

The Esoteric Interpretation of Divine Caliph in Surah al-Baqarah

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Abstract

This study aims to elucidate the Esoteric interpretation of the term *Khalīfah* in Surah Baqarah. Given the importance of examining Qur'anic terms and concepts, the research first reviews the literal meaning of the word *Khalīfah* and, through reflection on verses 30 to 39 of Surah Baqarah, seeks to derive the Esoteric concept of Divine Caliph (*Khalīfah* Ilahi). By utilizing the meanings of key words and phrases in these verses, it is suggested that the Esoteric interpretation of this title is realized in the human being. In this context, the existential structure of "Adam" and his mission are also conceptualized. This study investigates the influence of the true teaching of *al-smá kulluhā* (all the names) in the structure of humanity. The conclusion drawn is that the complete manifestation of the Divine Names in the existence of humankind might be the primary factor for the realization of the "Divine Caliph" attribute within them. The occurrence of this reality will lead to the obedience of all the forces of the universe to humankind, which is expressed in the Qur'an by the angels' prostration to Adam. The embodiment of this attribute in the personalities of the Divine *Awlīyá* (particularly the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them) in the material world gradually becomes apparent. Thus, the purpose of Adam's descent to the "earth" (a realm of materiality and gradual progress) is to display the gradual attainment of the position of "God's Deputy," which, in the end, leads to the Divine *Awlīyá* attaining the highest positions of the complete manifestations of the Divine Names and proximity to "Allah".

Keywords: Esoteric interpretation, *Khalīfah*, Earth, Adam, Knowledge of Names, Prostration.

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Introduction

Since the title of *Khalīfah* is assigned to "Adam" by God in the Holy Qur'an, the most important and suitable reference to understand the meaning of this attribute for "Adam" is the Qur'an itself. Given that the true understanding of the Qur'an is accessible through the Ahl al-Bayt (as) and the Divine *Awlīyá*, it is inevitable and essential to draw upon the sayings of the infallible Imams and Islamic mysticism to comprehend the inner meaning of the term "Divine Caliph" (*Khalīfah Ilahi*). This research seeks to explore the structure and mission of "Adam" in verses 30 to 39 of Surah Al-Baqarah in order to derive the Esoteric interpretation of "God's Deputy," utilizing both the Qur'an and Esoteric theories based on the interpretation of these verses. Words such as: Khalīfah, Adam, knowledge, names, news, prostration, earth, and descent in relation to God's assignment of a deputy on Earth in these verses require conceptualization. Each of these terms, considering their syntactical and contextual relationships, will create a broad semantic field for the word "Khalīfah," through which the true meanings of "teaching the names" (*al-'Ilm al-Asma'a*), how Adam informed the angels of these names, the quality of the angels' prostration to Adam, the imparting of "words," the meanings of "earth," and the purpose of descent will be understood. Each of these phrases, in addition to their apparent meaning, contains deep, esoteric concepts.

Research Methodology

One of the ways to access the deep meanings of the Qur'an is through contemplation of its verses. "Contemplation" (*Tadabbur*) means to think beyond the surface, delving into what is hidden beneath. The result of deep reflection is the discovery of truths that are not immediately apparent from a superficial glance. The Qur'an, in three verses (23:68, 47:26, and 4:82), warns and admonishes its audience to engage in deep reflection on its verses. Imam Ali (as) says in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon 106: "Only the 'contemplative person' can uncover the essence and pure truth of Islam." These statements highlight the importance of reflection, and thus the best way to understand the deeper meanings of the Qur'an is through contemplation. Therefore, the method adopted in this study will be the practice of contemplation in the Qur'anic verses. Since reflection on the Qur'anic verses can lead to understanding their multiple layers of meaning, merely relying on the apparent meanings of the verses, with the assumption

that the apparent meaning is conclusive, will not reveal the deeper truths of the Qur'an. Considering the Esoteric interpretation of the Qur'an as explained by the people of knowledge, one can also seek guidance from the practices of these great figures to express the inner meanings of the verses.

Literal Meaning of the Word *Khalīfah*

The word *Khalīfah* means "deputy" or "successor" (Qurashi, 1317 AH, vol. 2, p. 286). According to Raghīb in his *Mufradāt* (Raghīb, 1416 AH, p. 39) and Shartuni in *Aqrab al-Mawarid* (Shartuni, n.d., p. 65), the term *Khalīfah* refers to one who acts as a deputy for someone else due to the absence, death, incapacity, or honor of the original person. In this sense, God has made His *Awlīyá* (saints) deputies on Earth: "He is the one who made you *Khalīfahs* of the earth" (Al-An'am, 6:165). Raghīb adds that *Khalīfah* refers to a singular and *Khalīfah* and *Khulafa'* are plural forms. For instance, "He made you successors after the people of Noah" (Qur'an, 35:39). This is a rule of pluralization, where gender (masculine or feminine) is not considered. For Prophet Dawood (David), it is mentioned: "We made you a *Khalīfah* on Earth" (Qur'an, 38:26). According to *Aqrab al-Mawārid*, both *Khulafa'* (plural masculine) and *Khulafa'* (plural, can be masculine or feminine) are correct and widely used in classical Arabic, as evidenced in the Qur'an.

