

PROPHETS OF ISLAM · PART 1

Adam

The first human being and the first prophet: his creation from clay, the teaching of the names, the Garden, the repentance and the descent, as told in the Qur'an and the authentic hadith.

CONTENTS

1 The Announcement
2 The Clay and the Breath
3 The Teaching of the Names
4 The Prostration
5 Iblis
6 His Wife
7 The Garden and the Tree
8 The Whisper
9 Repentance and Acceptance
10 Adam and Musa
11 Down to the Earth
12 His Form, His Greeting and His Day
13 His Descendants Shown, and His Death
14 The Two Sons
15 What the Sources Do Not Tell
16 Where Scholars Differ

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The lives of the Prophets named in the Qur'an, one part every Tuesday, told from the sources. A reference follows each statement: the Qur'an by surah and ayah, hadith by collection and number, and the classical books by name.

Reports from the biographies, the histories and the books of tafsir are historical accounts and are not held to the standard of authentic hadith; the text says when a statement rests on such a report. Dates are approximate where the sources differ.

CHAPTER 1

The Announcement

The Qur'an tells the story of Adam (peace be upon him) in several places, and each place adds something the others leave out. Al-Baqarah gives the announcement to the angels and the teaching of the names. Al-A'raf and Al-Hijr give the prostration and the refusal of Iblis. Ta-Ha and Al-A'raf give the Garden and the whispering. Sad gives the creation again, with the words Allah spoke to Iblis. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30–39; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:11–25; Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:26–44; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:115–123; Qur'an Sad 38:71–85) This book follows those passages in the order of the events, and adds what the authentic hadith say.

Why the story is told

Allah says in Al Imran that He chose Adam, Nuh, the family of Ibrahim and the family of Imran over the worlds. (Qur'an Al Imran 3:33) Adam is therefore named first among the chosen servants. The Qur'an also calls human beings the children of Adam, and it addresses them by that name when it warns them about Shaytan. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:26–27) Ibn Kathir says that the story reminds the children of Adam of the honour given to their father and of the enmity of Shaytan, so that they beware of him. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

What was made from what

Before the story begins, the sources state what the three kinds of created beings in it were made from. The Prophet ﷺ said that the angels were created from light, the jinn from a flame of fire, and Adam from what has been described to you, that is, from clay. (Muslim 2996) The Qur'an says the same in its own words: man was created from clay like pottery, and the jinn from a smokeless flame of fire. (Qur'an Ar-Rahman 55:14–15) In Al-Hijr it adds that the jinn were created before man. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:26–27)

The angels are the servants of Allah who carry out His commands. The jinn are a separate creation, unseen by us, who have choice as human beings do. This distinction matters later in the story, because the one who refused to bow was not an angel but one of the jinn. (Qur'an Al-Kahf 18:50)

A successor on the earth

The Qur'an opens the story with a conversation. Allah told the angels that He was going to place a khalifah on the earth. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30) The word khalifah means one who comes after, or one who stands in place of another. Ibn Kathir takes it to mean human beings

succeeding one another on the earth, generation after generation, and he says that it appears Allah did not mean Adam alone. He adds that the word can also mean one who judges between people and holds them back from injustice. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The angels asked a question: would Allah place on the earth someone who would spread corruption and shed blood, while they themselves glorified His praise and declared His holiness? Allah answered that He knew what they did not know. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30) The angels did not object. They asked in order to understand, and they accepted the answer. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The Qur'an does not say how the angels knew that bloodshed would follow. Ibn Kathir mentions that they may have understood it from the nature of a creature made from clay, or from the word khalifah itself, and he records Qatada's statement that they already knew this creature would cause mischief. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us which. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) Ibn Abbas is reported to have said that jinn lived on the earth before Adam and shed blood there. At-Tabari records this with a weak chain. It is a statement of a Companion and not a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, and no authentic text establishes it. (Tafsir at-Tabari)

In Sad, Allah tells the Prophet ﷺ that he had no knowledge of the exalted assembly when they disputed, and that it was revealed to him only because he was a clear warner. (Qur'an Sad 38:67–70) Ibn Kathir explains this as a reference to the dispute over Adam, when Iblis refused to prostrate and argued with his Lord. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) Seen this way, the account of the beginning of mankind is a matter of revelation. No human being witnessed it.

CHAPTER 2

The Clay and the Breath

Allah then told the angels that He would create a human being from clay, and that when He had shaped him and breathed into him of His spirit, they were to fall down before him in prostration. (Qur'an Sad 38:71–72; Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:28–29) The creation itself is described in several ways in the Qur'an.

