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Chapter 6: Uncertainty and questions

The time of the Resurrection Day

Among all the various questions, asked from the Divine prophets, there was this particular question: whether Resurrection Day was a truth to be trusted? And when would be the time of this great event? When will it happen? When shall mankind be faced with it?1

The Holy Qur'an tries to make us understand before any explanation, that these kinds of questions are a way to make some excuses to not believe in that great day; it is a kind of evasive behavior, in order to run away from the greatest challenges that the human nature has to face yet. It then gives two answers to this question:

- 1. Knowledge of this event is beside Allah and He only knows it. 2 Therefore, this is one of the greatest mysteries of the universe and no one but Allah Almighty knows the answer to it.
- 2. It then begins rapidly to describe all the events, which will take place in the Resurrection Day. It says,

"Man will be apprised, on that Day, of what he has done and what he has left undone." – 75:13

In fact, the manner with which the Holy Qur'an answers in this way has many reasons. One can name some of them.

First, these kinds of questions cannot be answered essentially; that is, even if the right answer shall be given, the person, who has received one such answer cannot verify properly and concretely this answer. These questions are like some silly, strange demands such as, "Where is the centre of the Universe?!"

Someone had answered to that question and replied, "It is right here!"

Someone asked him then, "Pray, how come you say it is right here?!"

He replied, "[If you do not believe it, then] go and measure the Universe yourself!"

However, we see that the Holy Qur'an answers very wisely to that useless guestion.

The issue of Judgment Day is essentially not possible to be considered by the standard measurement of this world of ours and it bears a post-historical truth; it is not an event, which could be measured or calculated with the help of our earthly calendars. Therefore, this question is a foolish demand, not to be answered by the learned and the erudite.

In fact, man has to ask for things and make some research in things and concepts that could be very useful for him. Something to bring him a certain benefit; that is why, any question that does not bear these particularities is devoid of any importance and one can go so far as to say that it can also become very harmful and damaging.

This is because it can make the human brain work incessantly, without providing him any acceptable, reasonable answer; and this can prevent man from understanding truth and reality. However, one of the things that would suffice us to know, concerning the Resurrection Day is that:

"And verily the Hour will come: and there can be no doubt about it, or about the fact that Allah will raise up all who are in the graves!" – 57:7

Therefore, Resurrection Day shall come certainly. There is no doubt about it, whatsoever. However, the fact of knowing or ignoring the time of that event is devoid of any importance for the human being, at this stage of his existence on Earth.

Therefore, the Holy Qur'an explains that which is useful for the human beings to know, and instead of answering such vain questions, tries to explain things that one has the necessity and the obligation to know of them. And it then gives us all kinds of information, in this regard.3

Physical and spiritual Resurrection

Will the "matter" and the physical life survive, in the Hereafter...?4

The Holy Qur'an announces that there is also a physical and material aspect in the Hereafter; and that "Ma'ad" [i.e. Resurrection] has two aspects: one is physical and the other one is spiritual. However, this does not mean that in that other world, "matter" will survive and remain with all its earthly characteristics and particularities; for in that case, it would have been a place of change, oldness, agedness, elderliness, and ending of many things. Then, it would have been under the domination of many duties to be executed duly. Therefore, in the Afterlife, "matter" will not exist with its philosophical meaning; for in that place, there is no possibility of any change of situation[s].

And whatever shall be there, will be endowed with the quality of "newness" and "innovation"; in fact, each creature can have a grade or degree of its own and it can create and produce things, according to its personal grade or degree; however, it cannot transform itself from one thing to another.

Some equivocal thoughts to be considered

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There has always been a concept, from time immemorial, that our body had been "part" of the "parts" of the "bodies" of some other creatures; and that after death, and with all the natural transformations that will follow one after the other, it shall become once again, a "part" of the body of some other human being. Therefore, if the physical body of the human being accompanies the physical resurrection, how will it be possible to distinguish these bodies, from one another? And how can each person resurrect with his/her own physical body?