Divine Caliph in the Qur'an

"And when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place a deputy (*Khalīfah*) on Earth..." (Baqarah, 2:30). The word *Khalīfah* and its derived forms (in the context of praise) appear 12 times in the Qur'an (Abu Zahra al-Najdi, 1416 AH, p. 91). The phrase "I am going to place a deputy on Earth" seems to refer to appointing a deputy for God, because if the intention were to appoint a deputy for someone else, the term *musta'khlef 'anhu* (the one being succeeded) and the duration of the succession would need to be specified. The fact that these details are not mentioned suggests that the succession is meant for God Himself (Misbah Yazdi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 364).

The Concept of *Khalīfah* in the View of the People of Knowledge (*Ahl al-Ma'arifah*)

In the domain of Irfan (mysticism), this concept is explained as follows: everything that exists in the universe is a manifestation of the Divine Names and Attributes (Mulla Sadra, 1384 AH, vol. 1, p. 87). With this

introduction, some believe that the Divine Names and Attributes initially manifested separately, and then all these Names united in the greatest manifestation. Thus, the "concept of the Perfect Human" (*al-Insān al-Kāmil*) becomes revealed in the world (Qaysari, n.d., p. 63). The manifestation of the "Perfect Human" is essentially the unveiling of the body of humanity, meaning that everything that the Divine Names represent has manifested in this body. Here, an important point arises: the manifestation of the Divine Names in their collective form (Hassan Zadeh Amoli, 1374 AH, p. 95) certainly holds the highest rank, as a complete whole inherently includes all its components. Therefore, the theory of the separate manifestation of the Divine Names is rejected based on this reasoning.

In other words, perhaps there is a confusion between the manifestation of the Divine Names in the spiritual realm (*Alam al-Amr*) and their appearance in the material world (*Alam al-Mulk*). The spiritual realm is outside the boundaries of time and space. Therefore, the realization of any matter in this realm follows the "Kun Fayakun" principle (Be, and it is). An important note regarding this principle is that in a monotheistic view, it may be said that since there is nothing in the universe besides "Allah," the concept of ancient and created matters is nullified. This is because there is nothing in the world that can exist after Allah. According to this view, everything that exists in the universe has existed eternally.

*In the beginning, the light of Your beauty was revealed,
And love appeared, setting fire to the entire world (Hafiz, Ghazal 152).*

All the truths that exist in the universe are contained within the human being. This is confirmed by the verse: "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves" (Fussilat, 41:53). This verse clearly states that the signs of God are present not only in the external world but also within the self. (Ibn Arabi, 1367 AH, vol. 11, p. 23). However, it is important to note that objects are not individually and concretely present in humans; rather, their truths, or in other words, the essence of things in their totality, are present in humans. Thus, human beings are the microcosm of all non-material truths, and in this sense, humans are the "small world" (*'alam al-asghar*). Ibn Arabi uses various terms for the "Perfect Human."

In his book *al-Tadbirat al-Ilahiyyah*, he states: "People of truth have used various expressions to describe this *Khalīfah* (the Perfect Human), such as 'the Clear Imam,' 'the Throne,' 'the Mirror of the Truth,' and similar terms" (Ibn Arabi, 1366 AH, p. 121). The Perfect Human, who is the absolute *Khalīfah* of God, is unique in every era. Among all the *Khalīfahs* of God, Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and the Imams (as) hold a special place. In reality, the first direct *Khalīfah* of God is the "Light of Truth," Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), and this does not contradict the fact that the first human being was Prophet Adam (as). The absolute and direct *Khalīfah* of God in the realm of Divine knowledge precedes all other beings and is the source of creation in the general and universal sense. However, in the material world, he occupies the final link in this chain (Qaysari, n.d., pp. 350-352). It is narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: "I was a Prophet while Adam was between water and clay" (Majlisi, n.d., vol. 16, Chapter 12, p. 134).

The View of the Angels Regarding "Divine Caliph"

"They said, 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?'" (Baqarah, 2:30).

The structure of the angels is such that they can only know the degree that is actualized in their own being, and they are only aware of their own essence. They themselves admit this when God says to them, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful" (Baqarah, 2:31). The angels respond, "Glory be to You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise" (Baqarah, 2:31). So, how is it that they ask God, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood" (Baqarah, 2:30)? Could it be that the angels' question is actually a rhetorical question posed by God to emphasize a point? The interpretation might be that God is reminding them: "If Adam forgets his position as My '*Khalīfah*' (deputy), he has forgotten the very purpose of his creation." Since Adam was created to be God's representative on Earth, the characteristics of the one who is represented (*musta'khlef 'anhu*), i.e., God, are inherently present in him. The *Khalīfah* retains these shared qualities with God, but only as long as he does not forget his true nature: that he is the servant (*'abd*) of the Lord of the Worlds. If he forgets this, then his path becomes confused, and he may even wish to "become God" himself, like Pharaoh, who declared "I am your lord, the

most high" (Qasas, 28:38). This marks the greatest challenge in the journey of the "Khalīfah of God," a major flaw that stems from forgetfulness.