The words for clay

The Qur'an uses different words for the material of Adam's creation. It says he was created from dust, and that Allah then said to him, "Be," and he was. (Qur'an Al Imran 3:59) It says he was created from clay. (Qur'an Al-Mu'minun 23:12; Qur'an As-Sajdah 32:7; Qur'an Sad 38:71) It says he was created from clay taken from altered black mud, and from clay like pottery. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:26; Qur'an Ar-Rahman 55:14) Commentators read these words as describing one material at different

stages. Ibn Kathir, following Ibn Abbas, Mujahid and Qatada, says that the word salsal means dry clay, and that "altered mud" means the dried clay that comes from mud. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The Prophet ﷺ added a detail about the earth itself. Allah created Adam from a handful taken from the whole earth, and so the children of Adam came to be as the earth is: some are fair, some red, some black, and some in between, some gentle, some rough, some good and some bad. (Abu Dawud 4693; Tirmidhi 2955) The scholars of hadith grade this report sound. (Tirmidhi 2955)

The time of shaping

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: when Allah shaped Adam, He left him as He willed. Iblis went around him, looking at him, and when he saw that he was hollow he knew that he was a creature that could not hold himself back. (Muslim 2611a) The report gives no length of time. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us how long the shaping lasted.

The breath of the spirit

The Qur'an says that Allah breathed into Adam of His spirit, and that He gave human beings hearing, sight and hearts. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:29; Qur'an As-Sajdah 32:9) The scholars explain that the spirit is a created thing, and that the words "My spirit" join it to Allah as an honour. They do not mean that a part of Allah entered Adam, since the Qur'an says that there is nothing like Him. (Qur'an Ash-Shura 42:11)

In Sad, Allah asks Iblis what prevented him from bowing to "that which I created with My hands." (Qur'an Sad 38:75) The Prophet ﷺ also said, in the hadith of intercession, that Allah created Adam with His hand. (Bukhari 3340) Ahl as-Sunnah affirm these words as Allah has said them, without asking how and without likening Allah to His creation. (Qur'an Ash-Shura 42:11)

His descendants

The Qur'an says that after Adam, Allah made his offspring from an extract of a despised fluid, and describes the stages in the womb: a drop in a firm resting place, a clinging clot, a lump, bones, and flesh over the bones, and then another creation. (Qur'an As-Sajdah 32:8; Qur'an Al-Mu'minun 23:12–14) Adam's creation was therefore different from the creation of every human being after him.

CHAPTER 3

The Teaching of the Names

After the creation, and before the prostration in the order of Al-Baqarah, the Qur'an places a scene that shows why Adam was given the place he was given. Allah taught Adam the names, all of them. Then He showed those things to the angels and said: tell Me the names of these, if you are truthful. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:31)

The angels answered: glory be to You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us; You are the Knowing, the Wise. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:32) Allah said: O Adam, tell them their names. When Adam had told them, Allah said to the angels: did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and that I know what you show and what you hide? (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:33)

Which names?

The Qur'an says "the names, all of them" and does not list them. The best known view is reported from Ibn Abbas: that Adam was taught the names that people use for things, such as human being, animal, sky, earth, sea, horse and donkey, and the names of the other kinds as well. Mujahid and Zayd ibn Aslam are reported to have said that when Adam was asked, he named everything shown to him, from the angels to the birds. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) Ibn Kathir supports the first view with the hadith of intercession, in which the believers tell Adam that Allah taught him the names of all things. (Bukhari 4476) The Qur'an itself does not say more, and the authentic hadith do not add to it.

What the scene shows

The scene is not a contest of status between Adam and the angels. The angels confessed that their knowledge was what Allah had given them, and they praised Him. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:32) What Adam had been given was knowledge, and the capacity to learn names and use them. This was the first answer to the question the angels had asked in the announcement: the creature who would be placed on the earth was one who could be taught. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The Qur'an does not say in what language Adam spoke, how he was taught, or in what place. It also does not say how long the interval between the creation and this teaching was. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us these things.

