

## A Critical Study of Muslim Theologians' Justifications of Adam's Sin

Hossein Atrak\*

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran

Received: September 6, 2021 ; Revised: October 16, 2021 ; Accepted: October 22, 2021

© University of Tehran

### Abstract

Most of the Islamic theologians, particularly Shiites, who believe in prophets' infallibility assert that Adam's act in eating the forbidden fruit was not a sin. They have provided some justifications for Adam's act. The most significant justification is that God's prohibition of eating the fruit was not obligatory but advisory. In another justification, Muslim theologians attribute Adam's sin to his children and generation. Other justifications belong to those theologians who accept that Adam's act was a sin done in disobedience to God's necessary prohibition. They justify his act in these ways: 1) Adam was misled by Satan's oath; 2) He committed the sin out of oblivion or mistake; 3) His sin took place in the heaven; 4) That was a minor sin; and 5) Adam was not a prophet when he committed the sin. The current study aimed at analyzing these justifications. In conclusion, according to some evidence, it seems that God's command to Adam was not advisory. Accordingly, Adam's sin was neither minor nor unintentional. The kind of command, advisory or necessary, or the place where sin was committed is not important. What matters is that Adam disobeyed Gods' strict and direct command. Since a prophet should obey all God's commands, Adam's act was a sin.

**Keywords:** Adam, Advisory Forbiddance, Infallibility Prophets, Sin.

### Introduction

Adam's story has been narrated in the holy scriptures of the Bible and Qur'ān. Having created Adam and Eve, God permitted them to live in the heaven and eat whatever therein except for a tree and its fruit. According to the Qur'ān, Satan deceived Adam and Eve telling them if they ate that tree's fruit, they would be eternal. Then Adam and Eve ate the fruit and disobeyed God's command (Qur'ān 7:19-22). However, based on the Bible, at first, the serpent deceived Eve and told her if you ate the fruit, your vision would be broadened and you would be like God knowing both good and evil. Eve was convinced, took some of the fruit, and ate it. Then she gave Adam some, who was with her, and he ate it too. At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt ashamed of their nakedness. Therefore, they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves (The Bible, Genesis 3:1-7). God punished and expelled them from the heaven because of their disobedience.

Christian theologians believe that Adam is guilty in this story and consider his act as the first sin. They claim that human beings are born with this sin. In contrast, some Muslim theologians do not accept that Adam's act was a sin because they believe in infallibility of prophets. Therefore, they try to justify Adam's act in a way that it is not regarded as a sin and disobedience of God's prohibition in order to be consistent with prophethood status and prophets' infallibility. In the present paper, these justifications and their strengths or

---

\* Email: Atrak.h@znu.ac.ir

weaknesses will be taken into consideration. The main questions of this research are; Are Muslim theologians' justifications of Adam's sin sufficient and acceptable or not? Did Adam ignore God's prohibition or not? Was he sinful or not?

### Reasons for Considering Adam's Act a Sin

Some Islamic groups, who do not believe in prophets' infallibility, have presented some reasons to prove that Adam was guilty and his act was a sin and disobedience of God's command. They have referred to some verses of Qur'ān in seven aspects.

1) The verse “عَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ”, “Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray” (Qur'ān 20:121)<sup>1</sup> explicitly states that Adam disobeyed God by ignoring His prohibition. Disobeying God's command is regarded as a sin. According to the verse, "Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger will have Hell's Fire as his permanent home" (Qur'ān 72:23), ignoring God's prohibition and disobeying Him have been regarded as a major sin for which hell's fire has been promised. Therefore, Adam's act was a major sin.

2) The word “فَغَوَىٰ” in this verse is the opposite of guidance, which means that Adam deviated from the right path by disobeying God (Ibn Manzūr, 1994, vol. 15: 140). Sometimes, this word has been used for someone who obeys Satan as in this verse, "Surely, you will have no power over My servants, only over the ones who go astray and follow you" (Qur'ān 15:42).

3) In some other verses, Adam has been called penitent implying that his act was a sin and he was guilty. The following verses illustrate this,

"Then Adam received some words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance: He is the Ever Relenting, the Most Merciful" (Qur'ān 2:37).

"Then his Lord chose him, so He accepted his penitence and guided him" (Qur'ān 20:122).

4) Other verses indicate that Adam disregarded God's prohibition, which is a major sin.

"He lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the Garden to cover themselves. Their Lord called to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’" (Qur'ān 7:22)

5) Adam has been called a wrongdoer for disobeying God's command. Wrongdoing is an act of sin, which renders its agent a guilty person.

We said, ‘Adam, live with your wife in this garden. Both of you eat freely there as you will, but do not go near this tree, or you will both become wrongdoers’ (Qur'ān 2:35).

