

MLU 2.1: Belief in life after death and Al-Qadr

Articles of Faith (Cont.)

Belief in Life after Death

The fifth article of Islamic Faith is belief in life after death. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has directed us to believe in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgment.

- (1) The essential ingredients of this belief, as the life of this world and of all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. Everything will be annihilated. That day is called *Qayamah*, i.e. the Last Day.
- (2) That all the human beings who had lived in the world since its inception will then be restored to life and will be presented before God who will sit in judgement on that day. This is called *Hashr*: Resurrection
- (3) That the entire record of every man and woman of all their doings and misdoings-will be presented before God for final judgment.
- (4) That God shall finally adjudge the reward of every person. He shall weigh everyone's good and bad deeds. One who excels in goodness will be rewarded a goodly reward; one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his good deeds, will be punished.

The reward and punishment will be administered justly. Those who emerge successful in this judgment will go to paradise and the doors of eternal bliss will be opened upon them; those who are condemned and deserve punishment will be sent to Hell-the abode of fire and torture.

The Need of this Belief

Belief in the life after death has always been a part and parcel of the teachings of the Prophets. Every Prophet asked his followers to believe in it, in the same way as the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (PBUH), has asked us to do. This has always been an essential condition of being

a Muslim. All Prophets have categorically declared that one who disbelieves in it, or casts doubts on it, is a *Kafir*. This is so, because denial of life after death makes all other beliefs meaningless.

In everyday life, humans instinctively consider the utility and harm of actions. They are unwilling to waste time and energy in useless or unproductive jobs. They are also less likely to avoid harmless things. The stronger the conviction about a thing's utility, the firmer the response.

That is not all. If you reflect still deeper, you will come to the conclusion that belief in life after death is the greatest deciding factor in the life of a man. Its acceptance or rejection determines the very course of his life and behavior.

A man with a belief in the next world and a clear understanding of the consequences of his actions will always prioritize the everlasting benefit or harm, avoiding the wrong despite its appearance.

Life after Death: A Rational Vindication (Justification)

In fact, the constituents of the belief are rationally understandable. The fact is that whatever Muhammad (PBUH) has told us about life after death is clearly borne out by reason. Although our belief in the that Day is based upon our implicit trust in the Messenger of God, rational reflection not only confirms this belief but also reveals that Muhammad's (PBUH) teachings in this respect are much more reasonable and understandable than any viewpoints found in the world.

Following are the viewpoints about the life after death.

- a) A group of the people says that there is nothing left of man after death, and that after this life-ending event, there is no other life. According to these people, this belief has no reality. They say that there is no possibility of it and such a belief is quite unscientific. This is the approach and brings in western science in their support.
- b) Another group of the people maintains that man, in order to bear the consequences of his deeds, is repeatedly regenerated in this very world. If he lives a bad life, in the next generation he will assume the shape of an animal, like a dog or a cat, etc., or some tree or some lower kind of man. If his acts have been good, he will be reborn as a man into a higher class. This view point is found in some Eastern religions.
- c) There is a third viewpoint which calls for belief in the Day of Judgment, the Resurrection, man's presence in the Divine Court, and the administration of reward and punishment. This is the common belief of all the Prophets.

Now let us consider these viewpoints one by one. The first section, the scientific argument that life after death is impossible; pointing out that it is based on the absence of evidence rather than knowledge. It argues that just because no one has observed revival after death, it doesn't mean life after death doesn't exist. This reasoning is likened to someone who, having never seen an airplane concludes that airplanes don't exist. The text asserts that claiming something doesn't exist simply because it hasn't been observed is both unscientific and unreasonable.

The second group's belief is that a person's current form (human or animal) results from their actions in a previous life. They face a problem: if humans came before animals, then humans must have been animals before becoming human, creating a circular reasoning. If animals came first, then animals must have been humans who turned into animals due to their actions. This creates an endless loop with no clear starting point for the first being, rendering the belief absurd and unresolvable.

Now consider the third viewpoint. Its first proposition is: "This world will one day come to an end. God will destroy and annihilate the universe, and in its place will evolve another higher and far superior cosmos."

This statement is undeniably true. The universe is not permanent and will eventually face destruction due to the limitations of its forces. Scientists predict that the sun will cool, stars will collide, and the cosmic system will be disrupted. It questions why the universe, like its individual components, shouldn't evolve into a different, potentially better state rather than becoming completely non-existent.

After considering all these questions no reasonable person can escape the conclusion that the belief in life after death is the most acceptable to reason and common sense, and that there is nothing in it which can be said to be unreasonable or impossible. Moreover, when a true Prophet like Muhammad (PBUH) has stated this to be a fact and it involves nothing but what is good for us wisdom lies in believing it implicitly and not in rejecting it without any sound reasons.

Belief in Al-Qada€ wa€l-Qadar (Divine Will)

Belief in Al-Qadar is the sixth pillar of faith, and no one's faith is complete without it.