CHAPTER 4

The Prostration

Allah then commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam. The Qur'an reports the command and the response in several places, with small differences of wording, among them Al-Baqarah, Al-A'raf, Al-Hijr, Ta-Ha and Sad. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:34; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:11; Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:29–31; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:116; Qur'an Sad 38:72–74) In Al-Hijr and Sad the text states that the angels prostrated, all of them together. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:30; Qur'an Sad 38:73) In every place the exception is the same: Iblis refused. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:34; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:116)

What kind of prostration

The commentators explain that this prostration was not worship of Adam. Worship belongs to Allah alone. It was an act of honour and submission to the command of Allah, carried out by the angels because Allah had told them to do it. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) The scholars add that prostration to anyone other than Allah was lawful in some earlier laws as a greeting or sign of respect, and that it is not allowed in the law of Muhammad ﷺ. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Why the command was given

The Qur'an gives the sequence: the creation, the shaping, the breath of the spirit, and then the command to prostrate. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:29; Qur'an Sad 38:72) Ibn Kathir says that the angels all heard, obeyed and prostrated, and the Qur'an describes them elsewhere as beings who do not disobey Allah in what He commands them. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Qur'an At-Tahrim 66:6) The Qur'an does not state the time or place of the prostration, or whether the angels' prostration came before or after the teaching of the names in time. Al-Baqarah places the teaching first. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:31–34) The two accounts agree on the order of events that matter: Allah announced, Allah created, the angels bowed, and one did not.

In Al-A'raf, the verse begins by addressing mankind: Allah created you, shaped you, and then told the angels to prostrate to Adam. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:11) Ibn Kathir explains that the plural refers to Adam, because Adam is the father of all mankind. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

CHAPTER 5

Iblis

Iblis was present when the command was given, and he did not obey. The Qur'an says that he refused, and was arrogant, and became one of the disbelievers. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:34) Allah asked him what kept him from prostrating, and in each account he gave the same answer in different words: he was better than Adam, because he had been made from fire and Adam from clay. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:12; Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:32–33; Qur'an Sad 38:75–76)

Angel or jinn

The Qur'an says plainly that Iblis was of the jinn, and that he departed from the command of his Lord. (Qur'an Al-Kahf 18:50) Some early commentators said that he had been among the angels in rank or in company. Ibn Kathir records from Ibn Abbas that before his fall he was with the angels and was called Azazil. Ibn Kathir himself holds that Iblis was not an angel, and says that his original nature showed itself when the command came: he was made from fire, and the angels from light. He cites al-Hasan al-Basri, who said that Iblis was never an angel, not even for a moment, and that he was the origin of the jinn as Adam was the origin of mankind. Ibn Kathir notes that at-Tabari records this with a sound chain. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) The longer stories about his earlier life, including the name he is said to have had before his fall, are reports of the early commentators. They are not part of what the Qur'an or the authentic hadith tell us. They are set apart in a later chapter.

The sentence

Allah told Iblis to get out, for he was expelled, and that the curse would be on him until the Day of Recompense. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:34–35; Qur'an Sad 38:77–78) Iblis asked for time until the day when people are raised. Allah said that he was among those given time, until the day of a known time. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:36–38; Qur'an Sad 38:79–81)

Then Iblis said what he would do with the time. Because Allah had put him in error, he said, he would make disobedience attractive to people on the earth and mislead them all, except Allah's chosen servants. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:39–40; Qur'an Sad 38:82–83) Allah replied that this was a straight path to Him, that Iblis would have no authority over His servants except those among the misguided who chose to follow him, and that Hell was the promised place for them all. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:41–44; Qur'an Sad 38:84–85) The Qur'an gives no time for any of this. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us how long Iblis had worshipped before this moment, or what he did in that time.

The enemy

The Qur'an warns Adam's descendants in the same words it uses for Adam: Shaytan is an enemy. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:117; Qur'an Al-Kahf 18:50) It describes his power as limited to whispering and invitation. He has no authority over the servants who do not follow him. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:42)

CHAPTER 6

His Wife

The Qur'an refers to the first woman as Adam's wife or mate. It does not give her name. Al-Baqarah tells the two of them to live in the Garden, and Al-A'raf and Ta-Ha address them both. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:19; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:117) The name Hawwa, which English

calls Eve, is the one used in the classical books of qasas al-anbiya and in the explanations of the commentators. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

From a single soul

In An-Nisa, Allah addresses all of mankind: fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate, and spread from the two many men and women. (Qur'an An-Nisa 4:1) Al-A'raf says the same: He created you from a single soul and made from it its mate, so that he might find rest in her. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:189)

The commentators take "one soul" to be Adam. They differ on the words "from it". Many take them to mean that the mate was created from Adam himself. Ibn Kathir says that she was created from his left rib, and he cites the hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ said that a woman is created from a rib, whose upper part is the most bent, so that if you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you leave it, it stays bent. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Bukhari 3331; Muslim 1468a) Al-Razi notes in his tafsir that the words can also be taken to mean a mate of the same kind as Adam, a human being like him. (Mafatih al-Ghayb, ar-Razi) Many scholars understand the comparison to a rib as a description of the natural character of women and of the patience asked of husbands, since the Prophet ﷺ gave it as a reason to treat women kindly. (Bukhari 3331; Muslim 1468a) The Qur'an does not say from which part of Adam she was made, or how.