After ignoring God's prohibition, they say,

Their Lord called to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’ They replied, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if You do not forgive us and have mercy, we shall be lost.’ (Qur'ān 7:23-24)

6) Adam himself confesses to his sin and asks God to forgive him in verse 23 of Al-A‘RĀF Surah and says that if God would not forgive him, he shall certainly be of the losers. It means that he had committed a sin.

7) Adam was expelled from the heaven for his disobedience showing that God punished him. In other words, it can be stated that he was already guilty (See Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 3: 459; Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 8: 268-269).

1. In this paper, Abdel Haleem's translation of the Holy Qur'ān has been used as the main and original translation, and in some cases, I compared it with Mohammad Habib Shakir's translation.

## Muslim Theologians' Justifications of Adam's Act

Muslim theologians' justifications of Adam's act in eating the forbidden fruit are divided into two parts: those who accept that Adam's act was a sin and those who do not. This difference originates from their attitudes in prophets' infallibility. Shi'a scholars believe in absolute infallibility of prophets regarding any kinds of sin, intentional or unintentional, major or minor, both before and after their prophethood. Thus, the prophets are infallible from doing a sin intentionally or unintentionally, out of mistake or oblivion. (See: Mufīd, 1993: 129; Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1991: 337; Muẓaffar, 2002, vol. 2: 378; Ḥumṣī Rāzī, 1992, vol. 1: 424) This is the "strong version of prophets' infallibility". They assume that infallibility is a necessary condition for being a prophet. Accordingly, these theologians could not confirm Adam's act in eating forbidden fruit as a sin, therefore, they tried to justify it in some ways like the first two items of the below justifications (1-2 and 2-2).

On the other hand, Sunni theologians do not believe in absolute infallibility of the prophets but state some "weak versions of infallibility". They state that the prophets may commit some mistakes or sins under some conditions. Some of them believe that the prophets never intentionally commit a minor sin after attaining prophethood and a major sin like being a polytheist or worshipping other gods before being raised to prophethood. However, they intentionally might commit a minor sin before being a prophet and a minor sin unintentionally as a prophet (Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 51; Abd-u Al-Jabbār, 1965, vol. 4: 309-310; Hillī, 1984: 196). The second set of justifications (numbers 3-2 to 8-2) belongs to these theologians. They accept that Adam's act was a sin and try to justify his sin in some other ways that can be consistent with their doctrine in the prophets' infallibility.

### *Tark-i Awlā or Advisory Command Justification*

The most significant justification by those deny Adam's act to be a sin is to coin the term "*tark-i awlā*". Explaining the meaning of *tark-i awlā*, some Islamic theologians have classified God's forbiddance into two categories:

- a) God's obligatory forbidding command (Nahye Mulawī) refers to necessary prohibition of an act by Him without permission to do it due to its very high corruptive consequences.
- b) Advisory forbidding command (Nahye Irshādī) which demonstrates that it is better to leave an act because of low corruption in it. Nevertheless, one is completely permitted to do it. God advises us to leave it, but He does not seriously expect us to abandon it. As a result, He neither upbraids nor punishes us for it in Doomsday (Musawī, 2006: 34-35).

Some contemporary theologians believe that the meaning of *tark-i awlā* as suggested by Islamic scholars is violating God's advisory prohibition, and Adam's sin was not a true one (committing a necessary commanding forbiddance). Indeed, what Adam did was a *tark-i awlā*, which means committing an advisory forbiddance (Subhānī, n.d.: 99).

According to this justification, other previously mentioned aspects of Adam's act, which were regarded as a sin, are also justified. The word «فَعْوَى» does not mean that Adam was misguided and went astray; rather, it means he felt disappointed as he failed to attain God's great rewarding through abiding by His command (Fāḍil, 2002: 248). Sayyid Murtaḍā, one of the great Shiite scholars, has defined «فَعْوَى» to be inflicted with a loss. Since Adam lost a great deal (God's reward) by denying His command (Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1871: 9).

Accordingly, the reason why Adam has been called a penitent in some verses is his abandoning God's advisory command not that he was a true sinner who disobeyed God's necessary and obligatory command. (Fāḍil, 2002: 248; Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1871: 9)

Committing God's necessary forbiddance is a sin in true meaning but committing God's unnecessary and advisory forbiddance is called sin only metaphorically rather than literally.

Adam has been called a wrongdoer because of disobeying God's advisory command. Wrongdoing here means *tark-i awlā* and missing great reward. He called himself a wrongdoer owing to losing a great reward that he could gain by obeying God's advisory command.

