the Truth is discovered even analogically by individuals who seek to unravel the mystery of the yearning to understand the human/Divine communication. Eventually, the medium becomes the message itself; the personality of the messenger transforms the revelation, *vis a vis* the Divine trust and empowerment, into the Living Message, a message come to life, if you will, illustrating the higher potential of humanity. The message is presented by each messenger as a transformative ‘truth’ that can transform each of us into a reflector of the Divine Message in our life, perhaps like the moon’s reflection on the still pond.

Unfortunately, the purity of the message is, again and again, corrupted and distorted. Even the message of Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) became distorted by his own followers. After the demise of the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*), the message becomes lost in the *fitna* of internecine fighting, including such events as the deceptions that ensnare Imam Ali (*radiya-Llaahu ʿanhu*) and Aisha (*radiya-Llaahu ʿanhaa*) into a war. In less than 40 years, the message becomes distorted, while fewer and fewer people grasp the fact that a distorted message is an attack on the Prophet (*salla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*) himself; an attack – in fact and in essence – that continues up to this very time that we live in. How can the message survive without the messenger, if the Messenger of Allah is himself the best and the last manifestation and articulation of the message?

With this in mind, let us listen once again, with new ears to the story (briefly re-told) of our own forefather, Hazrat Adam (*ʿalayhi-s-salaam*), and Hawa (*ʿalayhaa-s-salaam*). The Message cannot be separated from the context (historical/human). Knowing, as I hope we do, the spiritual reality of the human being who yearns for unity—whether we use the metaphor of global technology as a unifying force, or the cognitive dissonance in the Islamic mentality of the present time—the urge for a unifying message and the correlative of an Ever-Living, Ever-Present Messenger remains. 1

1 McLuhan : ‘If the work of the city is the remaking or translating of man into a more suitable form than his nomadic ancestors achieved, then might not our current translation of our entire lives into the spiritual form of information seem to make of the entire globe, and of the human family, a single consciousness?’

In reflecting on the message and messengers, it is of particular import to note that with Hazrat Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*), in the beginning there were no other people to bring the message to. He himself was the recipient of the message; he and Hawa (*alayhaa-s-salaam*) were the ones being guided and warned, warned directly by Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaalaa*). In that there is the example of both listener and speaker, messenger and follower.

THE ADAMIC STORY

Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaalaa*) says in the Qur'an:

MINHĀ KHALAQNĀKUM WA FĪHĀ NUĪDUKUM WA MINHĀ NUKHRIJUKUM TĀRATAN UKHRĀ.

From the earth We created you, and into her We shall return you, and from her shall We bring you forth yet another time. [20:55]

In this *'ayat* Allah is telling us of our own creation and the creation of Hazrat Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*). Who is the first person, Adam, who is created from earth? Some have translated the name "Adam" as nothing, "no thing," which is quite an interesting translation of his name, as he was born out of no woman, no living thing, but was created out of sticky mud.² Be that as it may, what was to become the living Adam, was left for 40 days before the Breath was breathed into him. Some say it was for the angels to pass by the form and become used to the fact that there was going to be the creation of another being; to give time for the adjustment to the radical change of the way of existence at that time. Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) is not only the progenitor of all of us, but also and more importantly, a force, an intention. He is the Adamic imperative that is in each one of us to create.

This Adamic story is quite old. It is also quite diverse. It is found all over the world, in many different societies. It is found in Native American teachings. It is found in the Mau-Mau of North Africa, and other

² Others look to the Hebraic roots of possible origin: "Adam appears in Genesis mostly as "man" or in general "mankind", but also (less frequently) as Adam, a proper name. See for example Genesis 2:20, 3:17. There are 4 similar terms (by sound) in Hebrew: Dam = blood (root dmm) - common to many Semitic languages. Adam = man (root ?dm) Adom = red (root ?dm) Adama = earth, soil (root ?dm) Dam, adam and adama appear frequently one by the other in the initial chapters of Genesis, which seems intentional and yet doesn't prove any etymological relation. Dam/adom (blood/red) are likely to be related, no clear relation between these two and adam (man), adama (earth). The similarity adam-adama exists also in Latin: homo (man) and homus (earth).

Adam (man/Adam), ben adam (son of man/Adam) and the plural Bnei Adam (sons of man/Adam) mean in Hebrew man (the singular) and men/mankind (the plural). There's no feminine form, yet one can say about a woman "she is a good ben adam" where "son of man/Adam" is understood as genderless "person". In Modern Arabic it has come to mean 'man' or 'mankind' (genderless) (human-kind). The use of "Adam" as a proper name is a later development. Both, the Elohist and the Javist versions of the history of creation used "haadam"="the man" first as a common noun and not as a proper name. The word first appears in the Elohist version in Genesis 1.27: "So God created man (=haadam) in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

In the Javist version, the word also occurs with the definite article first in Genesis 2.7: "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." In Genesis 5, the Elohist starts to use "Adam" first as a name of the species, i.e. of mankind and then as a name for the first man (without definite article).