Human beings are the deputies of God, and God has entrusted them with the management of His kingdom on Earth. However, the true owner is only God, and humans hold only the position of trusteeship. (Ibn Arabi, 1400 AH, p. 71). The relationship between the deputy (*musta'khlef*) and the one being succeeded (*musta'khlef 'anhu*), i.e., God, is that of a servant (*'abd*) to the master (Mawla). The same relationship must prevail between the human *Khalīfah* and God. As long as a person keeps the sense of servitude to God alive in their heart and sees themselves as completely dependent on the Lord of the Worlds, they will fulfill their role as God's deputy with dignity. However, forgetfulness of this truth causes them to go astray, leading to arrogance, as described in the verse: "No! Indeed, man transgresses when he sees himself as self-sufficient" (Alaq, 96:6-7). This rebellious tendency is inherent in human beings. Whenever they perceive themselves as independent, they want to be like God because their existence contains all the Divine Names and Attributes, stemming from the "breath of My Spirit" (Hijr, 15:29), which makes them inherently God-like.

To prevent Adam from forgetting his purpose, God has taken numerous measures. He sends him to Earth as His deputy and makes everything sent with him a reminder (*dhikr*). God sends messengers in the broadest sense: through the modes of creation, written scripture, and even embodied forms, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Mohammad, Ali, and Fatimah, to ensure Adam does not forget his mission. This is so that the angels' prediction will not come true: "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood?" And in response, the loving God defends His beloved creation: "Indeed, I know what you do not know." God Himself descends to Earth and manifests as Hussein, embodying the essence of God in the form of a human being: "The essence of God" (*Ziyārat al-Jāmi'ah*). Through the events of Karbala, God demonstrates the true kingship of His deputy, proving to the angels what they did not know. Thus, the martyrdom of Hussein becomes the ultimate proof of Adam's title as *Khalīfatullāh* (God's Deputy).

The Hidden Treasure

God manifests in the world out of love, a love derived from eternal affection: "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created

the creation so that I might be known." (Shushtari, 1409 AH, Vol. 1, p. 431). In other words, God says: "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known, so I created the creation and made Myself beloved to them through blessings so that they might know Me." (Kashani, 736 AH, p. 371). The phrase "that I may be known" refers to God's desire to be recognized, as the essence of "being beloved" is tied to the knowledge and understanding of the lover. The greater the knowledge of the lover, the more complete the beloved's position, and the elevation of the lover's status corresponds to the depth of their knowledge of the beloved. Love is, therefore, a result of knowledge, and this is a profound secret that not everyone can grasp.

The Burden of Trust

"So, I created" refers to the creation of both spiritual and material beings, beings without matter, helpers, or partners, created by choice, not compulsion, as the text says "the creation": God desired to create humankind, and nothing else in existence could bear the burden of divine trust. As mentioned in the Qur'an: "Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it. But man undertook it." (Ahzāb, 33:72). This passage is a great announcement to humanity, signifying that human are the manifestation of the Divine essence and the reflector of the Divine attributes. Therefore, the entire universe directed its knowledge and recognition to humankind. (Shushtari, 1409 AH, Vol. 1, p. 431).

Many Sufis and spiritual seekers consider God's trust to be love, the very thing that the heavens and the earth refused to bear, but humanity, in their determination, accepted it. As 'Aziz ad-Din Nasafi states: "O dervish, the trust that was offered to all beings and was rejected by them, mankind accepted. This trust is 'love.' If people knew that love is a divine destiny and a great affliction, they would never have accepted it." (Nasafi, 1962 AD, p. 299). In the commentary of Safi Ali Shah, God's trust and love are discussed in more detail. (Safi Ali Shah, undated, p. 598).

The Criteria of Succession

In Surah Baqarah, verse 31, God says: "And He taught Adam the names of all things." The definite article "al" in *al-asmā* (the names) and the word *kullahā* (all) both imply the universality of the Divine Names. Teaching Adam all the names indicate his qualification for divine succession, and the complete embodiment of the divine representative (*Khalifah*) reveals the

secret of succession. The Qur'an emphasizes the teaching of all names to Adam as the key to understanding divine succession. In this context, the Khalīfah, by manifesting all the Divine Names, becomes the representative of God on Earth and is granted the right to succeed Him. (Ibn Arabi, Vol. 1, p. 342).

After teaching Adam the names, God said to the angels, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful." The angels admitted their ignorance in response, and from this ignorance, God demonstrated their unworthiness for succession, stating: "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth?" This implies that the unseen, which they did not know, is the "what you do not know" that they lacked. Interestingly, even after the angels were informed about the names, they still were not deemed worthy of succession because "informing" is different from "teaching." Despite being told about the names, the angels did not grasp them fully due to their lack of the necessary affinity with those names. They were not capable of encompassing such knowledge. (Bahraani, 1416 AH, p. 164).

The *Khalīfah* of God

The *Khalīfah* of God is the only being who fully manifests God, with all His perfections, Names, and Attributes. Specifically, the *Khalīfah* of God, by leading socially, manifests all of God's Names and expresses them through His sovereignty. Such a *Khalīfah* grants, forbids, honors, humiliates, gives life, causes death, brings harm, brings benefit, and displays the Divine Names in the world. (Ibn Arabi, undated, Vol. 2, p. 272).