In addition, Adam confesses his sin and asks God to forgive him because of ignoring God's advisory command and committing *tark-i awlā*.

Adam was expelled from heaven for committing God's unnecessary and advisory forbiddance. (Fādīl, 2002: 248; Sayyid Murtaḍā, 1871: 9-12)

Those who believe that Adam was not a sinner has provided these justifications as well as replies.

### *The Sin of Adam's Children*

Another justification of Adam's sin by Muslim theologians deals with attributing Adam's sin to his children and generation. They say the true meaning of the verse «عَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ» (Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray) (Qur'ān 20:121) is not that Adam himself disobeyed God, but it means that Adam's children and his generation disobeyed God during the history of this world. These scholars state that this verse is similar to «وَأَسْأَلُ الْقَرْيَةَ» (ask the town) which means that ask the people of the town not the town itself. You cannot ask anything from buildings, streets, alleys, etc. (Ṭūsī, 1985: 372-373)

### *Adam Was Misled by Satan's Oath*

Another justification about Adam's sin is that Adam was misled by Satan's oath. Satan came to him and said, "If you eat this tree's fruit, you will have eternal life. You will never die. I take the oath of God that what I say to you is true". Having seen Satan's oath to God, Adam accepted his utterance and ate the fruit because he had not seen anyone before taking a fake oath to God (See Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 3: 460; Rāzī Ḥanafī, 2002: 277).

Fakhr Rāzī holds this justification wrong and says it is not acceptable that Adam and Eve accepted Satan's oath and confirmed him in his utterance. Otherwise, their fault would be greater than eating forbidden fruit. While Satan accuses God in his words of being non-benevolent, he introduces himself as benevolent. He says I want you to reach the eternal life but God does not wish so (Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 3: 460).

He [Satan] said: Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals,' (Qur'ān 7:20).

Furthermore, Adam was aware of the evil deed of Satan for which God had expelled him from the heaven (Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 3: 460).

So We said, 'Adam, this [Satan] is your enemy, yours and your wife's: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable'. (Qur'ān 20:117)

### *Sin out of Oblivion*

Justifying the verse «عَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ» (Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray) (Qur'ān 20:121), some scholars mentioned that "فَغَوَىٰ" means "ignorance" or "oblivion". It means that when Adam committed a sin, he was unaware that God had forbidden him to eat that tree's

fruit. The evidence for this justification is another verse in Qur'ān in which God says to the Prophet about Adam,

«وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِن قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا» ; "We also commanded Adam before you, but he forgot and We found him lacking in constancy"(Qur'ān 20:115).

Based on this verse, Adam did not have any intention and will to disobey God. He just forgot God's command not to eat that tree's fruit (Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 53; Qāḍī 'Ayyād, 1983, vol. 2: 367).

This group of theologians holds that prophets might commit a sin out of ignorance and oblivion. When Adam sinned, he had forgotten that God had forbidden him from approaching that tree.

However, some scholars do not accept this justification. They argue that when Satan was talking to Adam and Eve to deceive them, he openly referred to God' prohibition as stated in this verse,

"ما نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَن تَكُونَا مَلَائِكَةً أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَّا الْخَالِدِينَ" ; "He [Satan] said: Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals " (Qur'ān 7:20).

Reacting to this argument, theologians say that maybe the time of Adam's sin and that of Satan's saying were different (See Ṭūsī, 1985: 373).

### *Sin out of Mistake*

Some Sunni theologians say Adam's sin was not out of disobeying God intentionally, but misunderstanding His true intention. When God told him, "Do not approach this tree", he thought that God forbade him from a special instance of the tree not from all instances of that kind of tree. Then, he ate fruit of another instance of that kind of tree whereas God had forbidden him from all instances of that kind of tree. Therefore, Adam made a mistake in realizing God's intention. (Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 53; Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, 2004, vol. 7: 12)

Some Mu'tazilī scholars do not accept this justification because they think that if Adam were in doubt about understanding God's command, he should pay more attention to God's command in order not to make such a mistake. In addition, some other Mu'tazilī believe that it is a contradiction to say, on the one hand, that Adam's sin was out of mistake and, on the other hand, believing in reprimanding prophets for mistake. Rationally speaking, reprimanding the insane, asleep and inadvertent is wrong (Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, 2004, vol. 7: 13).

### *Sin in the Heaven*

Another justification for Adam' sin is that he disobeyed God in the heaven, and there is no sin in the heaven. No one is called a sinner in the heaven because there is no religious canon and obligation. The concepts like religious duties and laws, sins, obligatory commands, etc. belong to this world. Prophets are infallible in this world and never disobey God here (See: Makārim Shīrāzī, 2000, vol. 4: 600; Mūsawī, 2006: 36).