tribal areas in Africa. Along with it goes the affirmation of *tawheed* / unity, of one God – monotheism. It is found in Hinduism, though most people think of Hinduism as polytheistic. Sanatana Vishnu Dharma is found in the story of Shiva, and the many, many similar references. When we reflect on all the humans since the beginning that have come from Adam and Hawa (*alayhumma-s-salaam*), we understand that this is a progressive creation. Allah created Adam in many different stages, each of which is described in different place in Qur'an and Hadith. For example, there is one *hadith* that states: “When Allah created Adam, he was 60 cubits tall.” 60 cubits is 30 meters or approximately 90+ feet tall. “Then humankind gradually became shorter and shorter.” One could interpret this literally, or, less literally, to mean that height indicates distance from the truth or a regression of moral and ethical stature. We know that Hazrat Adam was created from dust (clay), and an angel was sent to earth from the heavens to gather the dust but couldn't gather it; finally Jibreel gathered dust from every portion of the earth. A *hadith* recounts:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (salla-Llaahu alayhi wa sallam) say, “Allah created Adam from a handful that He gathered from the entire earth, so that the sons of Adam come like the earth. Some of them are red, some of white, some of them are black, and some of them are in between. Some of them are easy, and some are difficult. Some are evil, and some are good.”

The dust was then mixed with water to form mud, which became black and sticky, viscous. This dust was created from earth that was partly sand, and it was mixed. When it dried, it resounded. Clay like potter's clay, it had hollowness to it, a tone. Allah says in Qur'an:

WA LAQAD KhALAQNĀ-L-'IŅSĀNA MIŅ ṢALSĀLIM-MIN ḤAMA'IM-MASNŪN.

Verily, We created them of sticky clay. Then, indeed, We created man of dried, sounding clay of altered mud. [15:26]

Then the wind was set upon the clay, and it dried it out until it became clay like pottery, and was given shape, limbs, capacities, faculties, each part of which was given a shape and suited to its purpose. Then Allah breathed Adam's spirit into Adam and completed this creation after 40 days. When He finished, He commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam in recognition of his grandeur, his status before Allah, over any other creation. Allah said to the Angels:

FA'IDhĀ SAWWAYTUHU WA NAFAKhTU FĪHI MIR-RŪḤĪ FA-QA'Ū LAHU SĀJIDĪN.

When I fashioned him and breathed into him from My spirit, then fall down and prostrate to him. [15:29]

As we know, the angels prostrated themselves, all of them except Iblis, who was proud, and one of the disbelievers. Allah told the angels that he was going to place Adam on this earth, and make generations after generations of his offspring.

WA'IDh QĀLA RABBUKA LI-L-MALĀA'IKATI "INNĪ JĀ'ILUÑ FI-L-'ARDI KHALĪFATAÑ."

And remember when your Lord said to the angels, "Verily I am going to place mankind, generations after generations on the earth." [2:30]

From this *'ayat*, we should understand that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) always intended to place Adam on the earth, even before He created him. It's wrong to say that Allah didn't know that Adam and his wife would eat from the forbidden tree, and be displaced from Paradise. He said to the angels, "I will place them on the earth." Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) planned this, with understanding and wisdom. And when He told them this, the angels asked:

"ATAJ'ALU FĪHĀ MAÑY-YUFSIDU FĪHĀ WA YASFIKU-D-DIMĀA'A WA NAHNU NUSABBIḤU BIḤAMDIKA WA NUQADDISU LAKA" QĀLA "INNĪ A'LAMU MĀ LĀ TA'LAMŪN."

"Will you place upon it [one] who will corrupt it and shed blood, [while] it is we who hymn Your praise and sanctify You?" He said, "Truly, I know what you know not." [2:30]

What did He know that the angels did not? He knew the drama of human frailty, and the struggle to regain the Divine Mercy that would follow. He knew the hearts and souls of Hazrat Adam (*'alayhi-s-salaam*) and Hawa (the mother of the living)³ He knew that He (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) would teach Hazrat Adam the names of everything, every object, everything in creation, every concept, without omitting anything. When Allah asked the Angels to name them, they couldn't, because he had not taught them.

**WA 'ALLAMA ĀDAMA-L-'ASMĀA'A KULLAHĀ THUMMA 'ARADAHUM 'ALĀ-L-MALĀA'IKATI FA-QĀLA AMBI'ŪNĪ BI'ASMĀA'I HĀA'ULĀA'I IÑ KUÑTUM ṢĀDIQĪN.
QĀLŪ SUBḤĀNAKA LĀ 'ILMA LANĀ ILLĀ MĀ 'ALLAMTANĀ INNAKA AÑTA-L-'ALĪMU-L-HAKĪM.**

He taught Adam all the names—all of them and then made them visible before the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful."