What is not told

The Qur'an does not say when she was created in relation to the prostration, or whether she was in the Garden from the start. Ibn Kathir records from Ibn Ishaq that she was created from Adam's left rib while he slept, and that this is what the People of the Book and others, such as Ibn Abbas, have said. These details are not in the Qur'an or the authentic hadith, which say only that a woman is created from a rib. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us more. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

What the Qur'an states is that Allah made her a mate to Adam, that she was a partner in the Garden and in the test, and that she was, with him, the origin of the human family. (Qur'an An-Nisa 4:1; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:19–23)

CHAPTER 7

The Garden and the Tree

Allah told Adam to live in the Garden with his wife and to eat from it freely, wherever they wished. There was one prohibition: do not go near this tree, or you will be among the wrongdoers. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:19)

What the Garden was like

Ta-Ha describes the conditions in it. Allah told Adam that he and his wife would not be hungry there or unclothed, and that they would not be thirsty or suffer from the sun. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:118–119) Before this, Allah warned Adam about the enemy: this is an enemy to you and to your wife, so do not let him remove you from the Garden, or you will be in hardship. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:117) The warning came before the temptation.

The Qur'an says that Adam had also received a covenant earlier, and that he forgot it, and that Allah found no firm resolve in him. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:115) The commentators say this refers to the instruction not to approach the tree and the warning about Shaytan. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The tree

The Qur'an does not name the tree. It calls it "this tree" in Al-Baqarah and Al-A'raf, and only Shaytan names it, as "the tree of eternity and a kingdom that does not decay." (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:19; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:120) Later books name the grape, barley, the date palm, the fig, and other trees. These are reports of the early commentators, and none of them is an authentic statement of the Prophet ﷺ. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) Ibn Kathir quotes at-Tabari, who said that Allah has not told us which tree it was, and that knowing it would bring us no benefit. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Tafsir at-Tabari)

What the prohibition was

The tree was a test of obedience set in a place where everything else was permitted. The Qur'an does not say that the tree was harmful in itself. It says that Allah forbade it, and that to go near it would make them wrongdoers. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35) The Qur'an uses the same words, "do not approach," elsewhere, for example of zina, unlawful relations between a man and a woman, where they mean to keep away from the whole matter. (Qur'an Al-Isra 17:32)

Whether the Garden was in heaven or on the earth is discussed in the last chapter of this book.

CHAPTER 8

The Whisper

Shaytan whispered to Adam and his wife in order to show them what had been hidden from them of their private parts. He said that their Lord had forbidden them this tree only so that they would not become angels or become immortal. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:20) He swore to them that he was a sincere adviser to them both. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:21) In Ta-Ha he put the matter to Adam directly: shall I show you the tree of eternity, and a kingdom that does not decay? (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:120)

The slip

They ate from the tree, and their private parts became apparent to them. They began to cover themselves with the leaves of the Garden. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:22; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:121) Their Lord called out to them: did I not forbid you that tree, and tell you that Shaytan is a clear enemy to you? (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:22) In Al-Baqarah the Qur'an says that Shaytan made them slip out of the Garden and took them out of the state they had been in. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36)

Who is blamed

The Qur'an addresses both of them in the dual in the account of the temptation, and the two of them say together, in Al-A'raf, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves." (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:20–23) In Ta-Ha, the one named is Adam: he disobeyed his Lord and erred. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:121) Nowhere does the Qur'an say that the first woman tempted Adam or that she alone was at fault. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:120–121)

How the scholars describe it

The Qur'an uses two different words for what happened in this scene and in the scene with Iblis. Of Iblis it says he refused and was arrogant. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:34) Of Adam it says he forgot, and that Allah found no firm resolve in him. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:115) The scholars therefore describe Adam's act as a slip caused by forgetfulness and by Shaytan's oath, not as defiance. They also hold that the prophets are protected from persistent disobedience, and that the errors the Qur'an mentions in them were followed by repentance and by raising of rank. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:121–122)

Ta-Ha says that Allah then chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided him. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122) That is the next part of the story.