Manifestations of "All Names"

Each of the "Names" represents the essence of a Divine attribute or manifestation. The Names have different levels: in the first level, they apply to intelligible meanings in the unseen world, which are not embodied as tangible entities. In a lower level, they apply to physical beings that serve as manifestations of the unseen Names. For example, "knowledge" is the essential truth of God, and it represents a Divine "Name" that reflects the abstract meanings of God's attributes and manifestations. Thus, each of the intelligences or pure spirits (the *aqls*) can be considered a manifestation of God's Name "Al-'Aleem" (The All-Knowing). The teaching of the Names to Adam refers to the divine inspiration of the truths of objects to him. (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1366 SH, Vol. 2, p. 305)

"A person who embodies the all-encompassing Name of God—the highest of Names in the second manifestation—has manifested all Names in themselves. By this, they have become the embodiment of God's all-encompassing Name. Such an individual must be seen as the manifestation of all the Names, unlike other creatures that only reflect one of God's Names." (Yazdanpanah, 1388 SH, p. 587) The *Khalīfah* of God is the one who reflects all the perfections of God, and among all beings, none, except the perfect human being, can be considered the full reflection of all Divine Names and Attributes. Therefore, among all manifestations, only the perfect human can ascend to the position of *Khalīfah* and reveal all the Attributes of the Divine *Mukhlif 'Anho* (the one who is replaced). (Ibn Arabi, undated, Vol. 1, p. 263)

The Type of Teaching in "Knowledge of All Names"

It is unlikely that the teaching of the Names merely refers to their verbal utterance; it is far more likely that it refers to the understanding of their essence. The knowledge that is discussed in the worldly sense is primarily acquired knowledge—knowledge that is based on concepts and definitions. In contrast, the type of knowledge in the realm of meaning is not about words or concepts. It is not sound for the ears to hear, nor is it a picture for the eyes to see. It is not a concept for the mind to grasp. Here, the path is through the heart. The knowledge granted by God to His saints is known as knowledge of witnessing or presence, which is a direct showing of the truth to the individual through divine experience. This knowledge remains in the soul of the person and cannot be lost. The *Khalīfah* of God, in order to act upon the world, requires the Divine Names, as with these Names, the *Khalīfah* can influence and manage creation. (Ibn Arabi, 2001 AD, Vol. 1, p. 273)

The teaching of "All Names" occurs in the realm of meaning. The Teacher is "the Lord of the Worlds" (*Rabb al-'Alamin*), and therefore there must be a congruence between the "world of teaching and the teacher" and the "method and content of teaching." Whenever the Qur'an refers to God's teaching to His servants, this type of teaching manifests itself in the character of the learner. For example, the teaching that God imparted to Prophet Khidr (as) is illustrated in the Qur'an: "So they found a servant of Our servants to whom We had given mercy from Us and We had taught him knowledge from Ourselves." (18:65, Kahf). This divine teaching

manifested in the actions of Khidr, as when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) asked Khidr to teach him some of the wisdom he had been given, saying: "Moses said to him, 'May I follow you so that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgment?'" (18:66, Kahf). Khidr displayed this "knowledge" through his actions during their journey, and no verbal instruction took place between Moses and Khidr because the teaching was of a divine nature. As Khidr was a servant of God, he was capable of manifesting divine wisdom, which is a characteristic of being a servant of the Lord of the Worlds.

The Manifestation of All Divine Names in Adam

Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, one of the greatest commentators on Ibn Arabi's teachings, describes three types of Divine manifestations. In the first manifestation, called the "Essence Manifestation" (*Tajalli Dhāti*), God's Essence becomes evident to itself, resulting in the emergence of the One (*Ahdiyyah*). In the second manifestation, the "Fixed Entities" (*A'yān Thabitah*) come into being, which Kashani refers to as the "First Determination" (*Tayyun Awwal*). The third manifestation is called the "Visionary Manifestation" (*Tajalli Shuhudi*), where God appears in the forms of His Names in the world.

The inner meaning of the "Teaching of the Names" refers to the complete manifestation of all Divine Names in Adam. God created Adam with a specific structure that could encompass and reflect all of these Divine Names. When the Names manifested in him, Adam became the "Face of God's Manifestation," containing within him all the Divine Names, even though the angels, each embodying a particular Name, could not do so. In essence, Adam, in his totality, was the fullest embodiment of God's attributes and essence. (Abd al-Razzaq Kashani, 736 AH, p. 17-18)

The Offering of the Names to the Angels

Before revealing Adam's true potential and capacity, God first presented all the Names to the angels: "*Thumma 'Aradahum 'Ala al-Malā'ikah*" (2:32). The reason for this "offering" rather than a "teaching" could be attributed to the unique attribute that the angels lack, which is the "Divine Spirit" (*Ruh Allah*) breathed into Adam, setting him apart. As God says, "I breathed into him from My Spirit" (15:29).

Mulla Sadra, in his explanation of the presentation of the Names to the angels, argues that every type of being, such as human or horse, has an

intellectual and luminous essence before God. These intellectual essences, known as "separate intellects" (*Aqls*) and abstract forms, are in fact the Divine Names, which have existed eternally. The Names are presented to the angels at this level of existence, yet the angels only recognize the Name that is embodied in their own existence, and remain unaware of the other Divine Names. As a result, they cannot fully comprehend the complete nature of the Names presented to them: "He said: 'Inform Me of the Names of these, if you are truthful.' They said: 'Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who are the Knowing, the Wise'" (2:32).

