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The Day of Judgment and the Resurrection (Qiyama)

The day of resurrection will be the time when all of humankind will be brought back to their original physical form. There will be a time on earth when everything that God created will cease. Every human being, from the past to the present, will be resurrected and examined by their deeds. This day is called the “Day of Judgment.”

O mankind! If you are in doubt concerning the resurrection, then, verily, We created you from dust, then from a drop, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh [both] shaped and shapeless, that We make it clear for you. And We cause what We will to remain in the wombs for an appointed time, and afterwards We bring you forth as infants: then you attain your full strength.

And among you there is he who dies [young] and among you there is he who is brought back to the most abject time of life so that, after knowledge, he knows nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down water on it, it thrills and swells and puts forth every lovely kind [of growth].

That is because Allah is Reality, and it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things, and because the Hour [of Judgment] will come concerning which there is no doubt, and because Allah will raise those who are in the graves. (22:5-7)

Regarding the Day of Judgment God states:

Verily We shall give life to the dead, and We record all that they send before and that they leave behind, and We have taken account of all things in a clear Book [of evidence]. (36: 12)

And to every soul will be paid in full of its deeds, and He knows best all that they do. (39:70)

The number of verses in the Quran that deal with life after death and the Day of Resurrection is close to 1,200. This is in addition to a vast number of traditions related from the Prophet Muhammad and the twelve imams. This number reveals the importance and significance of life after death and emphasizes

that the life of a human being does not end at death, but, in fact, continues afterward towards a new life. The Quran calls this life the “true life.”¹

Many people wonder if eventually humankind is going to die out, why then were people created in the first place?

Humankind was created to be the caretaker of the earth; thus, life on earth becomes a test, to maintain and preserve nature. More importantly, to maintain and preserve our moral natures.

According to Islam, a person will be judged according to his or her life's actions. People whose deeds and actions in life are mainly good will enter Heaven (also called Garden or Paradise). However, if one's deeds or actions are mainly evil, he or she will enter Hell (also referred to as Fire). On the Day of Judgment, everyone will know the fate of everyone else.

Both Heaven and Hell have different levels. The worst of people will be in the lowest depths of Hell, while the best of people will be in the highest parts of Heaven.

Death and Life After Death

Through religious doctrine, humanity has been shown a glimpse of what we experience at the moment of death and life after death. The Quran reveals some of the secrets surrounding the soul:

It is Allah who takes away the souls at the time of their death, and those that die not during their sleep. He keeps those souls for which He has ordained death and sends the rest for a term appointed. Verily, in this are signs for people who think deeply. (39:42)

And they ask you concerning the spirit. Say: “The spirit, it is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord, and of knowledge, you mankind have been given only a little.” (17:85)

For the believers, the departure of the soul will be peaceful:

It will be said to the pious: “O you in complete rest and satisfaction, come back to your Lord well-pleased yourself and well-pleasing unto Him. Enter then among my honored servants, and enter my Paradise.” (89:27–30)

The Quran reveals that a person who is near death will become aware that he or she is going to die. For those people who are destined for Hell, the parting of the soul will be accompanied by severe pain. The moment of death has been described in the Quran:

Nay! When the soul reaches the collarbone, and it will be said, “Who can cure him and save him from death?” And he, the dying person, will conclude that it is the time of departing, and he is shrouded; the drive on that day will be to your Lord. (75:26–30)

Remember that the two recording angels receive each human being after attaining the age of

puberty, one sitting on the right and one on the left, to note his actions. Not a word does he utter but there is a watcher sitting by him to record it. And the stupor of death will come in truth; this is what you have been avoiding.

And the trumpet will be blown; that will be the day whereof warning had been given, and every person will come forth with an angel to drive him and an angel to bear witness. It will be said to the sinners: “Indeed, you were heedless of this. Now We have removed your covering, and sharp is your sight this day.” (50: 17–22)

When the deceased are buried their souls will accompany their physical body to the grave. The soul will then be questioned therein by two angels concerning their lifetime actions, deeds, and faith. The soul will then remain buried alongside the body. Although the body will perish, the soul will remain living until the time of one's resurrection on the Day of Judgment.²

Islam believes that before the time of Resurrection and the Day of Judgment the souls of people, in their graves, will either live in comfort or distress before ultimately entering Heaven or Hell. This abode is called *barzakh*. The life of *barzakh* can be described as a small form of paradise or hell. A person's faith, whether good or bad, will determine the atmosphere of *barzakh*, namely, pleasant or unpleasant.³

Once, Prophet Jesus sent two messengers to the city of Antioch to call for monotheism and the worshipping of God. One of the men of that town embraced the faith and followed the messengers. The king of the land ordered him to be killed. As the righteous man was dying he said, **“Verily I have believed in your Lord. So listen to me.” It was said to him when the disbelievers killed him, 'Enter paradise.'** He said, **“Would that my people knew what my Lord Allah has forgiven me for and made me one of the honored ones” (36:25–27).**

The Paradise that the man had entered was the small form of Paradise called *barzakh*.