It is true that resurrection is both physical and spiritual; however, there is no necessity that the body one is in possession of, in the afterlife, be the same body one had had in the earthly plane.

In fact, we go a little farther and say that even the physical body of this earthly plane had never remained unchanged, unvarying, and invariable; however, it had always changed from one form to another form, in each decade of the human lifetime...

Now, what one needs in the afterlife is the survival of that human being and the particularities, which proves amply that he/she is truly that particular person; and these particularities are equal to the human soul. Therefore, just as the human cells change and the transformation of all the parts of the human body is an incessant process, making the inner personality and the "ego" of the individual not prone to any change.

In like manner, in the afterlife, whatever the different body parts of that soul might be, the characteristics and the personality of the individual will remain as same as during his stay on earth. And this, whether he/she shall be with this body or not, and whether he/she will be with this existing form or with another new form. Even if they will change our human form in the afterlife and make us resurrect with an animal form, it is still us! There is no change whatsoever, in this regard. It shall keep on being us, no matter what happens, either with an animal form or with some other form: it shall still be us, and no one else.

The secret of insisting on the blessing of the physical form

The secret of insisting on the blessing of the physical form6

Why is it that the Holy Qur'an has insisted so much on the physical blessings, which shall exist in Heaven [i.e. Paradise]? Why does it speak often of things such as trees, flowers, rivers, cups, angels, etc.? Why does it speak of things and pleasures that are considered to having a "physical" nature and characteristics...?

The negation of God's blessings, appearing as bad things

The Christians created in fact, this concept, and it concentrates on negating each of the earthly pleasures that God has granted to man, by calling them as wicked and abominable things. Things that one should abstain from executing or feeling them; that is, from a sexual drive, which leads to procreation to the willingness of having a licit fruitful business, in order to enjoy life, as wisely as one can do. This concept is against the principle of monotheism [i.e. *Tow'hid*] and the laws of creation, which have been made wisely for the human beings. Moreover, nothing of these blessings is bad, in itself. Indeed, the root of the wickedness that might be found in these sound, simple pleasures of life comes from two things alone:

- 1. That man, acts in such way that even with all his talents and tendencies, he still brings on torpor and apathy for his other talents, thus, preventing their blossoming in his life.
- 2. Then again, man acts in such way as to violate and transgress the moral rights of the others, only to fulfill his own whims and wishes; and by acting thus, to make the life of his fellowmen, as miserable as can be, by preventing them from doing any good things in their lives on earth.

Absence of any limitation for all the pleasures, awaiting man in the afterlife

First, one should point out that the world beyond is not limited in any way, whatsoever. Each life force will reach its maximum limit of activity and perfection. There, if the eyes could see even better and clearer, if the ears can hear more clearly and far beyond their normal range and the palate can enjoy everything, much more than usual, it will then be called and considered as "pure perfection". Then again, there shall be no limit from anywhere, and the moral right of anyone will be far beyond what it had enjoyed so far; for it is now infinite, and everyone can wish for anything, in an unlimited and infinite mode.7

Secondly, all the Divine blessings, which are actually inside Heaven [i.e. Paradise], will not distract the blessed inhabitants of paradise from the remembrance of Allah Almighty. The Holy Qur'an announces that after some of the physical blessings, God will grant them much more,

"Upon those [blessed] will be garments of green silk and brocade; and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Sustainer will them to drink of a drink most pure." – 76:21

"Tahur" means pure, clean. Imam Sadiq [as] has given a very nice interpretation for this verse and for the question that had been put to him: of what impurity does the heavenly Drink clean and purify man? And he had replied, "It cleans and purifies us from the notion of wanting anything, except Truth [and Justice]."