The True Meaning of the Angels' Prostration to Adam

The angels, upon being shown the Names by God, recognized that they too were manifestations of the Divine Names within Adam, as this is the inner meaning of the *Laylat al-Qadr*, where the angels descend with God's command: "The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter" (97:4). In this case, the "angels" represent the forces or faculties of existence within Adam, and their prostration to him symbolized their obedience to his authority. Therefore, the angels' prostration was not just a physical act but a representation of their acknowledgment of Adam's unique position as the embodiment of God's full manifestation. As stated in the Qur'an: "And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam,' and they prostrated..." (2:34).

This act of prostration, according to the teachings of Ibn Arabi and other mystics, is not merely an act of physical submission but a recognition of Adam as the true *Khalifah* (Vicegerent) of God, who embodies all the Divine Names. It is through Adam that the Divine essence and the complete manifestation of God's attributes come into being and interact with the world.

Reasons for Satan's Refusal to Prostrate to Adam

Satan's refusal to prostrate before Adam, despite God's command, is a critical event in Islamic theology and mysticism, and several reasons can be identified for his defiance. When God asked Satan, "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" (7:12), Satan's response was: "I am better than him. You created me from fire and him from clay" (7:12). Several key points arise from Satan's statement:

Superficial Understanding of Adam's Nature: Satan only saw Adam's physical form, which was made from clay, but he failed to recognize the spiritual dimension of Adam. God had breathed His Spirit into Adam, making him far more than just a physical being. God says, "And I breathed into him from My Spirit" (15:29). Satan's refusal stemmed from his inability to perceive the deeper, divine aspect of Adam's existence.

Faulty Reasoning through Comparison: Satan made an erroneous comparison based on appearances. His judgment was limited to a surface-level comparison between fire (a more exalted element in his view) and clay (the substance of Adam's body). In spiritual matters, such reasoning is deemed invalid. This reflects the Sufi perspective that worldly perceptions and comparisons based on physical qualities are misleading when it comes to the essence of creation and the Divine order.

Envy (*Hasad*): Another significant factor in Satan's defiance was envy. He could not accept that someone made from clay could be preferred by God over him, a being created from fire. This sense of superiority and jealousy led to his rebellion. Envy, especially in a spiritual context, prevents individuals from recognizing the truth and can lead to disobedience.

Pride and Arrogance (*Kibr*): Satan's arrogance was another key reason for his refusal. His sense of self-importance and belief in his own superiority blinded him to God's command. Pride prevented him from acknowledging that God, in His infinite wisdom, could prefer Adam over him.

Lack of True Love and Servitude: Satan was not a true lover or servant of God. A true servant of God would not question His command, nor would he seek to place himself above others. Satan, however, viewed his acts of worship as a transaction, where he hoped to receive a reward. This transactional attitude is not characteristic of true servitude, where the servant sees no distinction between himself and his Lord, and acts out of love, not for reward. God's command to Satan was, "Descend from it, for it is not for you to be arrogant therein. So, get out; indeed, you are of the humiliated" (7:13).

Adam's Residence in Paradise and His Mission on Earth

God commanded Adam to settle in paradise along with his wife, Eve: "And We said, 'O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise" (2:35). The nature of this paradise is subject to different interpretations.

Transcendence of Paradise: Some scholars view the paradise where Adam resided as a spiritual or intermediate realm (*Barzakh*) rather than a literal, earthly garden. This perspective holds that the paradise in which Adam dwelled was not entirely disconnected from the material world but was a higher spiritual state, still containing certain qualities of the material world, yet transcendent in nature. In this view, Adam's existence in paradise represents a state of spiritual purity before his descent to the earthly realm.

Theological Perspectives: Allamah Tabatabai explains that the paradise where Adam resided was not in contradiction with his creation from clay, nor with his eventual descent to the earthly world. Some narrations even mention that this paradise had qualities resembling the material world, such as the presence of the sun and moon. According to Ibn Arabi, this paradise is different from the heavenly paradise (*Jannah*) after death. The paradise where Adam lived was a "pre-worldly" realm, a station of the soul before its descent into the physical realm.

Philosophical Interpretation by Mulla Sadra: Mulla Sadra explains that the paradise where Adam resided before his earthly life was not a place of final abode but an intermediate station in the spiritual journey of the soul. In his view, paradise represents a state through which the soul passes as it descends into the earthly realm, where it ultimately fulfills its role as God's vicegerent (*Khalifah*) on Earth. Therefore, this paradise was a temporary abode to prepare Adam for his mission in the world.

The First Test and the Forbidden Tree

God warned Adam and Eve against approaching the forbidden tree: "And do not approach this tree" (2:35). Despite this clear prohibition, Adam and Eve ate from it, resulting in their expulsion from paradise. Some interpretations suggest that this paradise was never meant to be Adam's permanent home. It was a "temporary residence" that prepared him for his role as the vicegerent of God on Earth. God had already ordained for Adam to be placed on Earth: "Indeed, I am placing upon the earth a vicegerent" (2:30). This indicates that the earthly realm was ultimately his destined abode, and the paradise was a preparatory stage.