³ Hawa (*'alayhaa-s-salaam*): Who is not specifically mentioned by Qur'an with relationship to the act of eating the food and being created from Adam (*'alayhi-s-salaam*). We will leave the issue of the Issue (their children) to a further discussion or text; only to mention that some have put forward the idea that the killing of Abel by Cain was the beginning of disobedience and resistance of children to parents as seen in the next of the series with the Messenger/Prophet Nuh (*'alayhi-s-salaam*).

They said, “Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Truly, it is You Who are the All-Knowing and the All-Wise. [2:31-32]

By teaching Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) the names of things, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) gives him the power to see these things, to describe them, to teach, to discriminate and differentiate. Through this, Hazrat Adam becomes not only recipient of the message, but also the first messenger; moreover, he then embodies the responsibility of knowledge and its intricacies. That is the semantic of creation, enacted through the dynamic of naming things. We too have also inherited this ability to identify, to designate value and names to things. He taught Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) language, and speech, and the ability to communicate. He taught him the perfect language with which to name everything.

We cannot assume that at that time in the Garden, Hazrat Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) spoke the language we speak. I like to think that he spoke only *du'aa*; that is everything was praise of, and supplication to Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). Due to the infinite wisdom of Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), the souls of Adam and Hawa, as well as all the souls to ever be born (their descendants), accepted the *amaanaat* to be caretakers of this creation. In teaching the names, Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) taught Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) what he needed to know to perform those duties; but, at the same time gave him, and all his descendents, the capability to be distracted, selfish, forgetful and also repentant.

After He creates Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*), He creates Hawa, who was to be his wife. There are versions among Muslims of the creation of Hawa. In one, Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) is sleeping and Allah took a rib from Adam's back and caused flesh to grow from that. Others say he was sleeping, and rolled over, and she was there. In Qur'an, Allah tells us:

YĀ AYYUHĀ-N-NĀSU ITTAQŪ RABBAKUMU-LLADhĪ KhALAQAKUM MIN NAFSIÑW-WA-AḤIDATIÑW-WAKhALAQA MINHĀ ZAWJAHĀ WA BATH-ThA MINHUMĀ RIJĀLANĀ KATHĪRĀ...

O mankind be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from one single self and created from it, its mate, and spread, from these two, men and women in abundance. [4:1]

He caused Hawa and Adam, wife and husband, to dwell in Paradise and instructed them to eat of any of the fruits in Paradise, except for one particular tree, which was forbidden to them.

THE ROLE OF IBLIS

But, as we know, there is another player in the story: Iblis, who had refused to bow to Hazrat Adam:

WA'IDh QULNĀ LI-L-MALĀ'IKATI USJUDŪ LI'ĀDAMA FA-SAJADŪ ILLĀ IBLĪSA ABĀ WA-STAKBARA WA KĀNA MINA-L-KĀFIRĪN.

And when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam!” they [all] prostrated except Iblis. He refused through pride, and [so] became one of those who cover up the truth. [2:34]

The story of Iblis, one of the jinn and a creation separate from the angels, is intertwined into the story of Hazrat Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) and thus into our story too. The *jinn*s are created from smokeless fire, and can't be seen by humans unless Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) wills it. The *jinn*, like humans, were given free will. Among them there are some Muslims, and also some who don't believe in Allah. The *jinn* were obviously created before the humans, because Iblis is in existence at the time of the creation of Hazrat Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*). At this time, Iblis was considered to be a Muslim, and one of the most devout worshipers of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). Iblis was knowledgeable, and in time it caused him to be very proud. He considered himself to be one of the best of Allah's creation, and thus above bowing to Hazrat Adam.

The angels were asked to prostrate before Adam in recognition of his status. This request was in no way a kind of worship of humankind, just a simple act of obedience, which, of course, the angels would never question. It was a way of honoring a creation Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) had made, as we should all honor Allah's creation. When we honor the creation of Allah, we thank Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*); we exalt the beauty of nature, and sweetness of food, the kindness of human beings. We are not worshiping human beings, or food, or beauty; but Iblis, as we know, refused to prostrate out of pride or envy, out of stubbornness, arrogance, false pride, or ego.⁴

QĀLA, “MĀ MANAʿAKA-LLĀ TASJUDA IDh AMARTUKA?” QĀLA, “ANĀ KhAYRUM-MINHU KhALAQTANĪ MIN NĀRIŅW-WAKhALAQTAHU MIŅ TĪN.”

Allah said: “What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?” He said: “I am better than him. You created me from fire and You created him from clay.” [7:12]

In that moment, he became a disbeliever. How quickly this happened; in one moment he was chief among the exalted worshippers of Allah, and the next he is the lowest of the low: through one, seemingly rational choice. He excused it. He said, “I only bow before You, not anything else.” Nonetheless, he was being disobedient. Not only did he refuse to prostrate, but he denied that Allah could create something better than him by saying that he was better than Adam, since Adam was made of clay while he was made of fire. Allah then expels Iblis from Paradise. He humiliates him and curses him for refusing to prostrate.