Indeed, the enumeration and recall of the physical blessings in the Holy Qur'an is not only considered as a mistake and/or an imperfection, but it also bears witness to its general characteristics. The human

being, who is going towards his eternal dwelling-place, goes there, endowed with all his aspects, and not with a limited part of his being. Therefore, if he has reached his human and spiritual perfections, he should then enjoy fully all the blessings that appear as heavenly pleasures to him. Moreover, he should never doubt that the spiritual pleasures are far better than those he had experienced before, during his life on earth.

Punishment, according to the deed

Punishment, according to the deed8

Punishment should be in accordance with the committed crime. Now, the torments in the afterlife are far more terrible and difficult to bear. And for some horrible crimes [i.e. sins] such as killing someone, eternal torment would be the verdict of the Divine Balance; strange enough, the more someone commits a crime, the more the duration of the actual moment of committing that crime had been brief, short, and more limited.

Why is it so?

Now, the Torment in the afterlife differs with the punishment one has to endure on this earth. However, in order to distinguish the variety of the punishment, we should first give a brief explanation, in this regard. Those Punishments are divided into three categories.

- 1. **The conventional Punishments:** That is, the Punishments that had been decreed, by various laws and regulations, made in this world of ours. These kinds of Punishments are changeable and the duration can get shorter or longer.
- 2. **The Punishment for a deed committed**: Certain Punishments are the direct, natural, and determining consequences of a certain committed deed. Like for example, the individual, who takes poison to end his/her life; the natural consequence of such act is instant death. These kinds of punishments do not have anything to do with any convention, and nobody can do anything about it, with the existing laws and regulations, in order to shorten or lengthen that punishment in particular.
- 3. The similarity between the deed and the Punishment: To begin with, the Torment [i.e. Punishment] in the Hereafter belongs to the category of the determining Punishments; it has nothing to do with any convention or pre– established order. Secondly, the determining relation between the torment [i.e. Punishment] in the afterlife and the human deed [or to be more exact: misdeed] is something far more powerful than the punishments that a criminal human being has to endure on earth.

In fact, the Torments of the Afterlife are nothing but the direct consequences of the actual crime [i.e. misdeed] and it is the concrete, palpable visualization of the deeds [or to be more exact: misdeeds] that the human beings have done in this earthly plane. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says,

"And the record [of everyone's deeds] will be laid open; and thou wilt behold the guilty filled with dread at what [they see] therein; and they will exclaim, "Oh, woe unto us! What a record is this! It leaves out nothing, be it small or great, but takes everything into account!" For they will find all that they ever wrought [now] facing them, [will know that] thy Sustainer does not wrong anyone." – 18:49

A good deed accomplished by a Non-Muslim

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The good deeds, accomplished by the Non-Muslims, such as [Louis] Pasteur, [Thomas] Edison, and [Albert] Einstein, and then the good deeds of Muslims, who are not Shiite are services rendered unselfishly and most generously to the humankind. However, one may wish to know: will all those deeds, be accepted by God Almighty, on Resurrection Day, or will they not...?

If they will not be accepted, how then can this matter be in harmony and in accordance with Divine Justice...?

Most certainly, we as humans cannot fathom such notions in this world of ours and/or clarify the "reckoning" of each individual, on Judgment Day. However, in a general way, one can clarify certain necessary things for you to understand better:

First, the "Truthful Religion" comes, once in every era, and it is necessary for everyone to obey it and to submit himself/herself to it. The Holy Qur'an announces,

"For, if one goes in search of a religion other than self-surrender unto God, it will never be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the lost." – 3:85

Secondly, Sin and Perdition have many varieties:

The sin of Obstinacy: That is, to commit sin, by obstinacy and enmity; in these instances, it is possible that truth has been unveiled for the individual, by the help of some solid arguments; however, the individual refuses to comply, only because of his obstinate nature and the enmity he feels inside his heart. In these situations, the individual is certainly most worthy of punishment and penalty.

The sin of Ignorance: That is, a certain individual does not affirm nor attest this absolute truth, only because of his pitiful ignorance. In this instance as well, there are two things to consider. Either this ignorance is intentional and deliberate or it is unintentional.