The test of the forbidden tree was a means of evaluating Adam's readiness for the responsibility of vicegerency. Some Sufis believe that Adam ate from the tree because he sought something "new." He found the blessings of paradise to be insufficient for his evolving soul, and so he



longed for deeper spiritual fulfillment. By partaking of the fruit, Adam demonstrated his readiness for the next phase of his existence. In Sufi thought, this action symbolized a deeper, more profound connection to the Divine — one that transcended the comforts of paradise.

Satan's refusal to prostrate to Adam was driven by pride, envy, a superficial understanding of Adam's nature, and a lack of true servitude to God. Adam's journey from paradise to Earth, on the other hand, was part of God's divine plan to prepare him for his greater role as God's vicegerent. The test in paradise was a pivotal moment, marking the beginning of Adam's spiritual journey and his eventual fulfillment of his earthly mission.

Characteristics of the World of *Mulk* (The Material Realm)

One of the prominent features of the worldly realm (*Mulk*) in the Qur'an is its nature as a realm of trial and test (*dār imtihān*). As mentioned in the Qur'an: "Indeed, We have made what is on the earth an adornment for it, that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed." (18:7). Furthermore, the Qur'an emphasizes the transient nature of worldly life and its trials: "And this worldly life is nothing but a deceptive enjoyment. You will surely be tested in your wealth and your lives." (3:185-186). The world is described as the "flower" of life: "The glitter of worldly life is but a test for them. And the provision of your Lord is better and everlasting." (20:131).

Given these attributes, the primary challenge for Adam as the first human in the material realm was to face and navigate this trial. God commands Adam not to approach the forbidden tree: "And do not approach this tree" (2:35). This first trial would determine whether Adam had the capacity and the readiness to take on the responsibility of God's vicegerency (*Khilāfah*) in this realm of trial.

Satan's Role in the Trial

Satan's role in the Qur'an is that of an antagonist whose task is to lead humans astray, to test them, and to sow discord. In the case of Adam, Satan succeeded in tempting him and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree: "Then Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from the state they were in." (7:22). This resulted in their expulsion from the paradise, and God commanded them to descend to Earth: "And We said, 'Descend, some of you are enemies to others, and for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time.'" (2:36). Satan, as the instigator of the first trial,

also descends with them to Earth, and thus the journey of mankind in the world of trial begins. Interestingly, even Satan's opposition and role in testing Adam serve a greater purpose in God's plan, as through these trials, the true nature and potential of humanity are revealed.

Adam's Repentance and Return to Divine Mercy

After Adam and Eve's fall, they learned an invaluable lesson about their dependence on God. In response to their transgression, Adam receives guidance from his Lord: "Then Adam received words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful." (2:37). Despite his initial failure in the test, Adam's repentance becomes the turning point of his spiritual journey. It is important to understand that Adam's failure was not a sign of his inadequacy but a necessary part of his development. Through this failure, he learned not to trust in anything or anyone other than God. This realization marks his true return to his divine mission.

God, in His infinite mercy, did not leave Adam in despair but instead provided him with the means for his redemption. "Adam received words from his Lord" – these words are understood to be divine guidance or inspiration that enabled Adam to seek forgiveness, and God, being "the Most Merciful", accepted his repentance.

The Nature of Repentance in the Qur'an

The Qur'an describes repentance as a powerful tool for returning to God's grace. When Adam and Eve repent, it is not merely an act of regret but a turning back to God through His guidance. The "words" that Adam receives are a form of divine revelation that guides him back to his true purpose as God's vicegerent on Earth. These words are essential in Adam's repentance process and highlight God's role as the "Most Merciful" and "Most Compassionate" in facilitating human return to His favor.

The Role of "Words" in Spiritual Guidance

The notion of "words" (*kalām*) plays a central role in the Qur'an as a means of divine communication. In several verses, God sends His "words" to guide the prophets and the faithful. For instance, in Surah A'raf (7:158), the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) is described as one who believes in God's "words" after believing in God Himself: "So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided." This highlights that God's words,



whether through Scripture or divine inspiration, are a means of spiritual guidance and redemption. Thus, Adam's repentance through receiving God's words was a critical moment in his journey, where he was spiritually rehabilitated and prepared for his role as God's vicegerent on Earth. The acceptance of his repentance signifies not only God's mercy but also Adam's reaffirmation of his purpose as a servant and trustee of God's creation.

The Role of Trials in the Material Realm

The world (*Mulk*) serves as a realm of trials and tests, where humans are tested in their deeds, their faith, and their ability to adhere to God's guidance. Adam's experience in the world of trial mirrors the ongoing journey of humanity, which involves navigating the temptations of Satan, learning from mistakes, and seeking redemption through repentance. The Qur'anic narrative emphasizes that while the world is a place of testing, it is also a place where God's mercy is ever available for those who turn back to Him with sincerity and humility.

This understanding of the world as a place of trial is crucial for human spiritual development. It teaches that despite the difficulties and tests faced in life, humans must trust in God's guidance, remain steadfast, and seek His forgiveness whenever they err. The words given to Adam represent the divine tool for this process, and it is through them that humans are reminded of their ultimate purpose and potential to fulfill their role as God's representatives on Earth.