⁴ In Biharul Anwar, [a compendium of traditions (hadith)], and in the context of the stories of the prophets, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (*radiya-Llahu anhu*) was quoted as saying, “Satan was ordered to bow down to Adam. He replied: O Lord! If You forgive me for not prostrating to him, I would worship You the kind of worship that no one else could match.’ God Almighty said: ‘I wish to be obeyed whence I have decreed.’”

QĀLA FA-HBIT MINHĀ FA-MĀ YAKŪNU LAKA AÑ TATAKABBARA FĪHĀ FA-KhRUJ INNAKA MINA-S-SĀGHIRĪN.

[Allah] said, “Get down from this [station], for this is no place for you to be arrogant. Get out. Surely, you are from among the lowly. [7:13]

When told of his fate, he pleaded with Allah to give him respite until the Last Day.

**QĀLA AÑDhIRNĪ ILĀ YAWMI YUB^cATHŪN.
QĀLA INNAKA MINA-L-MUÑDhARĪN.**

**[Iblis] said, “Reprieve me until the Day of Resurrection!”
[Allah] said, “Surely you are among the reprieved.” [7:14-15]**

Iblis asks for a reprieve, but not for forgiveness. Then Allah gave him the name Iblis, which is taken from *“ablasa mina-r-rahman,”* which means, **“he despaired of mercy.”** He has lost any hope of receiving mercy, because he didn’t repent. He only asked for respite and, in His wisdom, Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta^caalaa*) agreed to the request. Iblis vowed to work to mislead Adam (*calayhi-s-salaam*) and all of his descendants, which include us; thus, a framework is set up in which people have and make excuses to disobey what they are told, and they will resist. Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta^caalaa*) sends every messenger with proof, but some don’t accept that proof. Only the ones destined to accept the proof will accept the proof.

**QĀLA FA-BI^cIZZATIKA LA’UGHWIYANNAHUM AJ^āMA^cĪN—
ILLĀ ^cIBĀDAKA MINHUMU-L-MUKhLAṢĪN.**

**[Iblis] says, “So by Your Might, I will beguile them, every one—
save for the sincere ones from among Your worshippers.” [38:82-83]**

Allah allows Iblis and his descendants to tempt us and to try to get us to disobey. It doesn’t mean that Allah approves of what he does, just that this is part of the dynamic, part of the reality of creation. But there is another subtlety in that: Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta^caalaa*) allows us to disbelieve. He allows us to question, and to have consciousness and doubts. Those who seek refuge with Allah (*Subhāanahu wa ta^caalaa*) will be kept safe, because Shaytan has no power over those who believe.

...

**...FA-STA^cIDh BI-LLĀHI MINA-SH-SHAYTĀNI-R-RAJĪM. INNAHU LAYSA LAHU SULTĀNUN
^cALĀ-LLADhĪNA ĀMANŪ WA ^cALĀ RABBIHIM YATAWAKKALŪN.**

...seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Shaytan. Truly he has no authority over those who believe and place their trust in their Lord. [16:98-99]

This permission from Allah for Iblis to tempt us is one of the ways Allah tests and tries us.

...

...LIYABTALIYA-LLĀHU MĀ FĪ ṢUDŪRIKUM WA LIYUMAHḤISA MĀ FĪ QULŪBIKUM WA-LLĀHU ʿALĪMUM BIDḤĀTI-Ṣ-ṢUDŪR.

...[All of this] in order that Allah might try what is in your breasts and render pure all that is in your hearts. And Allah knows what is hidden in [your] hearts. [3:154]

EATING FROM THE TREE

Of course, the first test for humanity is the test of a warning: eat anything you like, except from this one tree.

YĀ ĀDAMU USKUN AŅTA WA ZAWJUKA-L-JANNATA WA KULĀ MINHĀ RAGḤADAN ḤAYṬHU SHI'TUMĀ WA LĀ TAQRABĀ HĀDḤIHI-SH-SHAJARATA FA-TAKŪNĀ MINA-DḤ-DḤĀLIMĪN.

O Adam, dwell you and your wife in Paradise, and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight of things and of whatever you will, but come not near this tree, lest you become one of the oppressors [of yourselves and others]. [2:35]

This *'ayaat* exemplifies the message of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*): He gives us bounty and much to be grateful for, but with it comes a warning. From that moment on, every prophet becomes a warner. Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*) and Hawa are not able to heed the warning; they fall from this exalted state, and all their progeny have the same challenge: to be grateful for the bounty of Allah and heed the warning. In a very microcosmic way, it is similar to the way we warn our children not to do certain things when we know full well that they will probably do them. At least, the warning has been given; that notice is there. That notice is also telling you of your potential. If you give someone a warning, they obviously have a choice. If they have choice, they have some power. If they have some power, they have some responsibility. If they have some responsibility, then there must be some good in following that responsibility, and there must be some punishment for not following that responsibility.

FA-WASWASA ILAYHI-SH-SHAYṬĀNU QĀLA "YĀ ĀDAMU HAL ADULLUKA ʿALĀ SHAJARATI-L-KḤULDI WA MULKIL-LĀ YABLĀ?"