### *Minor Sin*

Some theologians believe that prophets are allowed to commit a minor sin both intentionally and unintentionally before being assigned as prophets and unintentionally as prophets maintain that Adam's sin was a minor sin before his prophethood (Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 53).

### *Adam was not a Prophet when He Committed the Sin*

One of the famous justifications that generally belongs to Sunni scholars, who believe in feasibility of committing a minor sin by prophets before their prophethood, is that Adam had not attained the status of a prophet when he ate the forbidden fruit. Replying to those who appeal to the verses to reject the infallibility idea of prophets, Fakhr Rāzī, Ījī and Taftāzānī, the great Sunni scholars, say that when Adam made this mistake, he was not a prophet. He became a prophet after he and Eve came to this world, got some children, and built a society (Fakhr Rāzī, 2000, vol. 3: 459; Ījī, 1946, vol. 8: 269; Ṭūsī, 1985: 373). A prophet is needed by a society in this world in order to be guided not just two people in the heaven. Taftāzānī says when Adam committed that sin, there was not yet a society in the world from Adam's generation (Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 53).

This justification is not consistent with the foundations of Shiite thought because they believe in absolute infallibility of prophets before and after their prophethood.

### **Critique of Muslim Theologians' Justifications**

#### *Critique of Advisory Forbiddance Justification*

Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, a Mu'tazilī scholar, criticizing the justification that Adam's act was a *tark-i awlā* which means that he only disobeyed God's advisory command, says that he should not be called a sinner neither literally nor religiously because he only ignored an advisory command of God. If the meaning of an advisory command is an act that is recommended to be done but can also be disregarded, then how the person who chooses to disregard it can be called a sinner while having had no obligation directed at him (Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, 2004, vol. 7: 14-15). Thus, this means that the command that Adam ignored was not advisory but obligatory since God says that he sinned his God (see above).

In addition, God's command to Adam was not advisory but a necessary and mandatory command. In my opinion, there is some evidence for this claim,

First, when God commanded Adam and Eve to keep away from the tree, He told them if you do that, you will become wrongdoer. This means that they were never permitted to do that.

“But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers” (Qur’ān 7:19)

Second, eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve received God's reprimand. He asked their reasons for disobeying His command. God's reprimand shows that His command was necessary and obligatory.

And their Lord called out to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’ (Qur’ān 7:22)

Moreover, as another reason, Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd mentions that if it is right to call someone committing an advisory forbiddance (*tark-i awlā*) a sinner, then we must call all the prophets sinners because all of them committed a *tark-i awlā*.

He also says, in response to Sayyid Murtaḍā, who justified calling Adam unjust and wrongdoer as losing a great deal of rewards, that someone who gains a thousand dollars and loses just one dollar is not called unjust or wrongdoer. Losing interest or award is not considered as loss. (Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, 2004, vol. 7: 15-16)

In my opinion, justifying Adam's sin as committing *tark-i awlā* or advisory forbiddance is not acceptable since it is against plenty of evidences in the Qur’ān that show Adam's disobedience was a true sin in true meaning and committing God' necessary forbiddance. These evidences are,

1) God clearly commanded Adam not to approach the tree.

“But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers” (Qur’ān 7:19).<sup>1</sup>

If there were not the belief in infallibility of prophets, all Muslim theologians and scholars would judge that God’s command to Adam was a necessary and mandatory one based on the clear text of the verses. In *Ilm-u al-’Usūl* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), Islamic scholars indicate that prohibition from something implies that it is forbidden and one is not permitted to do it.

2) God’s warning at the end of this verse (فَتَكُونُوا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ) “You will become wrongdoers” implies that His command is necessary and obligatory. If it were an advisory and unnecessary command as Shi’a scholars claim, the warning would be senseless. In addition, ‘الظالمين’ (wrongdoers) in the Qur’ānic literature is said to those who disobey God’s obligatory commands as well as bounds and violate them. “These are the bounds set by God: do not overstep them. It is those who overstep God’s bounds who are doing wrong” (Qur’ān 2:229). God condemns those who overstep His bounds, “God’s rejection is the due of those who do such wrong” (Qur’ān 11:18).

‘الظلم’ (wrongdoing) literally means to put something in wrong place (Ibn Manzūr, 1994, vol. 12: 373), trespass and violate the bounds, and limits especially God’s bounds (Ṭurayhī, n.d., vol. 6: 110). This word has never been used in Arabic lexicons and the Qur’ān’s literature as *tark-i awlā*.

