

## Concerning Resurrection (Raj'a)

Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: Our belief concerning resurrection (Raj'a)<sup>1</sup> is that it is a fact. Verily Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, has said in His Mighty Book:

***“Bethink thou (O Muhammad) of those of old, who went forth from their habitations in their thousands,<sup>2</sup> fearing death, and Allah said unto them: Die, and then He brought them back to life” (Qur'an 2:243).***

These people were the residents of 70,000 houses, and they were visited by the plague each year. The rich, on account of their opulence, used to go out; while the poor would remain on account of their poverty. So the plague used to attack lightly those that went; while it raged severely among those that remained.

Now those that remained would say: If only we had departed, surely the plague would not have come upon us. And those that went would say: Had we stayed, it would have attacked us, even as it has attacked them. So they all agreed to depart from their houses collectively when the time of the plague was nigh. Then they all went out and camped on the banks (of a river).<sup>3</sup>

And when they had put down their belongings, Allah cried to them: Die, and they perished, one and all. And the passers-by swept them off from the road, and they remained in that condition as long as Allah willed. One of the prophets of Israel named Jeremiah passed by them. He said: If Thou wilt, O my Lord, Thou couldst revivify, them so that they may inhabit Thy cities,<sup>4</sup> and beget Thy slaves, and worship Thee with those who worship Thee.

And Allah through a revelation asked him: Do you wish that for your sake I should bring them back to life? The Prophet said: Yes, O my Lord. So Allah revivified them for his sake and sent them with him.

Now these people died and returned to the world and (again) they died at their appointed time. Allah says:

***“Or (bethink thee of) the like of him (the Prophet Ezra) who, by passing a township which had fallen in utter ruin,<sup>5</sup> exclaimed, How shall Allah give life to this city, after it has been dead? And***

**Allah caused him to die (for the space of) a hundred years, and then brought him back to life. Allah said: How long hast thou tarried? He (the man) said I have tarried a day or a part of a day. He said: Nay, but thou hast tarried for a hundred years. Just look at thy food and drink, they have not rotted! And look at thine ass! so that we may make thee a token unto mankind: and look at thy bones, how We adjust them and then cover them with flesh! And when (the matter) became clear unto him, he said: I know now that Allah hath power to do all things.” (Qur’an 2:259).**

And so their prophet remained dead for a hundred years, then he returned to the world and remained therein, and then died at his appointed term. He was Ezra, but it is also related that he was Jeremiah.

And Allah, Exalted is He, in the story of those that were selected among the Bani Isra’iil of the community of Moses for the appointed term of his Lord says:

**“Then We raised you up after your death that you may give thanks.” (Qur’an 2:56).**

And that was because when they heard the word of Allah, they said: We shall not believe in its truth until we see Allah clearly. So, on account of their wrongdoing the thunderbolt fell upon them and they perished. Moses, said O my Lord, what shall I say to the Bani Isra’iil when I return to them? Then Allah revived them and they returned to the world; they ate and drank and married women and begat children, and lived in the world and died at their appointed times.

And Allah said unto Jesus, son of Mary: (Remember the time) when you caused the dead to live<sup>6</sup> by My command, and all the dead who were revived by Jesus by the command of Allah returned to the world and lived therein so long as they lived, and then they died at their appointed times.

And as for the Companions of the Cave (*ashabul-kaḥf*),

**“they tarried in their Cave three hundred years and nine years over” (Qur’an 18:25).**

Then Allah revived them and they returned to the world in order that they might question one another; and their story is well known.<sup>7</sup> And if a questioner were to ask : Verily Allah, Exalted is He, says:

**“And thou wouldst have deemed them waking though They were asleep” (Qur’an 18: 18).**

(Then, how can there be resurrection of those that slumber?) To him it may be answered: Verily they were dead; for Allah the Mighty and Glorious has said: **“Woe upon us! Who hath raised us from our place of sleep? This is that which the Beneficent did promise, and the messengers spoke truth” (Qur’an 36:52).**

And if they (the unbelievers) say: That is so (that is, if the unbelievers say that this refers to the resurrection of the dead); (then we say) verily the Companions of the Cave were also dead. There are many examples of this kind. Thus it is established that resurrection did take place among the peoples of the past. For the Prophet, on whom be peace, has said: There will occur among these people (the like

of) what has occurred among previous peoples, even as one horseshoe resembles another, or as one arrow feather follows another.<sup>8</sup> Wherefore, according to this premise, it is necessary to believe that resurrection (*raj'a*) will take place in this community as well.