But Shaytan whispered to him, saying “Oh Adam! Shall I lead you to the Tree of Eternal Life and a Kingdom that will never decay?” [20:120]

He whispers to them, tempting them to eat from this tree. What is he tempting them with? Eternal life and a Kingdom that will never decay. Does that not speak clearly to the fears of the human being: fear of death, fear of being forgotten? When we look at our society today, we can certainly hear echoes of that whisper: in politics, in culture, in our acquisitive natures. Shaytan is not offering them something distasteful. He says, “Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become one of the immortals. If you eat from this tree, you will be an angel, an immortal.” And Shaytan swore to both of them, saying, “Truly, I am one of the sincere well-wishers for both of you. I want what is only best for you.” “Trust me,” he says, while giving the rational mind something to hold onto. They believed the lies and they believed the deception. They forgot what Allah had told them. So they disobeyed Allah, and they ate from the tree—they both ate from the tree.

...

...TAFIQĀ YAKHṢIFĀNI ʿALAYHIMĀ MIŃW-WA RAQI-L-JANNATI WA ʿAṢĀ ĀDAMU RABBAHU FA-GHAWĀ.

...so their private parts became manifest to them and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise for their covering; thus, did Adam disobey his Lord and he went astray. [20:121]

Now there is an obvious difference between the Judaic and Christian texts and the Islamic one. In the Islamic text, no blame is attributed specifically to either Adam or Hawa; rather, they both ate from the tree and disobeyed Allah together. It was not that Hawa tempted Hazrat Adam (*ʿalayhi-s-salaam*). So men and women should not be singled out and blamed for the act of eating from the forbidden tree. They had forgotten about the warnings and the prohibition of the tree, and they disobeyed Him. This is the reason that Allah named human-kind, *insaan*, which is derived from the Arabic word meaning ‘to forget.’

WA LAQAD ʿAHIDNĀ ILĀ ĀDAMA MIŃ QABLU FA-NASIYA WA LAM NAJID LAHU ʿAZMĀ.

Indeed, We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot and We found on his part no firm will power. [20:115]

Remembrance and will power—are those not two of the most valuable things that we all strive for in this life: How many times have I said to myself: “If only I remembered, if only I had more will-power and discipline.” Allah says to them:

A LAM ANHAKUMĀ ʿAŃ TILKUMĀ-SH-SHAJARATI WA AQUL LAKUMĀ INNA-SH-SHAYTĀNA LAKUMĀ ʿADUWWUM-MUBĪN?

Did I not forbid you that tree and, verily, tell you that Shaytan is an open enemy to you?
[7:22]

When they realized the enormity of what they had done, they were very regretful, and they asked Allah for forgiveness, and they said:

**RABBANĀ DhALAMNĀ AÑFUSANĀ WA'IL-LAM TAGhFIR LANĀ WA TARHAMNĀ
LANAKŪNANNA MINA-L-KhĀSIRĪN.**

“O Lord, we have wronged ourselves. And if You forgive us not and bestow upon us Your Mercy, then surely we will be of the lost.” [7:23]

The sins of Adam and Hawa stem from forgetfulness and desire, not from arrogance. The sins of Iblis come from arrogance. You see the difference. Iblis shows no remorse. He asks only for respite. Adam and Hawa ask for forgiveness. Both of them got exactly what they asked for. He promised to punish Iblis for his disobedience, but He guides Adam to repentance, to ask for forgiveness, and He accepts his repentance. When any human being asks or repents before Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), sincerely repents, the forgiveness is given. And truly, He is One Who forgives, the most Merciful. There are many lessons to be learned from this story, some of which are in regard to clear warnings. Allah lays down the law for our own benefit. Allah says:

...

...

...YUBAYYINU-LLĀHU LAKUM AÑ TADILLŪ...

Thus Allah makes clear to you His law, lest you go astray. [4:176]

Shaytan is the enemy who will stop at nothing to deceive you. He will trick you into denying the bounties of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*) to go against the will of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*), to go against the command of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta'aalaa*). This is the Truth that every prophet and messenger faced. After Adam (*alayhi-s-salaam*), Nuh (*alayhi-s-salaam*) sees the same thing. After Nuh (*alayhi-s-salaam*), Ibrahim (*alayhi-s-salaam*) sees the same thing. After Ibrahim (*alayhi-s-salaam*), Daud (*alayhi-s-salaam*) sees it, and Musa (*alayhi-s-salaam*) encounters it. Then you see the deception in the [story of the] Prophet Yusuf (*alayhi-s-salaam*) and his family.