Surah Luqman, verse 27, discusses the vastness of these "words": "And if all the trees on earth were pens, and the sea were ink, with seven more seas added to it, the words of Allah would not be exhausted." (Luqman 27) The late Allama Tabatabai, in his commentary on verse 27 of Surah Luqman, says: "The term 'word' in the divine discourse is sometimes applied to existence. Of course, existence, which is bestowed by His command, is referred to as the word *Kun* (Be), as mentioned in: 'Indeed, when He intends something, His command is to say to it 'Be' and it is.' So, the meaning of this verse is that if all the trees on earth were made into pens, and the waters of the seas, along with seven other seas, were assumed to be ink, and with this pen and ink, the words of God were to be written after being transformed into letters, the seas and trees would be exhausted

before the 'words' would end, because they are finite, whereas the 'word of God' is infinite."

In verse 171 of Surah Nisa, Jesus (as) is referred to as the "word" of Allah: "The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is but the messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul from Him." (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, vol. 18, p. 289)

In these verses, the common meaning regarding "word" or "words" seems to be that it does not refer to literal words, but to signs, verses, and the divine names, as clearly indicated in the verses. In verse 57 of Surah Luqman, it appears that the divine names are meant, which manifest in the larger world (the cosmos). Similarly, in verse 171 of Surah An-Nisa, the same divine names may be meant, but this time they manifest in the smaller world (the human realm). This could be because the presented names were the souls of beings more noble than angels. Some traditions suggest that these noble beings were the souls of the infallible ones (peace be upon them). (Bahrani, 1416 AH, p. 164)

In verse 24 of Surah Ibrahim, the verse "a pure word" is compared to "a pure tree." In Islamic traditions, it is explained that the "pure tree" refers to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and his family. Other traditions state that the "pure tree" refers to the Prophet, Ali, Fatimah, and their children. (Hawizi, 1383 AH, vol. 2, p. 535, hadith 53)

Some mystics have also used the term "word" in accordance with its Qur'anic meaning, where the word of God is synonymous with the word *Kun* (Be), meaning creation. Therefore, all beings are the words of God, and adding it to the Mohammadian name can also confirm this meaning, as it is derived from the idea of creation. This is evidence of the first entity or first manifestation, which is the Mohammadan light or spirit. The perfect human being, who embodies the names and attributes of God, is created, and through him, all other beings come into existence. (Ibn Arabi, 1400 AH, p. 86)

Given this, it could be said that the words revealed to Adam were the existence of the "Ahl al-Bayt" (the Infallible Progeny of the Prophet), for these are the words that can be revealed, just like in the case of Jesus (peace be upon him), who is mentioned in Surah Nisa, verse 171: "Indeed, the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is but the messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul from Him."

Allama Tabatabai explains that Jesus is only the messenger of God, His word, and the soul granted to Mary from Him. (Tabatabai, 1417 AH, vol. 18, p. 289)

The similarity between the word "His word which He directed to Mary" and the words revealed to Adam "Adam received words from his Lord" may be that both represent the truth of the divine names in their collective form. Both are small worlds, containing the truth of everything in the greater world, which is comprised of divine words that cannot be counted: "And if all the trees on earth were pens, and the sea were ink, with seven more seas added to it, the words of Allah would not be exhausted."

These words are revealed to Adam so that through them, repentance between him and his Lord may be realized. Since that time, it has been established that these "pure words" act as an intermediary between the "servant" and the "Lord," becoming an unalterable divine tradition.

The meanings of *Hoboot* in the Holy Qur'an

The term *Hoboot* in the Arabic language means the descent from a high place to a lower and more inferior position. It is the opposite of ascent. (Farahidi, 1410 AH, vol. 4, p. 44, Ibn Manzoor, vol. 7, p. 421)

The *Hoboot* of Adam to the earth is mentioned in the following verses:

"And We said, 'Descend, some of you being enemies to others, and for you on the earth is a place of settlement and provision for a time.'"

"We said, 'Descend from it all. And when guidance comes to you from Me, then whoever follows My guidance will not be misled and will not grieve.'" (Baqarah, 37)

In the Holy Qur'an, *Hoboot* also refers to settling or being established in a place (city). In the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) and the Israelites, the Qur'an says: "...He said, 'Do you exchange what is better for what is inferior? Descend to the city, for indeed you will have what you have asked.'" (Baqarah, 61)

Prophet Adam's descent from the realm of the supernatural to the confines of the natural world was not a physical descent, but rather an existential and status-level descent. This kind of descent is similar to the descent of the Qur'an from the presence of Allah to guide mankind—not a bodily or physical descent. Furthermore, since the descent of Adam was accompanied by his repentance and divine selection, it is referred to as the



"descent of wilayah (guardianship)" and "caliphate." (Jawadi Amoli, 1385 SH, vol. 3, p. 383)

Perhaps, with the emergence of the faculty of "discrimination and discernment" in humans, man reaches the threshold of responsibility and becomes the bearer of the "trust of duty." (Nasafi, 1962, vol. 1, p. 301) He must become Allah's vicegerent on the earth. But how is the "earth"? What are its characteristics? What capabilities must Adam possess to establish his caliphate upon it?