On the other hand, Muslim scholars interpret this word in “لا يئنا لعهدى الظالمين” (Qur’ān 2:124) (My pledge does not hold for those who do evil) as someone who commits a sin, minor or major. Then, according to this interpretation, they claim that all prophets are infallible, and they never commit a sin. If they have committed a sin in their life, they would not have reached the prophethood status (Ṭūsī, 2003, vol. 2: 253, Taftāzānī, 1989, vol. 5: 52).

3) God’s reprimanding Adam and Eve for committing his forbiddance shows that His command was necessary, which must be obeyed by them.

And their Lord called out to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’ (Qur’ān 7:22)

4) Calling Adam’s act succumbing to Satan’s temptation represents that the act was a devilish one.

Satan whispered to them so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them: he said, ‘Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals,’ (Qur’ān 7:20).<sup>2</sup>

Then he [Satan] he lured them with lies.... (Qur’ān 7:22)

Therefore, it seems wrong to call this act *tark-i awlā*, which means abandoning the best act and doing a good one as Islamic theologians define (See: Ṭūsī, 1985: 371; Makārim Shīrāzī, 2000, vol. 4: 599).

5) Calling Adam misguided who was led astray disobeying God’s command implies that the command was necessary, and he was obliged to obey it.

“Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray” (Qur’ān 20:121).

1. Mohammad Habib Shakir has translated ‘الظالمين’ into ‘unjust’. “But do not go near this tree, for then you will be of the unjust”.

2. Mohammad Habib Shakir’s translation, “But the Satan made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them what had been hidden from them of their evil inclinations, and he said: Your Lord has not forbidden you this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may [not] become of the immortals” (Qur’ān 7:20).

6) Adam's penance and confession to his sin, calling himself a wrongdoer and loser if God would not forgive him, suggests that he was a true sinner, and his act was a true sin.

Their Lord called to them, 'Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?' They replied, 'Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if You do not forgive us and have mercy, we shall be lost.' (Qur'ān 7:23-24)

7) Accepting Adam's penitence by God and calling him to be guided afterwards again show that his act was a sin, and he was misguided before.

later his Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance, and guided him (Qur'ān 20:122).

8) Driving Adam out of heaven for his disobedience clearly implies that God punished him for his sin and wrong act.

God said, 'Get out of the garden as each other's enemy' (Qur'ān 20:123).

9) God advised human beings and Adam's children not to be deceived by Satan like their first parents, Adam and Eve, because Satan is a great enemy, which implies that our first parents made a mistake and did a wrong act.

"Children of Adam, do not let Satan seduce you, as he did your parents, causing them to leave the Garden, stripping them of their garments to expose their nakedness to them: he and his forces can see you from where you cannot see them: We have made evil ones allies to those who do not believe" (Qur'ān 7:27).

The sum of these evidences leave no doubt that God's command was necessary and obligatory that Adam had to obey. However, Satan deceived him, and he sinned God. Then, he realized his mistake and turned to Allah in repentance. God accepted his repentance and forgave him. Nevertheless, the penalty of his sin was to be expelled from the heaven.

Therefore, it is a wonder why some Islamic theologians put these clear evidences away and make an unwarranted claim that Adam was innocent and he did not commit a sin but a *tark-i awlā* and an advisory forbiddance.

If his act were not a sin and it were just disobeying advisory command, there would be no need to do repenting, asking forgiveness, calling himself unjust and deceived by Satan, and his being expelled from the heaven.

### *Critique of Attributing the Sin to Adam's Children*

Another justification of Adam's sin was attributing the sin to Adam's children. Some theologians referred to this verse, "Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray" (Qur'ān 20:121) according to which Adam's children and his generation disobeyed God during the history. Criticizing this justification, I say that it is completely against the clear text of the verse. The verse clearly indicates that Adam disobeyed God. There was no problem for God to say that Adam's children or his generation disobeyed Him as He has said so in other verses. Comparing this verse with "ask the city" is wrong because it is not possible to ask the city. It is clear when someone says, "ask the store" he means, "ask the salesman or cashier of the store". However, in the verse about Adam there is no reason to attribute the act to Adam's children rather than himself.

### *Adam Was Misled by Satan's Oath*

Another justification about Adam's sin is that Adam was misled by Satan's oath. This justification is faced with two objections: first, it does not justify committing a sin. It is not acceptable for someone to say that I committed a sin and wrong act because Satan told me, "Do it, I take an oath that it is right". People are finally responsible for their acts even if someone takes a false oath. Second, Adam and Eve knew about Satan and his ignorance of

God's command to prostrate to Adam. He refused. Therefore, God gave them a warning about Satan and obeying him that he is your enemy.

“When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they did. But Iblis refused, so We said, ‘Adam, this is your enemy, yours and your wife’s: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable.’” (Qur’ān 20:116-117).