Ignorance of the first kind is when an individual does indeed have the necessary conditions to know the truth and/or had given the probability of its existence. And that if he was to search for it, he would certainly find it. However, because of some apathy, indifference, or negligence, he had not wanted to

unveil the Truth. This kind of individual has in fact, not searched the way of salvation, by his own volition; that is why he has lost the right to be granted God's Mercy and Forgiveness.

The other Ignorance is when an individual had no way to reach the truth, and thus, had not been able to understand and comprehend it. While in reality, he was willing to seek and find it, to submit then himself to it wholeheartedly; however, alas, he had not found it. According to the reasoning of the Holy Qur'an and its logic, this individual is prone to be forgiven and God's Mercy and Forgiveness shall be granted to him. The Holy Qur'an announces,

"Whoever chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good; and whoever goes astray, goes but astray to his own hurt; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another burden. Moreover, We would never chastise [any community for the wrong they may do] ere We have sent an apostle [to them]" – 17:15

Therefore, when a human being accomplishes a good deed, its social influence can be identical and equal everywhere. However, if it were done, minus the presence of faith and belief in God, just a simple, soulless physical body accomplishes it then. For, it does not go in search of any spirituality, God or even the celestial Heavens; thus this good deed does not have any effect to make that soulless body, get closer to God, in order to attain perfection and happiness; while, it is only the pure intention and devotion, which count, in this instance.

Therefore, it is impossible for the good deeds of he, who does not know God and does not intend to search and seek Him, in order to offer Him his good deeds, to ascend to heaven and reach God; for He will certainly reject them. In fact, he has not tried to pass through many Invisible veils to reach the Divine Threshold; he has not crossed the labyrinth of his vilest passions; he does not aspire to attain God, in order to transform his deeds into heavenly, celestial actions, thus pleasing God, by the fact of having accomplished them. He does not wish to make them become heavenly, so as to bring him joy, happiness, beatitude, and eternal Bliss. In like manner, God only accepts a good deed, when this good deed had been accomplished with all these inner intentions, inside the seeker's soul.

In like manner, the sin of obstinacy and hostility concerning truth, [even though you are well aware of its rightfulness] is the destroyer of any good deed and it will eliminate and nullify it. Evidently, the way a good deed is destroyed so quickly and easily does not belong only to the disbelievers; for the good deeds of the Muslims as well can be eliminated and destroyed by envy, jealousy, wrath, hypocrisy, and condescendence. In fact, a sin, which puts you in a hostile mood towards the absolute truth, while you know of the falsehood of your claim, provokes the ruin and the destruction of your good deeds. God Almighty has announced in this regard,

"[This, then, is] the parable of those who are bent on denying their Sustainer. All their works are as ashes which the wind blows about fiercely on a stormy day: [in the life to come,] they cannot achieve any benefit whatever from all [the good] that they may have wrought: for this [denial of

Intercession and Justice

Now, is it true that on Resurrection Day, intercession is somehow an injustice and a wrong done, because a rare privilege will be granted to someone, more than the others?

Intercession has varieties: one of them is wrong and unjust; one of them is just and correct; and the third one is wrong, while at the same time, you are preventing the law to act justly, with the help of a third party. Something like this, in this earthly plane is considered as wrong and oppressive, and in the Hereafter, it will be considered as an absolutely impossible thing to do. This kind of Intercession, according to the reasoning of the Holy Qur'an is unacceptable and null.

Let us therefore, consider the particularities of a just and correct Intercession:

The Principle of Mercy: In order to reach happiness, without taking into account the human deeds and actions, one is certainly in need of the flux of divine grace as well. One of the many manifestations of divine grace is the symbol of purity and pureness. God's Forgiveness is the cleaning and purifying action, which shall erase the stains of the committed sins from the human souls. Of course, some hearts are such that they have alas, lost their capability of purifying themselves, and thus turn into the very impurity from which they aspire to get free; they cannot be purified by any [spiritual] water, and according to the Holy Qur'an, their hearts have been transformed into seals...

