

Concerning The Reckoning (al-hisab) And The Scales (al-mawazin)

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Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: Our belief concerning the reckoning (*al-hisab*) is that it is real. Some of it will be undertaken by Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, and some by His Proofs (the Imams). The reckoning of Prophets and Imams, on whom be peace, will be undertaken by Allah the Glorious and Mighty; while every Prophet will be entrusted with the reckoning of his *wasi* (vicegerent, representative).

And the vicegerents (*awsiya'*) will take the reckoning of the whole of their communities. Allah, who is Blessed and Exalted above all, will be witness for the prophets (*anbiya'*) and apostles (*rusul*); and these (prophets and apostles) will be witnesses for the vicegerents (*awsiya'*).

And the Imams will be witnesses for the people, and this is borne out by His saying:

“But how (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring thee (O Muhammad) as a witness against these?” (Qur'an 4:41).

And Allah says:

“Is he (to be counted equal with him) who relieth on a clear proof from his Lord, and a witness from Him reciteth it....” (Qur'an 11:17).²

And the witness (here referred to) is the Prince of Believers, 'Ali bin Abi Talib. And He says, Exalted is He:

“Lo! Unto Us is their return, and Ours their reckoning” (Qur'an 88:25-26).

And Imam Ja'far was asked concerning the saying of Allah, Exalted is He:

“And We shall set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul shall be wronged in aught” (Qur'an 21:47).³

He said the scales (or balance) are the Prophets and their vicegerents (*awsiya*⁴). Among men there will be some who will enter Paradise without a reckoning; but everyone will be questioned according to the saying of Allah:

“Then verily We shall question those unto whom (Our message) hath been sent, and verily We shall question the messengers” (Qur’an 7:6).

That is, concerning religion. And as for sins, no one will be questioned about them except he whose reckoning⁴ is being taken. Says Allah:

“On that day neither man nor jinni will be questioned” (Qur’an 55:39).

That is, especially those who are the partisans (*Shi’a*) of the Prophet and the Imams, and not of the others,⁵ as has been handed down in the commentaries of the Qur’an. And every one whose reckoning is taken shall be punished, although it be that the punishment amounts to no more than a slight detention.

And no one shall escape the Fire, and no one shall enter the Garden (merely) by virtue of his actions, except by the mercy of Allah, Exalted is He above all.⁶ And verily Allah will address His slaves, whether they be the earlier or the later ones, in one speech containing the complete reckoning of the deeds of every person.

And each person shall hear only that part of it which relates to himself, so that he shall imagine that he alone is being addressed and no one else. And Allah, Exalted is He, will not be diverted from addressing one person because He is addressing another. And He will be quit of His reckoning of the prior and later ones (i.e. all mankind) in the space of half an hour (*sa’a*), according to the computation of the hours of this world.

And Allah will confront each person with a book which will be found to be wide open, informing him of all his actions, omitting neither a minor nor a major sin.⁷ In this fashion will Allah constitute each person his own reckoner and judge, for he will be told:

“Read thy book. Thy soul sufficeth as a reckoner against thee this day” (Qur’an 17:14).

Allah will put a seal upon the mouths of certain people, and their hands and feet and all their limbs will testify to things which they are hiding.

“And they say unto their skins: why testify ye against us? They say: Allah, Who giveth speech to all things, hath given speech to us, and it is He Who created you at the first and it is He unto Whom ye shall return. Ye did not hide yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should testify against you, but ye deemed that Allah knew not much of what ye did” (Qur’an 41:21-22).

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1. The best general account will be found in MC, 167–179 (art.21 of the Was. Abi Hanffa), also art. 21 of the Fiqh Akbar II, ibid., 195 and 231 sqq.; Macdonald, 306 (al-Ghazali) and other places; BHA, art. 244; KP, 110; Affifi, 163 sqq.
 2. The translation of this verse presents some difficulty. Pickthall, Palmer, Rodwell, Bell and Muhammad `Ali render يتلو as "recites"; while the Urdu translator takes to mean "follows", and this appears to deserve careful consideration. Dr. Daudpota has kindly sent me the following illuminating note, which I gratefully offer to the critical student:
Baydawi takes e in يتلوه to refer to بيته, in the sense of برهان but this is evidently wrong, unless one takes "the whole sense of the preceding words" as denoted by ه . probably ه refers to مَنْ i.e., the Prophet and شاهد من الله شاهد منه that is, the Qur'an. The Shi'itic interpretation, of course, should follow the trend of the Urdu translator's thought, namely ه in منه refers to the Prophet, مِنْ being the من of تبعيض; and شاهد منه – a witness who is part of him, refers to `Ali.
 3. MC, 167.
 4. 7. According to al-Ghazali two classes are exempt from reckoning, the infidels and the sinless; Baydawi mentions a third class, the sufferers, MC, 171.
 5. The Urdu translator, citing the Majma`ul-Bayan, relates on the authority of Imam `Ali ar-Rida, that he once told his companions that on the Day of Resurrection, the true believers (Shi'a) will not be questioned, because the sinful ones among them will be sufficiently punished during barzakh (the period between death and resurrection), so that when they rise, they will not be answerable for any sin.
 6. Salvation therefore depends entirely upon grace.
 7. MC, 172 sqq. Those who receive the book in the right hand will be treated with lenity; those who receive it in the left, with severity; and those who receive it behind their backs are the infidels and they will go to Hell, ibid., 173 (citing the Ahwalu 'l-Qiyama).

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