### *Sin Out of Oblivion*

Based on this justification, Adam sinned because he was unaware; he had forgotten God's command. This justification, I think, is against the evidences in the story. How can we accept this claim about forgetting God's command when it was His first command to Adam after his creation, permitting them to live a happy life together in the heaven, and warning them about getting close to the tree and Satan's temptations? Someone may forget his wife’s or his child’s order but no one forgets a master or big boss’s command.

### *Sin Out of Mistake*

The justification that Adam's sin was out of mistake in realizing God's real meaning is against the explicit texts of some verses. First, God tells him, "Don't close to this tree" (Qur’ān 2:35). The word "this" implies that the tree was definitely designated. Second, when Satan wanted to deceive them,

He [Satan] said, ‘Your Lord only forbade you *this tree* to prevent you becoming angels or immortals,’ (Qur’ān 7:20).

In this verse, there is also reference to a definite tree as the word "this".

Third, in another verse God says,

He lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from *the tree* (Qur’ān 7:22).

Additionally, article "the" preceding the word "tree" shows that the tree is definite.

Therefore, how one can accept that Adam' sin was out of mistake about the tree!

### *Sin in the Heaven*

In my book, the justification that Adam' sin was in the heaven does not help Islamic theologians because it does not matter where Adam sinned God and disobeyed his command. The matter is obeying God's command anywhere. God is our Lord and Master. If we are His true servants, we have to obey his commands everywhere, in this world, next world or anywhere else.

### *Minor Sin*

Although the justification that Adam's sin was a minor sin is consistent with some Sunni group's belief, but it is against what Shiites believe in this regard. This justification accepts that Adam sinned, but it was a minor one. However, Shiites believe that prophets never commit any kind of sin, minor or major, intentionally or unintentionally.

On the other hand, I cannot accept that refusing God's clear and apparent prohibition with an emphasis on obeying it, is a minor sin. There are some reasons implying that it was not a minor sin. First, God emphasizes that they must never do that. If they do that, they will be unjust and wrongdoer.

‘But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers’ (Qur’ān 7:19).

Second, God warns them against following Satan and eating that tree's fruit, which will make them unhappy.

So We said, 'Adam, this is your enemy, yours and your wife's: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable. (Qur'ān 20:116-117)

Third, He reprimands them after eating the forbidden fruit.

Their Lord called to them, 'Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?' (Qur'ān 7:22)

Forth, God expels them from heaven in spite of having forgiven them.

They [Adam and Eve] said, 'Our Lord! We have been unjust to ourselves, and if Thou forgive us not, and have [not] mercy on us, we shall certainly be of the losers. (Qur'ān 7:23, trans. Muhammad Habib Shakir)<sup>1</sup>

Based on these evidences, I think calling Adam's sin minor is not correct. Of course, I do not want to say that it was a major sin in the current meaning that God has promised to put the sinner in the hell and fire and never forgive him/her. Yes, we can say it was a minor sin in this meaning because God forgave Adam.

### Adam's Act Was a Sin

According to some evidences in the Holy Qur'ān, the author believes that Adam's act in eating forbidden fruit was disobeying God's clear forbiddance; therefore, it was a sin. Accordingly, the last justification that belonged to some Sunni scholars like Fakhr Rāzī, Ījī and Taftāzānī is confirmed. Three reasons are stated for this confirmation. The first one is a Qur'anic reason, the second one is traditional (Hadith), and the third one is rational. The Qur'anic reason is those nine evidences that I mentioned in critique of the advisory command justification. According to some verses of the Holy Qur'ān that were mentioned, God's command to Adam not to eat the fruit was an obligatory and necessary command. Disobeying God's necessary command is a sin. Then, Adam's act in disobeying God's forbiddance was a sin. This is the main reason for the original claim of this paper. Nevertheless, there is a second reason which supports this idea, and it is a tradition (Hadith) from Imam Rezā, the eighth Imam of Shi'a. This reason for Shi'a scholar is very important and challengeable.

According to a tradition which has been cited in an important book for Shi'a which is called '*Uyūn-i Akhbār-i al-Rezā*', this Shi'a Imam accepts that Adam's act was a sin before his prophethood.

"...Then Satan deceived them and they ate from that tree because of their trust to Satan's oath to God. This act of Adam was before prophethood and it was not a major sin to deserve its doer entering the hell, but it was a minor sin that its doing is permitted for prophets before descending the revelation to them. Then, when God chose Adam for prophethood and made him a prophet, he was infallible (Ma'sūm) and never committed a major or minor sin. God says, "Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray\* later his Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance, and guided him" (Qur'ān 20:121-122; Sadūq, 1999, vol. 1: 196).