CHAPTER 9

Repentance and Acceptance

Adam and his wife did not stay in the state of the slip. In Al-A'raf the two of them say: our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:23) In Al-Baqarah the text says that Adam received words from his Lord, and that Allah accepted his repentance, for He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37) Ta-Ha says that his Lord chose him, turned to him, and guided him. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122)

The words he received

Al-Baqarah does not quote the words Adam received. Ibn Kathir reports that Mujahid, Said ibn Jubayr, al-Hasan, Qatada and others said that they are the words of Al-A'raf, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves." A different report from Ibn Abbas gives other words, in which Adam asks whether Allah's mercy does not precede His anger, and whether he will be returned to the Garden if he repents. That report is a statement of Ibn Abbas and not a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not give us another text. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

The turning

The word the Qur'an uses for repentance, tawbah, means a return. In Al-Baqarah the verb is used of Allah: He turned to Adam. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37) In Ta-Ha the order of events is given as three steps: Allah chose him, turned to him, and guided him. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122) The order of the three verbs places Allah's turning to Adam before the guidance that followed it.

What the forgiveness meant

Muslims do not hold that the slip of Adam was passed on to his descendants. The Qur'an says that he repented and was forgiven, (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122) and that no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. (Qur'an An-Najm 53:38) The Qur'an places this step before the descent to the earth and, in Ta-Ha, before the command to go down. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122–123)

The Qur'an records two replies, one from Iblis and one from Adam. Iblis was told he was expelled and asked for time. Adam admitted his fault and asked for forgiveness. Only the second reply is described as accepted. (Qur'an Al-Hijr 15:36–38; Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:23; Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37)

CHAPTER 10

Adam and Musa

A hadith in Bukhari and Muslim reports a conversation between Adam and Musa (peace be upon them both). The Prophet ﷺ said, as Abu Huraira reported: Adam and Musa disputed. Musa said to Adam that he was the one who had brought the people down from the Garden. Adam answered that Allah had chosen Musa for His speech and had written the Torah for him, and asked whether Musa blamed him for a matter that Allah had decreed for him before He created him. The Prophet ﷺ said that Adam overcame Musa in the argument. (Bukhari 3409; Muslim 2652a) The wording in Muslim adds that the decree was written forty years before Adam was created. (Muslim 2652a)

How the scholars explain it

The scholars have explained this hadith in detail, because it can seem to say that a person may excuse his sin by pointing to the decree. They do not read it that way. Their explanation is as follows. (Muslim 2652a)

First, Musa was not accusing Adam of the sin itself. He was grieved about the hardship that came from leaving the Garden. Adam had already repented and Allah had accepted it, as the Qur'an states, and so to blame him after that would be wrong. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122)

Second, Adam did not use the decree as an excuse for the disobedience. He spoke of it as an answer to the complaint about the hardship, which was a matter beyond his choice. A person who does wrong must repent and may not say "it was written." A person who suffers a calamity after repenting should accept that it is from Allah. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37; Muslim 2652a)

Third, the Prophet ﷺ said that Adam overcame Musa, which the scholars take to mean that his argument was the sound one. (Bukhari 3409) The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not say when or where this meeting took place.

CHAPTER 11

Down to the Earth

Allah then told them to go down. In Al-Baqarah the command is first given when Shaytan made them slip: go down, some of you enemies to others, and you will have a place of settlement on the earth and provision for a time. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36) After the repentance the command is repeated, and with it comes a promise: when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance will have no fear and will not grieve. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:37–38) Those who disbelieve and deny the signs of Allah will be companions of the Fire, there to remain. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:39)

Guidance at the start

Ta-Ha says the same: go down from the Garden, all of you, some of you enemies to others. If guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows it will not go astray in this world and will not be unhappy in the next. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:123) Al-A'raf adds that on the earth they will live, and die, and be brought out from it. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:24–25) The first human beings therefore came to the earth knowing that guidance would reach them, and with the enemy named. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

Some scholars have drawn from this that the earth was not a punishment. It was the place for which Adam had been created from the beginning, as the announcement of the khalifah says. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30; Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36) Others stress the hardship. The text itself describes the earth as a place of settlement and provision for a time. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36)

The clothing

In Al-A'raf, soon after the account of the descent, Allah reminds the children of Adam of what He has given them. He has sent down clothing that covers their private parts and gives them beauty, and the clothing of righteousness is better. Then He warns them not to let Shaytan tempt them as he removed their parents from the Garden, stripping them of their clothing. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:26–27) The same Surah has already told of the moment in the Garden when their private parts became apparent and they covered themselves with the leaves of the Garden. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:22) The Qur'an does not describe how they clothed themselves on the earth, or what the first houses and tools were. It says only that the earth was a place of settlement and provision. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36)

The day

The Prophet ﷺ said that the best day on which the sun rises is Friday. On it Adam was created, on it he was admitted to the Garden, and on it he was taken out. (Tirmidhi 488) The scholars of hadith grade the report sound. (Tirmidhi 488) That is all the authentic hadith say about the day of the descent. They do not name the year, or the length of his stay in the Garden.