Our opponents (the Sunnites) have related that when the Mahdi, on whom be peace, will appear, Jesus, son of Mary, on whom be peace, will descend upon the earth and pray behind the Mahdi. Now the descent of Jesus to the earth is his return to the world after death, because Allah the Glorious and Mighty says:

***“Verily I will cause thee to die, and will take thee up to myself” (Qur'an 3:55).***

And Allah the Mighty and Glorious says:

***“And We gather them together so as to leave not one of them behind” (Qur'an 18:47).***

And He says:

***“And (remind them of) the Day when We shall gather out of every nation a host of those who denied Our signs” (Qur'an 27:83).***

Hence the day on which the multitude will be gathered together will be other than the day on which shall be gathered together the host.

And Allah the Glorious and Mighty says:

***“And they swear by Allah their most binding oaths (that) Allah will not raise up him who dieth. Nay, but it is a promise (binding) upon Him in truth, but most of mankind know it not” (Qur'an 16:40).***

The reference here is to *raj`a*.<sup>9</sup> And that is because thereafter He says:

***“In order to make manifest to those that differ concerning it” (Qur'an 27:83)***

And this "making manifest" is to be found in this world, not in the next.<sup>10</sup> And I shall write, if Allah wills, a book exclusively on the topic of *raj`a*, in which I shall explain its real nature and the proofs regarding the authenticity of its occurrence.<sup>11</sup> And the profession (of belief in) transmigration of souls is false, and he who believes in it is an unbeliever, because transmigration involves the denial of the Garden and the Fire.<sup>12</sup>

---

1. Cp. Wasfyat Abi Hanifa, art. 23, cited in MC, 130 and discussed at p.178. Affifi, 166, gives a philosophical explanation; BHA, no. 219 et seq.; FC, nos. 93, 94.

2. The reference is to the Exodus.

3. N على شط ; D على شط بحر .

4. Here N adds *و يلدوا عبادك و يعبدونك مع من يعبدك إلخ*.
5. Lit. "it was falling on its roofs".
6. N *تخرج الموتى بإذني*; D citing Qur. 5, 110 *تحيي الموتى*.
7. The Urdu translator citing the Tafsir Majma'ul-Bayan says that their eyes were open and they were breathing regularly. Therefore they were not dead, and this verse cannot strictly speaking be cited in proof of the doctrine or *raj'a*.
8. This expression occurs in the Sunnite and Shiite hadith, and also in the Isma'ili history *'Uyunu'l-Akbar* of Sayyidna *'Imadu'd-Din Idris b. Hasan*, died 872/1468. See JRAS for 1934, p.21, note 1, MB, s.v. *!z* has the following: *في الحديث عن النبي ص: يكون في هذه الامة كل ما كان في بني اسرائيل حذو النعل بالنعل و القدة بالقدة*.
9. 160. The Urdu translator says: It is related that a polytheist owed a debt to a Muslim, and in spite of repeated demands it remained unpaid. The Muslim said: I shall recover the debt after your death. The polytheist said: You are wrong. I swear by Allah that He will not revive any one after death. It was for falsifying him that this verse was revealed ( *Majma' u'l-Bayan* ) .
10. 161.N *و التبيين يكون في الدنيا إلخ* . D omits the word *التبيين* .
11. 162. The Urdu translator says that belief in *raj'a* is an essential part of the creed of the Shi'ites, and he who denies it is not of the Shi'a.
12. 163. Transmigration is generally not accepted by Muslims, MB, 204; BHA, no. 89 (p.31) speaks of *hulul*; MC, 92. It is however sometimes asserted that a form of transmigration is accepted by Isma'ili, Affifi 90 (citing Shahrastani); EI, iv. 648. It is not easy to say how far this is correct; it may be that while authoritative works always rejected this doctrine, some popular beliefs lend colour to this common fallacy.
- In Kalamī Pir, xlix, n.2, W. Ivanow explains that *tanasukh* is rejected by Isma'ilis. So also FC, no. 93, which he considers as an answer to opponents. Probably the doctrine of Imamate has been misunderstood as a doctrine of transmigration or reincarnation. It is also possible that popular beliefs, unwarranted by authority, may have tended towards this view. The Western Isma'ilis entirely reject both *tanasukh* and *hulul*. Various passages from *Ikhwanu's-Safa'*, *Tanbihu'l-Hadi*, *Aqwalu dh-Dhahabiya*, *Masabih*, and *Rislatu'n-Nafs* of Sayyid-na Dhu'ayb and of Sayyidna al-Khattab could be cited in refutation of both these doctrines. For details of these works, see W. Ivanow, *Guide to Ismaili Literature*, London, 1933.

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.al-islam.org/a-shiite-creed-shaykh-saduq/concerning-resurrection-raj'a>