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**QĀLA ... LA-AQUDANNA LAHUM ṢIRĀTAKA-L-MUSTAQĪM. ThUMMA LĀA'ATIYANNAHUM
MIM BAYNI AYDĪHIM WA MIN KhALFIHIM WA ^cAN AYMĀNIHIM WA ^cAÑ SHAMĀA'ILIHIM WA
LĀ TAJIDU AKThARAHUM SHĀKIRĪN.**

[Iblis] said, ...“I shall lie in ambush for them along Your straight Path. Then I shall fall upon them from before them, and behind them, and upon their right, and upon their left, and You will not find most of them to be grateful.” [7:16-17]

Why are we continually tested? It is so that we will turn towards Allah; so that we will remember to be grateful. We will realize our mistakes and consciously turn towards Allah, not just automatically worshipping Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) like the Angels. We have to consciously turn towards Allah, sincerely, through *tawbah*, through gratitude. We should never lose hope that Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) will forgive us, no matter how serious the sin is. If we repent, and we are absolutely sincere, then He forgives us as He forgave Adam and Hawa. In their case, a terrible sin is committed, openly disobeying, even after having been told explicitly, “Do not pick from that tree.” Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) then decrees that Adam and Hawa and all their descendants will spend some time on earth, so He sent them there along with Iblis. After that, He sent down revelations to human beings. He sent messengers to remind them, and to obey Him, and to not be tricked by Shaytan. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) says again in Surah al-Baqarah:

QULNĀ IHBITŪ MINHĀ JAMĪʿAÑ FAʿIMMĀ YAʿTIYANNAKUM MINNĪ HUDĀÑ FA-MAÑ TABIʿA HUDĀYA FA-LĀ KHĀWFUN ʿALAYHIM WA LĀ HUM YAḤZANŪN.

[For although] We said, “Get down [from this state]!” Yet shall there come to you Guidance from Me, and as for those who follow My guidance, neither shall they fear nor shall they grieve. [2:38]

This brings us back to the beginning of my talk, to the message. Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) sends humanity to the earth, where we will be tested and tried, confused and challenged, but yet **“there will always come to you Guidance from Me...”** The message and guidance will always be there. The question is: do we hear it? Do we follow it?

HEARING AND HEEDING THE MESSAGE

The Prophet (*Ṣalla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa-sallam*) said: **“The similitude of me and the message with which Allah has sent me is like a man who came to some people and said: ‘I have seen the enemy forces with my own eyes and I am a naked warner (to you), so save yourselves!’ And groups of his people obeyed him and went out at night, slowly and steadily, and were safe; while another group belied him, and stayed in their place until the morning when the army ran them over and destroyed them. Such is the similitude of those who obey me and follow what I have brought (i.e. message), and of those who disobey me and belie the Truth which I have brought.” [al-Bukharee, Muslim and others]**

The lack of trust, to outright rejection of the message brought by the messengers is a key element that influences the human story. The soul aspires for what is good and likes to drive away evil. The heart seeks to assert its sacred role as the ‘dwelling place’ of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). But the *nafs* listens to itself, to the whisperer; bolstered by the calculations of the rational mind, it turns us toward our

preferences and desires. Every messenger has a perfect message, as promised by Allah. The true message does not change much over time. But we look at the stories; we look at our own world, and we see and hear the same story over and over again: people, communities, and nations choosing not to hear and not to follow the message. We might ask, “Did they fail in bringing the message?” Was it a failure of the messenger? Nuuh (*radiya-Llaahu ‘anhu*) spent 950 years trying to get the message across to his own family. The Prophet Musa (*‘alayhi-s-salaam*) gets the ten commandments and comes down to find his followers worshipping the golden calf. This is the nature of the messages, the nature of the struggles of these prophets against the disbelievers.

Why, we might also ask, have there been so many messages and messengers? Why had Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta‘aalaa*) sent so many messengers? Why wasn’t there just one single prophet that was followed by human kind, generation after generation after generation with one message that was clear? The answer is that human beings, from the time of the fall of Adam, and the development of humanity, carry with us the disease of forgetting. We have weaknesses and failings that cause us to either forget, or disbelieve, or distort the message. When we look at history, and the nature of people, and analyze the lives of people, and the content of the messages, we might conclude that one of the most significant causes for the messages and the messengers was human nature. Prophet Mohammed (*ṣalla-Llaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said in a *hadith*:

Adam denied, so the children of Adam now deny. Adam forgot, and now the children of Adam forget. He made mistakes, and now the children of Adam make mistakes.

Have you ever denied anything? Have you ever made a mistake? “To forget” is part of human nature. Every one of the messengers strived to guide the human being toward remembrance of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa ta‘aalaa*): the spirit, the knowledge, the conduct, the maturity of people, so that at least the next one to receive the Divine message would be aware of the deviations that came before, and try to change them. All these messages stayed basically in the same direction, to destroy corruption, the deviations and distortions of the law that always came up. The messengers and the message always had this analogical reality, which was trying to build a more civilized society. Those realities are guarantees of peace and tranquility, goodness and compassion, and mercy for humankind in this world and in the Hereafter—if we would just listen, remember, pay attention.