Where he came down

The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not say where on the earth Adam and his wife came down. Later reports differ. Ibn Kathir records that Ibn Abbas said Adam was sent down to a place called Dahna, between Makkah and Ta'if, and that al-Hasan al-Basri said he was sent down to India and his wife to Jeddah. These are statements of early commentators and not of the Prophet ﷺ, and no authentic text establishes them. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) We keep to what the sources state: that Allah sent them down to the earth, and that it was the beginning of human life there. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36)

CHAPTER 12

His Form, His Greeting and His Day

The authentic hadith give a few details of Adam that the Qur'an does not.

His stature

Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: Allah created Adam, and his height was sixty cubits. He then told him to go and greet that group of angels, who were sitting, and to listen to the reply they gave, for it would be his greeting and the greeting of his descendants. Adam said, "Peace be upon you," and they replied, "Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah." They added the mercy of Allah to his greeting. The Prophet ﷺ said that everyone who enters the Garden will be in the form of Adam, and that people have been decreasing in height ever since. (Bukhari 3326; Muslim 2841)

The cubit is a measure of the forearm, so the report tells us that Adam was of great height and that later generations became smaller. The sources say nothing more on this point. (Bukhari 3326)

Some versions of this report say that Allah created Adam "in His image." The scholars have discussed the pronoun at length. Some hold that it refers to Adam: he was created in his complete form and not by growing from a child. Others take it to refer to Allah, and affirm the report as it is, saying that Allah is not likened to anything in His creation. (Muslim 2841)

The greeting of peace

The same hadith is the source of the greeting of Muslims. The words "Peace be upon you" and their answer were the first exchange between Adam and the angels, and the Prophet ﷺ said they would remain the greeting of his descendants. (Bukhari 3326; Muslim 2841) The hadith does not say where this took place.

Friday

The Prophet ﷺ said that Friday is one of the best of days, and that Adam was created on it and died on it. (Abu Dawud 1047) The same hadith states that the earth does not consume the bodies of the prophets. (Abu Dawud 1047) The scholars of hadith grade it sound. (Abu Dawud 1047)

Adam in the heavens

In the account of the Night Journey and Ascent, the Prophet ﷺ reached the first heaven and found Adam there. He greeted Adam, and Adam welcomed him as a son and a prophet. (Bukhari 3207)

On the Day of Rising

The Prophet ﷺ also said that on the Day of Resurrection people in distress will go first to Adam. They will remind him that Allah created him with His hand and that the angels prostrated to him. He will tell them to go to Nuh. They will come in turn to other

prophets, and at last to Muhammad ﷺ, who will intercede. (Bukhari 3340; Muslim 194a) The same hadith describes Nuh as the first of the messengers sent to the people of the earth. (Bukhari 3340) Scholars have therefore asked whether Adam was a prophet only or also a messenger, which is taken up in the last chapter. (Bukhari 3340)

CHAPTER 13

His Descendants Shown, and His Death

Tirmidhi records a hadith from Abu Huraira in which the Prophet ﷺ said that when Allah created Adam, He drew out all of Adam's descendants until the Day of Resurrection and placed a light between the eyes of each. Adam was struck by the light of one man among them, and was told that he was his son Dawud, who would come in the last nations. Adam asked that Dawud's life be made longer, and forty years were given to him from Adam's own. (Tirmidhi 3076)

When the angel of death came to Adam at the end of his life, Adam said that forty years of his remained. He was reminded that he had given them to Dawud. The Prophet ﷺ said that Adam denied it, and so his descendants deny; that Adam forgot, and so his descendants forget; and that Adam erred, and so his descendants err. (Tirmidhi 3076) Tirmidhi calls the report hasan sahih. (Tirmidhi 3076)

The covenant

The Qur'an also says that Allah brought out descendants from the children of Adam and made them bear witness over themselves that He is their Lord. They said that they did bear witness, so that they could not say on the Day of Resurrection that they had been unaware. (Qur'an Al-A'raf 7:172) Ibn Kathir cites the hadith above in his commentary on this ayah, among the reports that Allah brought out the descendants of Adam from his back. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)

His age and death

The Prophet ﷺ said that Adam died on a Friday. (Abu Dawud 1047) That is the only fixed fact about his death in the authentic hadith. The wording in Tirmidhi 3076 gives no total length of life. Later books give figures for his age, and no figure is established by an authentic text, so none is repeated here. (Tirmidhi 3076)

His burial

The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us where Adam was buried. Later books carry reports about the place of his burial and about his funeral. None of these reports is established by an authentic text, and we do not repeat them.