One must believe that Allah (SWT) knew everything before it came into being, and what will happen to it afterwards. He then brought them into existence, all in accordance to His Knowledge and Measure. *Allah (SWT)* says:

"Verily, We have created all things with Qadar." (54:49)

Everything which occurred in the past that is occurring in the present and what will occur in the future is known to Allah (SWT) before it came into existence. Allah (SWT) then brought it into being, all in accordance to His Will and Measure. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

"A person is not a Muslim until he believes in Qadar, its good and its evil consequences – until he knows that whatever happened to him would have never missed him, and what missed him would never have occurred." (Tirmidhi #2144)

The belief in Qadar means to believe in four things:

1. To believe that Allah (SWT) is well acquainted with everything taking place and His knowledge encompasses everything.
2. To believe that Allah (SWT) has pre-assigned the portions of everything in the 'Preserved Tablet' (Al-Lawh-ul-Mahfoodh). The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The first thing which Allah (SWT) created was the Pen, and He said to it, fWrite., It responded, fWhat should I write?., He said, fWrite everything that will occur until the Day of Resurrection., (Abu Dawood 4700 & Tirmidhi #3319)

3. Nothing takes place in the heavens or on the earth without the will of Allah (SWT) and His wish; whatever Allah (SWT) wills, takes place, and whatever He does not, will not take place.
4. Allah (SWT), the Exalted, is the Creator of all things. There is no other creator besides Him, nor is there a Lord other than Him... This belief does not contradict the fact that one must strive to attain things. To clarify this, if a person wants to become a business man there are certain things to achieve this goal; such as to study and work hard. After he does all that is in his power, he may be granted what he wishes or not. The reason for this is that a person would realize that what he does to achieve his goal is not in fact the true cause behind it; rather it is the Will of Allah (SWT). These means to fulfill our goals are also considered from the Qadar of Allah (SWT). The Prophet (PBUH) was asked:

fO Messenger of Allah (SWT), do the verses and supplications we recite and the medicine we take to cure ourselves waive the Qadar of Allah (SWT)?, [He replied,] fThey are from the Qadar of Allah (SWT)., (Mustadrak al-Haakim, but with a weak chain).

The Merits of Belief in Qadaa' and Qadar

1. One strengthens his dependence upon Allah (SWT) [in achieving results] after fulfilling their means.
2. One becomes pleased with whatever results, which in turn produces peace of heart and spiritual comfort. Allah (SWT) says:

"No evil befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah (SWT): So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah (SWT) does not love any arrogant boaster." (57:22-23)

3. It eases the effects of calamities. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah (SWT) than a weak believer, and in each one there is good. Be keen to do what benefits you and seek Allah (SWT)'s help, and do not be neglectful in doing so. And if any mishap befalls you, do not say, fIf only I had only done such and such,,, but rather say, fThis is the Qadar of Allah (SWT), and whatever He Wills He does (Qadarullaah wa maa shaa fafal),,, for indeed, fif,,, opens the door for Shaytaan,,,s works." (Muslim #2664)

4. It increases one's reward and effaces his sins. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"No Muslim is fatigued, is stricken with illness, feels stress, worry, sadness, or harm, not even a thorn which pricks him, except that Allah (SWT) forgives sins through it." (Bukhari #5318)

Belief in Qadar is not, as some mistakenly think, a call to put one's trust in Allah (SWT) without striving or fulfilling the means, for the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) replied to a person who asked him:

fShould I leave my camel untied and trust in Allah (SWT)?,, He said, fTie it and trust in Allah (SWT).” (Tirmidhi #2517)

Four Components of Qadr

The belief in Qadar means to believe in four things:

5. **Al-'Ilm (Knowledge)** - The belief that Allah (SWT) knows all things, in general and in detail, from eternity to eternity, whether that has to do with His actions or the actions of His slaves. Allah (SWT) says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Truly, nothing is hidden from God, in the earth or in the heavens" [3:5].

6. **Kitab (Writing)** - The belief that Allah (SWT) has written everything, which will happen until the day of judgment due to His knowledge, in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz (Book of Decrees, preserved in heaven). Allah (SWT) says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Know you not that Allah (SWT) knows all that is in the heaven and on the earth? Verily, it is (all) in the Book (al-Lawh al-Mahfooz). Verily, that is easy for Allah (SWT)" [22:70].

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The first thing which Allah (SWT) created was the Pen, and He said to it, fWrite., It responded, fWhat should I write?,, He said, fWrite everything that will occur until the Day of Resurrection., (Abu Dawood 4700 & Tirmidhi #3319)

7. **Mash'eeah (Will)** - The belief that nothing happens or does not happen without the will of Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) says (interpretation of the meaning):

"He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills" [3:5] and "and Allah (SWT) does what He wills" [14:27] and "And your Lord creates whatsoever He wills and chooses" [28:68]

8. **Al-Khalq (Creation)** - The belief that Allah (SWT) created everything. Allah (SWT) says (interpretation of the meaning):

"He has created everything, and has measured it exactly according to its due measurements" [25:2] and "Allah (SWT) is the Creator of all things, and He is the Wakeel (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian) over all things" [39:62].

Do we have free will?

Again, the belief in qadr as it has been described above does not contradict the idea of free will. We can do what we want to do and reject what we do not want to do. However, we should have the correct understanding regarding the usage of the words "*free will*". Will must be understood in the context that if you wish something to happen, it happens and without any external force or a thing interfering. For example, the will of Allah (SWT); He says "be and it is". On the contrary, we humans do not have such abilities. Our choices are always influenced by many things and many times things not always work the way we want. Therefore, it is only logical to conclude that we only have the freedom of making free choices and we do not have free will. However, we could not have had such ability without the will of Allah (SWT). Thus, our freedom of making choices is exercised within the absolute will of Allah (SWT) which has determined and permitted humans to make free choices of their own and it is the manifestation of Allah (SWT)'s absolute Will. Some atheists and philosophers argue that if Allah (SWT) knows exactly what will happen, right down to every choice, then it constrains one's freedom of making choices. However, their conclusions are hasty and this problem can be solved with a simple analogy. For example, if a teacher knows that one of his students is going to fail the final exam, due to his performance during whole year/term, it does not mean that teacher is forcing the student to fail or making him fail. Having knowledge about something does not mean that you are forcing it onto the other person or constraining him.

Reference

A'la Mawdudi, S. A. (2013). Towards Understanding Islam. Kube Publishing Ltd.