Adam on Earth

Adam must learn, in the world of dominion (which is a world of gradual development), how to transform all the names that God has taught him from potentiality into actuality. To acquire this ability, God sends him a "teacher" from among those who can be an "imam" to teach him. Thus, Adam has a "messenger" (from among his kind) for purifying his existence and teaching him the "book." "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a messenger from them, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom..." (Jumu'ah, 2)

The loving God, with these words, begins a warm and intimate account of His union with His servant: "When your Lord said..." And this begins the writing of the tale of love in the Qur'an. This book becomes the model for the lover's life and a book of guidance. Allah, whose knowledge is through the names, chooses a vicegerent to communicate His will. "His reading" must also be through the names. Hence, it says: "And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them." (A'raf, 180)

Adam the vicegerent of Allah can preserve and fulfill his mission within the framework of servitude to Allah, and this servitude is only manifested in the form of "love." Love is the vehicle for the servant's movement towards the "Lord" without interruption. And for this movement and praise towards the Lord of the Worlds, the servant must constantly remember whatever He "inspires." This can only be achieved through love. This love results in his continuous "reading" of Him.

The loving God, in order to make Himself known to Adam, teaches him all the names. Now that He has made Adam fall in love with Himself, He introduces to him the "beautiful names" (*Al-Asma' al-Husná*). (Kulayni, 1401 AH, vol. 1, p. 133, hadith 2; Majlisi, no date, vol. 4, p. 88) These "beautiful names" are such that the "acceptance of the deeds" of the servants

depends on their knowledge of them. (Kulayni, 1401 AH, vol. 1, pp. 143-144) Difficulties, by seeking their assistance, are alleviated at the divine court. (Shaykh Mufid, 1403 AH, p. 252)

Conclusion

The mystics, considering the symbolic nature of the Qur'an, have decoded many Qur'anic stories, including the story of "Adam (as)," and in doing so, have embraced various dimensions of meaning at different levels. By reflecting on the verses of the Qur'an and exploring the rich and extensive texts of Islamic mysticism, we find that the story of Prophet Adam has taken on various interpretations and manifestations. The mystics believe that a "caliph" is an entity that may sometimes be absent, yet God, who is present everywhere, does not need a caliph. The existence of a caliph is not necessary from the perspective of God's agency because His agency is complete. The caliph of God is necessary because it transmits divine grace to humans and other creatures. Therefore, a caliph is required in every realm, and even God's caliph has his own caliphs, which is a divine tradition. (Sadr al-Din Shirazi, 1384 SH, vol. 2, p. 303) The people of knowledge believe that, initially, the caliph of God is the "Great Soul" or the inner truth of the "Great Human," which is the Mohammadian truth (pbuih) or the Universal Intellect and the First Element. He receives grace directly from God, and the smaller human, or Adam, is the caliph of God on Earth. However, this caliphate does not belong solely to Adam (as), but also extends to his descendants. From the perspective of the mystics, Adam (as) was God's caliph on Earth, and the caliph of God in all the realms of existence is Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). (Same source, vol. 2, p. 301) According to Ibn Arabi, all beings in the world are manifestations and reflections of the Supreme Truth, and each one of them is a mirror that, according to its capacity and potential, displays the divine perfections and names. Intellectual beings express the perfections corresponding to their level, and similarly, ideal and material beings each display specific aspects of the divine perfections according to their level. However, it is only humans who have the capacity to become the perfect mirror of the Supreme Truth. Because humans possess material, ideal, imaginary, intellectual, and even supra-intellectual aspects, they are not limited to any one of these levels, and as a result, they alone can manifest all the perfections that other

beings reflect in part. This is the secret of human superiority over other creatures. (Ibn Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam*, 1400 AH, p. 75)

The "World of Dominion" (*Alam al-Mulk*), which is two stages lower than the World of Meaning, is the world of matter and gradual processes. One of the characteristics of the World of Dominion is that everything that manifests instantaneously in the World of Meaning gradually reveals itself in the World of Matter and Dominion over time. Each level of existence, when it enters the stage of "Kun Fayakun" (Be, and it is), must manifest in all three realms: the "World of Intellect" (*Alam al-Aql*), the "World of Example" (*Alam al-Mithal*), and the "World of Dominion." If it does not, its manifestation will not reach its perfection. The "Perfect Human," due to his absolute perfection, has the first manifestation in the World of Meaning, and since manifestations in the World of Dominion occur gradually, the more complete a being is, the longer its manifestation in the World of Dominion will take. (Imam Khomeini, 1378 SH, p. 83)

The final manifestation of the perfect human in the World of Dominion will be the last manifestation of this realm, and with his manifestation, the ultimate goal of God in creating a caliph on Earth will be fulfilled. Therefore, "glorification" in both the realm of creation (*'Ard Mulk*) and the realm of legislation (*'Ard Wujudi*) must occur in such a way that the manifestation of the perfect human is realized in these two realms. Then, the truth of this verse will become apparent: "And We wished to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them the inheritors." (Qasas, 5) At that time, God's promise will be fulfilled: "And We will establish them in the land and show Pharaoh, Haman, and their soldiers from them what they had feared." (Qasas, 6)

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