The third reason is rational. There are two principles in *Ilm al-'Usūl* that Islamic jurisprudents use for understanding and inferring Islamic laws from the Qur'ān and tradition (Hadith). The first one is the principle of "Aṣālat-u al-Zāhir" (the authenticity of appearance). According to this principle, the apparent meaning of a word and sentence is valid in understanding them. Then, in understanding the Holy Qur'ān, we have to take the apparent meaning of the verses and words into consideration. Therefore, when we read this verse of Qur'ān "عَصَىٰ آدَمُ فَغَوَىٰ", its apparent meaning is that Adam disobeyed God and went astray.

1. Abdel Haleem's translation: "They replied, 'Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if You do not forgive us and have mercy, we shall be lost.'"

This verse clearly indicates that Adam's act was a sin. The meaning of “عصى” in Arabic lexicons is “disobeying” (Ibn Manzūr, 1994, vol. 15: 67).

The second principle is the forbiddance of Ijtihād versus Naṣṣ. Ijtihād in Islamic law means the independent or original interpretation of problems not precisely covered by Qur'ān, Hadith (traditions concerning the Prophet Muhammad's life and utterances), and ijmā' (scholarly consensus). Naṣṣ means a verse, tradition, or ijmā' that states clearly and specifically Islam's law and judgment about a subject. Muslim jurists use Ijtihād for inferring Islamic laws and judgments when there is not a clear and specific verse in the Qur'ān or Prophet's tradition (Naṣṣ) that determines the Islam's law about a subject. Accordingly, when there is a specific verse or tradition that specifies the law of a case, it is not correct to use Ijtihād for inferring the law. Considering whether Adam's act was a sin or not, I think some of Islamic theologians, especially Shi'a scholars, use Ijtihād versus the Naṣṣ of Qur'ān and try to justify the clear versus that implies Adam's act was a sin and disobeying God. It seems that the first two justifications that were mentioned above are cases of “Ijtihād versus the Naṣṣ”, which are incorrect. Shi'a scholars due to some rational, Qur'ānic and traditional reasons believe in the absolute infallibility of prophets and accordingly justify these kind of verses which their apparent meanings state that the prophets have committed some sins and mistakes in their life. However, I think it should be vice a versa. What I mean is that according to this principle in *Ilm al-'Usūl*, Shi'a scholars must adjust their doctrine in the infallibility of prophets due to this kind of verses that are explicit, clear, and apparent (Naṣṣ) in committing some sins and mistakes by prophets. Therefore, the right theory about infallibility of prophets is that because of this verse of Qur'ān (Adam's disobeying), we must say that the prophets may commit a sin or mistake before their election for prophecy, but they are infallible after determination to prophecy (as some Sunni scholars believe).

To sum up, based on these evidences in the Qur'ān and tradition, it seems that Adam's act was a sin. However, it was before his being a prophet. It is clear that when Adam was in the heaven after creation as the first human being in the world, there was no one there other than Eve. It is meaningless for a person to be a prophet when there is no one to be guided by him. In addition to this reason, some verses in Qur'ān show that Adam's prophethood was after his sin and expulsion from the heaven.

Then his Lord chose him, so He turned to him and guided [him]. He said: Get forth you two therefrom; some of you are enemy to some others. So there will surely come to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy. (Qur'ān 20:122-123)

In these verses, having expelled them from the heaven, God speaks about Adam's generation hostilities that will arise among them, and the guidance that He will send them. This guidance is prophethood that God will send to Adam's children by prophets first of whom was Adam himself. Therefore, these verses imply that Adam became a prophet after being expelled from the heaven.

## Conclusion

In this article, Muslim theologians' justifications about Adam's sin were studied. As previously mentioned, some Islamic theologians, especially Shi'a scholars, do not accept that Adam's act was a sin. The main reason for their denying is their belief in the absolute infallibility of prophets. The most significant justification of Shi'a scholars was that Adam's act in eating forbidden fruit was disobeying God's advisory and unnecessary command that it is not regarded as a sin but *tark-i awlā*. Based on nine evidences from Qur'ān, this justification was rejected and I showed that God's command to Adam was necessary and obligatory and disobeying it is regarded a sin. Other justifications mostly were from Sunni

scholars who do not believe in absolute infallibility of prophets. According to them, Adam's act was a sin but a minor one, or out of oblivion or mistake, because of Satan's Oath, in the Heaven and before his prophethood. All of these justifications were rejected and the last one, committing a sin before prophethood, just was confirmed. For proving the main claim of this paper that Adam's act was a true sin, three reasons were stated.