The messages may be addressed to everybody, but there are only a small number of people who really receive it. Then, out of that, there is an infinitesimally small number of people who really understand it; and out of that, there are less who really understand, embrace, and embody it. Yes, the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, and psychological capacities of people are not the same. Of course, we might ask: If the message comes from Allah, and it’s a perfect message, then where’s the fault? Why doesn’t everyone hear and follow it? The fault has to be either with the people who are giving the message, or with the ones who are receiving it; because the message isn’t at fault. If the Messenger is the embodiment of the Message then the fault cannot be with the messenger; the fault must be with the receiver. That begins a deeper discussion on *akhlaaq* (character) and the process of *at-tazkiyat* (purification of the self or self-awakening). Allah keeps sending this message again and again, appropriate to the time and place. If the message is in proportion to the harmony and progress of human beings at any given time, and if the more progressive people have more perfection in perceiving the message, that should raise the question “Where are we now?” That is, perhaps, a discussion for another day.

THE GIFT OF REFLECTION

In conclusion, I want to say a few words about the gift of reflection and the messenger of the heart. As I have said, the message comes over and over again in order to shake up the world, to uproot the deviations, and to restore some kind of *meezaan* / balance, so that the soul of individuals could proceed to develop. It is so that the *ruuh* of individuals had a means to find its way back to their source; so that the way would be made clear and the *siraata-l-mustaqeem* established. This well-trodden path is before each of us, the boulevard is open so that a person can lead their life toward a very humane, spiritually humanistic direction in the world, and toward an ultimate reunion with Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*). But each day choices must be made against the backdrop of hypocrites, liars, deceivers, and opportunists: voices from within and from without.

We know the symptoms of the diseases—the diseases of ignorance, of distortions and superstitions. Over a period of time, throughout the span of human life, these present themselves as challenges, warnings, and sometimes as deterrents. The message affirms that there is Divine guidance that leads us along the path. The Messengers are sent by Allah for this purpose, and they are sent to guide human beings to lead us on the *siraata-l-mustaqeem*, the right path. Every people have had a guide; every people have had a message. Allah says in Surah an-Nisaa:

**RUSULAM-MUBASHSHIRĪNA WA MUŔDHIRĪNA LIʼALLĀ YAKŪNA LI-N-NĀSI ʿALĀ-LLĀHI
HUJJATUM BAʿDA-R-RUSULI WA KĀNA-LLĀHU ʿAZĪZAN ḤAKĪMĀ.**

[We sent] apostles as bearers of good tidings and as warners, so that people should not have any excuse on the Day of Judgment against Allah after the coming of the apostles, and Allah is ever Mighty and Wise. [4:165]

So there is no excuse, and yet we all make excuses. What's our excuse for not being on time, for not getting things done? What's the excuse for this and that? Indeed, all too often our first response is an excuse. The message is multidimensional and appropriate as it is complete; that means it is relevant to the most immature, as well as the most developed and mature people. Allah gave us our mind, our consciousness, and the ability to reflect and to choose. So we should ask ourselves, "Why don't I reflect on life and purpose more? Is it laziness, tiredness? What's the excuse?" I mean, what is the true reason? "What am I lacking? What am I choosing and what will I actually do?"

Allah gave us this gift of reflection. We have to turn our attention to the message. Part of this is turning attention to the messengers. Part of this is paying attention to the message, and the guidelines that come with that message (part of which is to pay attention). Our own mind becomes an observer. Part of being an observer is to challenge our *nafs ammaarah*, to argue with ourselves, to try to understand the Divine law and the Divine intention, to realize the importance of the prophethood and the message, to understand what these invitations are from Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), and to call others and yourself to that message, to believe in it, to act according to the teaching, to uplift one's own life. In this process, we refine, and refine, and refine our mentality, our knowledge, our *hikmah*, our wisdom, our devotion, our dedication, our submission, and our trust, until we can actually comprehend the message, until we see and understand.

We have eyes and to see, ears to hear, and we understand. We understand that the value of *iman* (belief) is stronger, because we have used our reason, our conscience, our interest, our maturity. Take the time to refine your capacity to reflect. Take time to pay attention to the message with the eyes of someone who is reflecting, who is meditating, who is making *dhikr*, who is following the *sharee'ah*, who is trying to follow the *sunnah*. Take all these things together, and in this respect, you will see that the message is designed to create wisdom and compassion, knowledge and tolerance, patience and peace, love, understanding, mercy, and justice. Over and over again, the message fails because the people don't do their part. Not because the messenger didn't make the effort, but because the people themselves didn't take that message seriously enough to start making the transformation of their soul and their heart. They become distorted and distracted, and the message becomes so degraded, that Allah sends another messenger. So how can the message succeed with each of us?

We are responsible for what we do or don't do, and we have a capacity to choose to do, or choose not to do it. If we choose to follow the message, to remember, we become more and more enlightened, refined, mature, and receptive, and we see more. The only way out of this cycle is for the people themselves to understand and say, "Enough of this," and decide to make an effort to change, to grow in spirit and knowledge. If it's not corrected here, how is it ever going to be corrected? We have to correct it where we are. That's what our effort is for; that's our purpose. Hardly a minute should go by that you don't remember what the purpose is. That's the Message—no excuses, no lapses.