No grave of Adam is known, and no part of the religion depends on knowing it.

CHAPTER 14

The Two Sons

The Qur'an tells one story of Adam's family after the descent. The Prophet ﷺ is told to recite to the people the story of the two sons of Adam, in truth. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:27) Each son offered a sacrifice. It was accepted from one and not accepted from the other. The one whose offering was not accepted said to his brother that he would kill him. The brother answered that Allah accepts only from those who fear Him. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:27)

The two replies

The brother who was threatened refused to raise his hand against him. He said that he feared Allah, the Lord of the worlds. He said he wished that his brother would bear his own sin and the sin of the killing, and so be among the companions of the Fire, which is the reward of the wrongdoers. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:28–29) The other brother's soul made the killing seem easy to him, and he killed his brother and became one of the losers. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:30)

The crow

Then Allah sent a crow, which dug into the ground to show him how to cover the body of his brother. The Arabic word, ghurab, is used for the crow and the raven, and translations use both words. The man said: woe to me, am I not able to be even like this crow and to bury my brother? He became one of those who regret. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:31) The Qur'an then says that because of this, Allah decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills a person, other than for a killing or for corruption in the land, is as if he had killed all of mankind, and whoever saves a life is as if he had saved all of mankind. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:32)

The hadith

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud reported that the Prophet ﷺ said that no soul is killed unjustly but that the first son of Adam has a share of the guilt for it, because he was the first to establish the practice of killing. (Bukhari 3335) Ibn Kathir calls the two brothers Habil and Qabil, the sons of Adam, as many scholars of the early and later generations said. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) A few early commentators are reported to have said that they were two men of Bani Isra'il, and al-Hasan al-Basri is named for this view in later commentaries. The hadith above, which speaks of the first son of Adam, is taken as a reason to prefer the first view. (Bukhari 3335)

The first burial

The Qur'an presents the crow as the one who showed the killer how to hide his brother's body. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:31) The Qur'an does not say whether Adam knew of the killing in the way the later books describe, or how he responded. It says nothing of his reaction, and the authentic hadith add nothing.

What is not told

The Qur'an does not give the names of the two sons, what they offered, the reason one offering was accepted, the place, or the manner of the killing. The classical books give the names Habil and Qabil, and describe a dispute over marriage. Ibn Kathir records this from Ibn Abbas and other early commentators, and says that the report from Ibn Abbas has a good chain. It is still not a statement of the Prophet ﷺ, and it is not part of what the Qur'an or the authentic hadith tell us. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) The same books explain how the children of Adam married one another in the first generation. The Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not tell us this, and we do not repeat the accounts here.

CHAPTER 15

What the Sources Do Not Tell

The Prophet ﷺ gave permission to pass on stories from the Children of Israel without blame, and also warned strongly against lying about him. (Bukhari 3461) The scholars of tafsir used this permission carefully. They divided such reports into three kinds. A report that agrees with the Qur'an and the authentic hadith can be accepted. A report that contradicts them is rejected. A report on which the sources are silent is neither believed nor called false, and nothing in religion is built on it. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir) These reports are called Isra'iliyyat.

Reports kept apart from the story

Many reports gathered around the story of Adam. Some are Isra'iliyyat, and some are reports of the early commentators that no authentic text confirms. This book mentions the following only to set them apart. None of them is used above as the basis of any statement.

- The kind of tree: the grape, barley, the date palm, the fig and others. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- That Shaytan hid in the mouth of a serpent to enter the Garden, a detail Ibn Kathir attributes to the Tawrah. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- That the first woman tempted Adam and led him to eat. The Qur'an names Adam as the one who erred. (Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:121)

- The earlier history of Iblis, including a name and a rank among the angels. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- The places where Adam and Hawwa came down on the earth. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- The names and quarrel of the two sons, and the marriages of the first generation. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir)
- The place and manner of Adam's burial.

