

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: And when We told the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!"²⁵ - they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, who refused and gloried in his arrogance: and thus he became one of those who deny the truth²⁶.

Malik: When We ordered the angels: "Prostrate before Adam in respect," they all prostrated except Iblees (Shaitan) who refused in his arrogance and became a disbeliever.

Pickthall: And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they fell prostrate, all save Iblis. He demurred through pride, and so became a disbeliever.

Yusuf Ali: And behold We said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam"; and they bowed down not so Iblis he refused and was haughty he was of those who reject Faith.⁴⁹

Transliteration: Waith qulna lilmalaikati osjudoo liadama fasajadoo illa ibleesa aba waistakbara wakana mina alkafireena

Khattab:

And ?remember? when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam,"¹ so they all did—but not Iblīs,² who refused and acted arrogantly,³ becoming unfaithful.

Author Comments

25 - To show that, by virtue of his ability to think conceptually, man is superior in this respect even to the angels.

26 - For an explanation of the name of the Fallen Angel, see surah 7, note 10. The fact of this "rebellion", repeatedly stressed in the Qur'an, has led some of the commentators to the conclusion that he could not have been one of the angels, since these are incapable of sinning: "they do not bear themselves with false pride... and they do whatever they are bidden to do" (16:49-50). As against this, other commentators point to the Qur'anic phrasing of God's command to the angels and of Iblis' refusal to obey, which makes it absolutely clear that at the time of that command he was indeed one of the heavenly host. Hence, we must assume that his "rebellion" has a purely symbolic significance and is, in reality, the outcome of a specific function assigned to him by God (see note 31 on 15:41).

Prostration in this verse does not mean worship, but an act of respect. A similar occurrence can be found in Sûrah 12, where Jacob (?), his wife, and his eleven children knelt down before Joseph (?).

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Iblîs was the name of Satan before his fall from grace. Iblîs was not an angel, but one of the jinn (see 18:50). Jinn are another creation of Allah, similar to humans in that they—unlike angels—have free will, but are made of smokeless fire and live in another plane of existence.

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The command to prostrate was a test of obedience. Satan arrogantly refused to comply because he believed he was superior to Adam—arguing that Adam was made of mud while Satan was made of fire (see 7:12).

49 - The Arabic may also be translated: "They bowed down, except Iblis." In that case Iblis (Satan) would be one of the angels. But the theory of fallen angels is not usually accepted in Muslim theology. In xviii, 50 Iblis is spoken of as a Jinn. We shall discuss later the meaning of this word.

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