Grace as a general quality, granted to everyone: Grace and forgiveness are granted as a general thing, encompassing everything and everyone. It envelops and embraces all the creatures, according to their possibilities and their capabilities; it is a thing, without the presence of which, absolutely no one can hope to escape from the Divine Torment. The holy Prophet (S) had said in this regard, "I swear to Allah, Who created me that nothing but a [good] deed and God's Grace will not be able to bring on Salvation! Even if I, [as a Prophet and Messenger of God] had committed a sin, I too, would have fallen undoubtedly [without the presence of God's Grace]! "10

Intercession and forgiveness: Intercession is nothing but divine forgiveness, which is attributed to Allah, who is the possessor of all goodness. This action is called forgiveness; and when He is acting as a cause of mercy and grace, this state is then called: Intercession.

The conditions of Intercession: All the conditions, which bring on divine forgiveness, are also acting for the intercession. Now, faith is the necessary and obligatory condition for the human being to become worthy of forgiveness and the reception of intercession by God Almighty. However, this condition is not enough and no one can enumerate either, all the needed and necessary conditions as a definitive thing. It seems as though the Holy Qur'an had not wanted to announce clearly and frankly, all the necessary conditions that would bring on the divine intercession, so that human minds and hearts may still be wary

of God and remain in the dual states between a fear of God and a hope in His Mercy [i.e. *Khow'f wa Radja*].

In Divine Intercession and Forgiveness, there are no such things as injustice and/or granting somebody various favors and privileges, whatsoever. God's Grace is infinite and whosoever is deprived of it, is because he has lost this capability of receiving it altogether; this means that this deprivation comes from the individual himself, who had acted as a negligent person. 11

Contrast between Mercy and Torment

However, one may wonder: how is it possible to think that God, who is more compassionate and more benevolent than a mother is, and who has such infinite generosity and absolute grace and mercy can actually torment and punish his creatures and not accept their apologies and their repentances? Now, one should make that clear that God's mercy is not like the emotions and feelings that a human being can feel in his heart and soul, and that his pity and compassion are not identical to the sentiments that we, as humans, could feel. God's Mercy is his wisdom and his favor, bestowed generously upon us; and it means that he will make everything and everyone reach the maximum perfection; and he grants his favor to whosoever is worthy of receiving It. It is not possible to think that one may actually have the possibility and privilege of possessing such inner worth and not receiving God's favor from Him.

Those, who, on Resurrection Day will not be forgiven by God Almighty and who will be deprived of God's compassion are not only among the disbelievers; in fact, many of the sinners will benefit from God's nercy and Intercession, according to their worth and merit; and they will actually be freed from their horrible Torments.

In effect, only those individuals shall be deprived of divine forgiveness, which had closed all the doors of special mercy before them, in the first place; therefore, their punishment has already become the same with their identity and their character.

In answer to the hostile disbelievers, the Holy Qur'an announces,

"[Hence] O you, who are bent on denying the truth, make no [empty] excuses today: [in the life to come] you shall be but recompensed for what you were doing [in this world]." – 66:7

In fact, the Holy Qur'an clarifies that their excuses will no longer be possible to be accepted; and not because they were acceptable but that it is God, in fact, who shall refuse to forgive them...

Therefore, in reply to their supplication to be able to return to Earth and to do some good deeds, God announces,

"But nay [they will say this only because] the truth, which they used to conceal [from themselves] in the past, will have become obvious to them. And if they were brought back [to life], they would

return to the very thing which was forbidden to them: for behold, they are indeed liars!" - 6:28

That is why, the inexcusable quality of their request does not mean that it was God, Who had not accepted their excuses, but because those sinners cannot change themselves anymore; and that their characters and personalities have already become one, with their Punishment and their Torment. 12

Tiredness and frustration

Now, what will happen after Resurrection Day, after Paradise and Hell...? Will man not be tired and frustrated after a while, during his unlimited, perpetual sojourn in God's beautiful Paradise...?