Finally, I guess Adam's act in eating forbidden fruit was a true sin, as the Christian and some Muslim theologians believe. Nevertheless, he repented immediately after his disobeying, unlike Satan who refused God's command to prostrate himself before Adam and never repented. Then, God forgave Adam and selected him for prophethood and people's guidance.

The most significant result of this paper is for Shi'a scholars who believe in absolute and complete infallibility of the prophets, infallibility from any kind of mistake, oblivion, and sin, minor or major, intentionally or unintentionally, out of mistake or oblivion. I think they must revise their infallibility doctrine and due to these explicit and clear verses about Adam's sin and disobeying God's command, at least accept that the prophets may commit a mistake and even a sin before their prophethood period. However, they have certainly repented from their sins and never done it again. They have been infallible (Ma'sūm) after their election for prophecy by God.

## References

- The noble Qur'ān*. Translated by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, (2005), Oxford University press.
- The noble Qur'ān*. Translated by Mohammad Habib Shakir.
- The Holy Bible*, Translated From The Latin Vulgate, Diligently Compared With The Hebrew, Greek, And Other Editions In Divers Languages, Douay-Rheims Version, 1609, 1582.
- Abd-u Al-Jabbār. (1965), *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb-i al-Tuhīd wa Al-'Adl*. Qāhirah, Dār al-Misriyya.
- Fāḍil, M. (2002), *Al-Lawāmi 'u al-Ilāhīyya fī al-Mabāhith-i al-Kalāmīyya*. Qom, Daftar Tabliqāt Islami.
- Fakhr Rāzī, M. (2000), *Tafsīr-u Mafātīh-i al-Ghayb*. Beirut, Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabi.
- Hillī, A. (1984), *Anwār-u al-Malakūt fī Sharh-i al-Yāqūt*. Qom, Al-Sharīf Rāzī.
- Ḥumshī Rāzī, S. (1992), *Al-Munqidh mina al-Taqlīd*. Qom, Al-Nashr al-Islami.
- Ibn Abi al-Hadīd, 'A. (2004), *Sharh Nahjul Balāgha*. Qom, Maktabāt Āyat-u Allah Mar'shī.
- Ibn Manzūr, M. (1994), *Lisān-u al-Arab*. Beirut, Dār-u Ṣād.
- Ījī, 'A. & 'A. Jurjānī, (1946), *Sharh-u al-Mawāqif*. Ed. B. Nāsānī, Qom, Al-Sahrīf Al-Rāzī.
- Makārim Shīrāzī, N. (2000), *Al-Amthal fī Tafsīr-i Kītāb-i Al-Munzal*. Qom, Madrasah Imam 'Alī Ibn Abītālib.
- Mufīd, M. (1993), *Awāil-u al-Maqālāt fī al-Madhāhib wa al-Mukhtārāt*. Qom, al-Mu'tamar al-Ālamī for Shaykh Mufīd.
- Mūsawī, 'A. (2006), *Al-Iṣmat-u fī al-Nabuwwat wa al-Imamat*. In: *Fī Rihāb-i Ahl-u al-Bayt*, al-Majma' al-Ālāmi li Ahl al-Bayt, vol. 40.
- Muzaffar, M. (2002), *Dalāil-u al-Ṣidq*. Qom, Āl-u al-Bayt Institute.
- Qāḍī 'Ayyād, A. (1983), *Al-Shifā bi Tārīf-i Huqūq-u al-Mustafā*. 'Ammān, Dār-u al-Fihā.
- Rāzī Ḥanafī, A. (2002), *Sharh-u Bida'-u al-'mālī*. Beirut, Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmīyya.
- Sadūq, M. (1999), *'Uyūn-i Akhbār-i al-Rezā*. Tehran, Nashr-e Jahān.
- Sayyid Murtaḍā, (1991), *Al-Dhakhīrah fī Ilm-i al-Kalām*. Qom, Mu'assasat-u al-Nashr-u al-Islamī.
- Sayyid Murtaḍā, (1871), *Tanzīh-u al-Anbīyā*. Qom, al-Sharīf al-Rāzī.
- Subhānī, J. (n.d), *Ismat-u al-Anbīyā*. Qom, Imām Sādiq Institute.
- Taftāzānī, S. (1989), *Sharh-u al-Maqāshid*. Qom, al-Sharīf al-Rāzī.
- Ṭurayhī, F. (n.d), *Majma' al-Bahrayn*. Available at: Jami' al-Ahādīth Software (Noor 2). Qom, The Computer Institute for Islamic Sciences.
- Ṭūsī, M. (2003), *Talkhīṣ al-Shāfi*. Qom, Muhibbīn Press.
- Ṭūsī, N. (1985), *Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal*. Beirut, Dār al-Aḍwā'.