My Shaykh (*alayhi rahmu*) was never far from his purpose. How do I know? The way he spoke, the way he acted, what made him happy, and what disturbed him—I always knew. It was always in front of him. Yes, people's character changes; people's demeanors are different depending on circumstances, but he was never far from his purpose. Don't you want to be like that? Do you think he was an uninteresting person? Did he only talk about Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*) all the time? No—he was talking to me about the school, or his family, or the *khanaqah*, or the students, or building the masjid, but he was never far from his purpose; and also, yes—since he always spoke of meanings and values and attributes. The message is "Don't waste time forgetting. Stay clear in your purpose; stay clear in your remembrance."

CONCLUSION: THE MESSENGER OF THE HEART

There is no message without the messenger. How would we know "*Ash-hadu an La ilaaha illa-Llaah*" if it were not for "*Muhammadin Rasuulu-Llaah*?" Throughout human history—from the very first, Hazrat Adam, to the very last, Prophet Muhammad (*salla-Llaahu alayhi wa sallam*)—messengers have been clear in their purpose, bringing us the clear message from Allah (*Subhaanahu wa ta'alaah*). The story and trials of Hazrat Adam are reflected in some way in the story of every messenger, and the story of all humanity. The message is consistent, just as Shaytan is consistently trying to silence the messenger and the message. The message comes through our hearts because the qualities are in our hearts—Allah placed these attributes in the hearts of all humanity when He taught Hazrat Adam the names. Our hearts speak to us. "*Oh Transformer of hearts, make my heart firm in the Deen*" we say. The heart is our messenger. If you're conscious that the message is in your heart, then you affirm your *islam*, trust, security.

Where do you find Allah? In the heart of the believer. The heart is where Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*) resides. We are given the mind and consciousness in order to understand that our heart is our leader, our messenger. Imam Ali (*radiya-Llaahu ʿanhu*) said: “*The diseases of the heart are worse than the diseases of the body.*” We have to give up the disease of the heart. We can do this by realizing what’s passing through the heart and the mind, and relying on *subḥat*, *ṣabr* and *at-tazkiyat*. We all have an inner messenger—it’s called reason, rationality, capacity to reflect, to take the message and to contemplate it. If we don’t do that, we are not rational, not of sound mind. So each one of us has an inner messenger that perceives, that sees the greatness of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), that inherently knows the qualities and attributes of Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*), feels what is right, and can sense the value of the message.

The message keeps coming, because during the absence of the physical messenger, we have the message; hence, we have the messenger too. And because that is often not enough, we have *tareeqah*, the path, and the guide; therefore, [we also have] those who are preaching *maʿruf* and *munkar*, enjoining people to do good and warning them from doing wrong. All the people of enlightenment over these years, all of the *awliya-Llāh* who have brought people from darkness to the light, to the right path— this is all preordained by Allah (*Subḥaanahu wa taʿaalaa*).

The final thought I will leave you with today is on the role of Hawa and the feminine in this human story we have been recounting today. I wish to comment on this at the very end, not because of a lack of importance, but because of the thread, throughout the lives of the prophets and messengers, of the feminine presence and energy, as exemplified in the wives, the female companions, the mothers of the messengers... from Hawa (*ʿalayhaa-s-salaam*) who repented; to Nuh’s wife, who was a disbeliever; to the life of Sara and Hajar, the wives of Daud; the beneficence of the Asiyah; the wife of Pharon; to Maryam the mother of Isa (*ʿalayhi-s-salaam*); and to Khadija and Ayesha, the wives of the Prophet (*ṣalla-Llaahu ʿalayhi wa sallam*). All play a key role not only in the story but in the effectuation of the message, mostly in positive ways but also as examples of disbelief too. Thus we see an example of balance: feminine and masculine, a message within a message, another level of meaning to be found. I will attempt to address this at greater length in future talks, *inshaa’a-Llaah*.

CLOSING DUʿAA

**Subḥaana Rabbika Rabbi-l-Izzati ‘Ammāa Yasifuun.
Wa Salaamun ʿalaa-l-Mursaliin. Wa-l-Ḥamdu Li-Llaahi Rabbi-l-ʿAalamiin.**

Limitless in His glory is thy Sustainer,
the Lord of Almightyness (exalted) above anything that (human beings) may devise by way of definition!
And Peace be upon all His message-bearer!
And all praise is due to Allah alone, the Sustainer of all the worlds!

Wa ṣalla-Llaahu ʿalaa Sayyidinaa Muhammadin wa ʿalaa aalihi wa saḥbihi wa Sallam.

And may Allah send blessings on our master Muhammad,
and on his family and people and companions, and also Peace.

Hasbiya-Llaahu. Laa ilaaha illaa Huu. ʿAlayhi tawakkaltu wa Huwa Rabbu-l-ʿArshi-l- ʿAdḥeem.

Allah is sufficient for me! There is no deity save Him. In Him have I placed my trust,
for He is the Sustainer, in awesome almightiness enthroned.