First, we have to consider that man is always seeking, finding, and having something for himself; and that after he has sought something and found it, after a while, his enthusiasm will diminish and he will be filled with feelings of frustration, annoyance, weariness, irritation, boredom, and vexation...

The secret of this bored irritation is that that which the human being aspires from the bottom of his heart and the depth of his nature, is something apart from that which he has reached to it.

In the depth of his soul, he is searching for the absolute perfection and runs away from all kinds of imperfection and limitation; therefore, whatever perfection happens before him at first, is that same ray of light, which comes from the infinite perfection; thus, he thinks that he has finally found his lost object of desire.

That is why, he goes after all kinds of material possessions; but the moment he reaches them, he finds out that it is much less that what he had expected it to be and once again, he goes in search of a new interest, a new toy...

However, if man reaches a place, where the absolute perfection is within his reach, he then becomes calm and serene, and does not feel any frustration or irritation anymore.

He does not aspire for any change and begins to act as a powerful river, which joins the great ocean, at last. And there and then, it stops from being agitated anymore...

Now, by considering all that has happened, and by studying all the characteristics about the hereafter, there shall be no more frustration or tiredness, no more boredom and vexation, no more weariness for any happy soul, in Paradise; this is because:

In the Hereafter, the believer has finally reached the real lost object of his desire, which comes from the depth of his good nature; that is, an eternal life, pure and devoid of any impurity, near God Almighty, who is the sovereign lord of the worlds.

Thus, by attaining paradise, man has reached the ultimate longing of his inner being, which had been to attain absolute perfection. That is why the Holy Qur'an clarifies that no one in the eternal dwelling-place,

which is the ultimate place of sojourn for man, wishes to go away from it or/and have any change or transformation made to his blissful state. The Holy Qur'an says,

"[But,] behold, as for those who attain to Faith and do righteous deeds-verily, We do not fail to requite any who persevere in doing good." – 18:30

In like manner, the Holy Qur'an insists that the blessed souls of the believers will have whatever they wish for,

"In that [Paradise,] they shall have whatever they desire, but there is yet more with Us." - 50:35

Therefore, there is no sign of an unfulfilled wish in Paradise, so that someone may accidentally become irritated, vexed, or frustrated. In simpler words, tiredness, weariness, and annoyance occur only for Man, whenever there is cause for any gap or lack.

However, if man is granted instantly, anything he wishes for, and that there will be nothing whatsoever above that, it is thus everything that every man had always wished for longingly and desperately! Then nothing could provoke any weariness, vexation, irritation, or frustration in him. 13

Al'hamdulillahe Rabbil Alamin

Sayyid Mehdi Mohammadi

The End

- 1. Al-Qiamah, 6
- 2. Az-Zukhruf, 85
- 3. "Understanding the Holy Qur'an", volume 11, pages 197-202
- 4. From the book "Ma'ad", pages 212 and 213
- 5. Idem, pages 222-227
- 6. "Understanding the Holy Qur'an", volume 11, pages 45-63
- 7. An-Nah'l, verse 31
- 8. Please refer to the "Complete Works" of Professor Mutahhari, volume 1, pages 215-239
- 9. Please refer to the "Complete Works" of Professor Mutahhari, volume 1, page 269
- 10. "Sharheh Ibn-e Abel Hadid", volume 2, page 862
- 11. Please refer to Pr. Mutahhari's "Complete Works", page 225
- 12. "Understanding the Holy Qur'an", volume 8, page 103; or volume 5, page 54
- 13. Please refer to the "Complete Works" of Professor Mutahhari, volume 2, page 524; or refer to the book entitled "Ma'ad", pages 171, 172

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