What the Qur'an and the authentic hadith do not say

QUESTION	WHAT THE SOURCES SAY
Where Adam is buried	Not stated.
Where the Garden was	Not stated in plain words; scholars differ (next chapter).
Where he first lived on the earth	Not stated.
Which tree	Not named. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35)
The name of his wife	Not given in the Qur'an. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:35)
How long he stayed in the Garden	Not stated in the Qur'an or in the words of the Prophet ﷺ.
His total age	Not stated in the Qur'an; not fixed in the hadith quoted above. (Tirmidhi 3076)
The names of his two sons	Not given in the Qur'an. (Qur'an Al-Ma'idah 5:27)
The time since Adam	Nothing authentic.

CHAPTER 16

Where Scholars Differ

The Garden: heaven or earth

The Qur'an calls the place where Adam lived the Garden, al-jannah. The word is used for the Garden of the next life, and it is also used for any garden. Scholars have differed about which is meant here. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir)

Most scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah held that it was the Garden of the next life, in the heavens, and Ibn Kathir holds this view. They point to the command to "go down" from it, to the word Garden with the definite article, and to the hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ said that Allah shaped Adam in Paradise. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:36; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:123; Muslim 2611a) Others held that it was a garden on the earth. Ibn Kathir raises the question of how Iblis, who had been expelled, could reach Adam there, and gives the answers that scholars have offered: that he entered secretly, or that he whispered to them from outside. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir; Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir) Both views rest on the same texts, and no authentic text decides the question in plain words. This book does not decide it.

The length of time since Adam

The Qur'an and the authentic hadith give no date for Adam and no count of the years since him. Figures that later books quote for the age of the world or of mankind are not established by an authentic text. The Qur'an does tell us that all mankind came from one soul. (Qur'an An-Nisa 4:1) It does not give the number of generations between Adam and Nuh.

Prophet and messenger

The scholars count Adam as a prophet. They point to the Qur'an saying that Allah chose him, turned to him and guided him, and that guidance would come to him and his descendants. (Qur'an Al Imran 3:33; Qur'an Ta-Ha 20:122–123; Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:38) Ibn Kathir cites a report from Abu Dharr, recorded by Ibn Marduwayh, in which the Prophet ﷺ said that Adam was a prophet and a messenger to whom Allah spoke directly. It is not in the two Sahih collections, and its grading is disputed, so we mention it as a report and do not rest the statement on it. (Tafsir Ibn Kathir) Scholars also differ on whether he was a messenger, that is, one sent to a people with a law. The hadith of intercession calls Nuh the first messenger sent to the people of the earth, and many take this to mean that Adam was a prophet and not a messenger in that sense. (Bukhari 3340)

The other points

The scholars also differ on the meaning of the rib in the hadith about the first woman, on the pronoun in the words "in His image," and on the identity of the two sons, as we noted in the earlier chapters. None of these changes what the Qur'an says about Adam: that he was created by Allah, honoured with knowledge, tested, forgiven, and sent to the earth with a promise of guidance. (Qur'an Al-Baqarah 2:30–39)

AT A GLANCE

Timeline

THE QUR'AN ON ADAM	WHAT IT SAYS
2:30–33	Allah announces a khalifah; the angels ask; the names are taught.
2:34	The angels prostrate; Iblis refuses.
2:35–36	The Garden, the one tree, the slip, and the command to go down.
2:37–39	Words received; repentance accepted; guidance promised.
3:33	Allah chose Adam over the worlds.
3:59	Adam was created from dust; Allah said "Be."
4:1	Mankind created from one soul and its mate.
5:27–32	The two sons, the killing and the crow.

THE QUR'AN ON ADAM	WHAT IT SAYS
7:11–18	Prostration, refusal, respite and the vow of Iblis.
7:19–25	The tree, the whisper, repentance and descent.
15:26–44	Clay; the breath; the refusal; the sentence.
18:50	Iblis was of the jinn.
20:115–123	The covenant forgotten; the whisper; choice, forgiveness, guidance.
32:7–9	Creation from clay and the breath of the spirit.
38:71–85	Creation, prostration, the words of Allah to Iblis.
55:14–15	Man from clay like pottery; the jinn from fire.

Adam's life has no dates in the sources; the table lists the Qur'an's accounts and not a sequence of years.

Sources

The Qur'an, with the translation of the meanings in the author's wording.

Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim.

Sunan Abi Dawud, Jami at-Tirmidhi.

Tafsir at-Tabari (Jami al-Bayan).

Tafsir Ibn Kathir.

Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, Ibn Kathir.

Mafatih al-Ghayb, ar-Razi.

Next Tuesday, in sha Allah: Part 2, Idris and Nuh.