The descriptions of the small hell and the ultimate Hell are very vivid and painful in the Quran which states, **“Evil torment encompassed the Pharaoh [and his people]—the fire: they are exposed to it morning and afternoon [barzakh], and on the day when the Hour will be established [Hell]“ (40:46).**

Repentance and Forgiveness

Repentance is the giving up of sin and it is the best way of expressing regret for having committed one. It involves sincerely regretting a particular sin and then resolving never to do it again. Repentance is the source of and way to success. The Quran says, **“Turn to Allah, O Believers, that you may be successful” (24:31).** No matter how grievous a person's sin may be, God's forgiveness is much greater. No one should be ashamed to turn toward God in repentance. God can erase the sins of whomever He pleases. The Quran states:

Say, O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, despair not of the mercy of Allah; verily, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (39:53)

Tell My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful. (15:49)

Will they not turn to Allah and ask His forgiveness? Allah is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (5:74)

Your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind in spite of their wrongdoing. (13:6)

Despite God's ability to destroy mankind (if He so willed), God possesses the main characteristics of forgiveness and mercy. For this reason, Muslims begin nearly every action, speech, or endeavor with the words, *"In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate."*⁴

Repentance is of benefit now and security for the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad narrated that the act of repenting brings an increase of wealth, protection from danger, and an easing of hardships and difficulties. Furthermore, it has been said that the fastest way to attain closeness to God is to humble oneself before Him and admit ones wrongdoing. The benefits of repentance for the next life are obvious—entrance into Paradise and safety from the Hellfire.

Repentance will be accepted up until the moment of death. Prophet Muhammad once said that if a person seeks repentance one year before dying, God will accept the repentance. Even if a person seeks repentance one day before dying, God will accept it. The Prophet then pointed to his throat and said that even if someone seeks repentance before his soul reaches here (pointing to his throat), God will accept it.

Nonetheless, repentance should be done as soon as possible and should not be delayed; this point has been emphasized again and again in the Islamic tradition. Imam Ali said, *"How numerous are the procrastinators who postpone [repenting and doing good deeds] until death overtakes them!"*⁵

Repentance should be done privately and secretly.

People can establish a direct link to Allah while seeking repentance without the necessity of a third person interfering. If a person commits a sin, he or she should not let others know about the sin. Prophet Muhammad once said to Imam Ali, *"O Ali, blessed is he whom Allah looks upon while he is weeping for the sin that none is aware of except Allah."*⁶

In addition to not revealing his or her own sins, every person must conceal the faults of his brother or sister to preserve that person's honor and the honor of society. That person's faults may be dealt with personally and privately, but it should not be spread among society.

God loves a person who sincerely repents his or her sin; hence, the repented sin will be considered as if he or she had never committed that sin. Imam al-Baqir said, *"He who repents of his sins is as one who has not any burden of sin."*⁷ However, repentance must be sincere. God knows who sincerely regrets misdeeds and who is just speaking empty words. A person came to Imam Ali and said, *"Astaghfirullah. I seek God's forgiveness."* The Imam replied:

*Do you know what asking God's forgiveness is? Forgiveness is a word that stands on six supports. The first is to repent over the past. The second is to make a firm determination never to revert to it. The third is to discharge all the rights of people so that you may meet God quite clean with nothing which to account for. The fourth is to fulfill every obligation which you ignored in the past so that you may now be just with it. The fifth is to aim at the flesh grown as a result of unlawful earning so that you may melt it by grief of repentance till the skin touches the bone and a new flesh grows between them. And the sixth is to make the body taste the pain of obedience as you previously made it taste the sweetness of disobedience. On such an occasion, you may say, "I seek God's forgiveness."*⁸

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1. See Quran 29:64.
 2. See Quran 56: 1-56.
 3. Quran 36:26-27.
 4. Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim.
 5. Ghurar al-Hikm, p.240.
 6. Bihar al-Anwar, v.77 p.63.
 7. Wassail al-Shia, v. 16 p.74.
 8. Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), sermon #426.

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