

Chapter 7: Philosophical Teachings of the Qur'an

Philosophical Teachings of the Qur'an by M.M Sharif

The Qur'an

Although the Scriptures revealed to the earlier prophets, especially those of the Christians and the Jews, are regarded by the Muslims as holy, yet the Book (al-Qur'an) revealed to the last Prophet, Muhammad, is their chief sacred Book. The doctrine propounded by the Qur'an is not a new doctrine, for it is similar to the Scriptures of the earlier apostles. ¹ It lays down the same way of faith as was enjoined on Noah and Abraham. ²

It confirms in the Arabic tongue what went before it, the Book of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus—in being a guide to mankind, admonishing the unjust and giving glad tidings to the righteous. ³ God never abrogates or causes to be forgotten any of His revelations, but according to the needs and exigencies of the times, He confirms them or substitutes for them something similar or better. ⁴

The Qur'an is a book essentially religious, not philosophical, but it deals with all those problems which religion and philosophy have in common. Both have to say something about problems related to the significance of such expressions as God, the world, the individual soul, and the inter-relations of these; good and evil, free-will, and life after death.

While dealing with these problems it also throws light on such conceptions as appearance and reality, existence and attributes, human origin and destiny, truth and error, space and time, permanence and change, eternity and immortality.

The Qur'an claims to give an exposition of universal truths with regard to these problems an exposition couched in a language (and a terminology) which the people immediately addressed, the Arabs, with the intellectual background they had at the time of its revelation, could easily understand, and which the people of other lands, and other times, speaking other languages, with their own intellectual background

could easily interpret. It makes free use of similitude to give a workable idea of what is incomprehensible in its essence.

It is a book of wisdom,⁵ parts of which relate to its basic principles, (umm al-kitab) and explain and illustrate them in detail, others relate to matters explained allegorically. It would be a folly to ignore the fundamentals and wrangle about the allegorical, for none knows their hidden meanings, except God.⁶ In what follows, a brief account is given of the Qur'anic teaching with regard to the religio-philosophical problems mentioned above.

Ultimate Beauty: God and His Attributes

The Ultimate Being or Reality is God.⁷ God, as described by the Qur'an for the understanding of man, is the sole self-subsisting, all-pervading, eternal, and Absolute Reality.⁸ He is the first and the last, the seen and the unseen.⁹ He is transcendent in the sense that He in His full glory cannot be known or experienced by us finite beings-beings that can know only what can be experienced through the senses or otherwise and what is inherent in the nature of thought or is implied by it. No vision can grasp Him. He is above all comprehension.¹⁰

He is transcendent also because He is beyond the limitations of time, space, and sense-content. He was before time, space, and the world of sense came into existence. He is also immanent both in the souls (anfus) and the spatio-temporal order (afaq). Of the exact nature of God we can know nothing. But, in order that we may apprehend what we cannot comprehend, He uses similitudes from our experience.¹¹

He "is the light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass; the glass as if it were a brilliant star lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it: light upon light!"¹²

Likewise for our understanding, He describes through revelation His attributes by similitude from what is loftiest in the heavens and the earth¹³ and in our own experience¹⁴ (our highest ideals).

This He does in a language and an idiom which the people addressed to may easily understand.¹⁵ These attributes are many and are connoted by His names,¹⁶ but they can all be summarized under a few essential heads: Life,¹⁷ Eternity,¹⁸ Unity,¹⁹ Power,²⁰ Truth,²¹ Beauty,²² Justice,²³ Love,²⁴ and Goodness.²⁵

As compared to the essence of God, these attributes are only finite approaches, symbols or pointers to Reality and serve as the ultimate human ideals, but though signs and symbols, they are not arbitrary symbols. God has Himself implanted them in our being. For that reason they must, in some sense, be faithful representations of the divine essence. They must at least be in tune with it, so that in pursuing

them we human beings are truly in pursuit of what is at least in harmony with the essence of God, for they are grounded in that essence.

God is, thus; a living, self-subsisting,[26](#) eternal, and absolutely free creative reality which is one, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-beauty, most just, most loving, and all good.

As a living reality God desires intercourse with His creatures and makes it possible for them to enter into fellowship with Him through prayer, contemplation, and mystic gnosis, and lights with His light the houses of those who do not divert from His remembrance, nor from prayer nor from the practice of regular charity.[27](#)

His life expresses itself also through His eternal activity and creativeness. God is one and there is no god but He.[28](#) He is the only one[29](#) and there is none like Him.[30](#) He is too high to have any partners.[31](#) If there were other gods besides Him, some of them would have lorded over others.[32](#)

He is the One and not one in a trinity

Those who attribute sons and daughters to Him and those who say Christ is the son of God and is himself God only blaspheme God.[33](#) He has begotten neither sons nor daughters[34](#) nor is He Himself begotten.[35](#) And how could He be said to have sons and daughters when He has no consort?[36](#) And yet the unbelievers have taken besides Him gods that create nothing, but are themselves created, who have no power to hurt or do good to themselves and can control neither death, nor life, nor resurrection.[37](#)

Therefore no god should be associated with God.[38](#) Setting up of gods is nothing but anthropomorphism. The gods that people set up are nothing but names of conjectures and what their own souls desire.[39](#) They do blaspheme who say, "God is Christ the son of Mary"; for said Christ, "O children of Israel, worship God my Lord and your Lord."[40](#) They regard the angels as females, as if they had witnessed their creation.[41](#)

God and the World – God is omnipotent

To Him is due the primal origin of everything.[42](#) It is He, the Creator,[43](#) who began the process of creation[44](#) and adds to creation as He pleases.[45](#) To begin with He created the heavens and the earth, joined them together as one unit of smoky or nebulous substance,[46](#) and then clove them asunder.[47](#)

The heavens and the earth, as separate existents with all their produce; were created by Him in six days[48](#) (six great epochs of evolution). Serially considered, a divine day signifies a very long period, say, one thousand years of our reckoning[49](#) or even fifty thousand years.[50](#)

Non-serially considered, His decisions are executed in the twinkling of an eye[51](#) or even quicker,[52](#) for there is nothing to oppose His will. When he says, "Be," behold! it is.[53](#) His decree is absolute;[54](#) no one can change it.[55](#) He draws the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the other in rapid succession.

He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, all governed by the laws ordained by Him⁵⁶ and under His command.⁵⁷ Every creature in the heavens and the earth willingly submits to His laws.⁵⁸

The sun runs its course for a determined period; so does the moon.⁵⁹ The growth of a seed into a plant bearing flowers and fruit, the constellations in the sky, the succession of day and night—these and all other things show proportion, measure, order, and law.⁶⁰ He it is who is the creator, evolver, and restorer of all forms.⁶¹ He it is who sends down water from the sky in due measure, causes it to soak in the soil, raises to life the land that is dead,⁶² and then drains it off with ease.⁶³

God is the Lord of all the worlds,⁶⁴ and of all mysteries.⁶⁵ He has power over all things,⁶⁶ and to Him belong all forces of the heavens and the earth.⁶⁷ He is the Lord of the Throne of Honour⁶⁸ and the Throne of Glory Supreme, the Lord of the dawn⁶⁹ and all the ways of ascent.⁷⁰

It is He who spreads out the earth⁷¹ like a carpet,⁷² sends down water from the sky in due measure⁷³ to revive it⁷⁴ with fruit, corn, and plants,⁷⁵ and has created pairs of plants, each separate from the others,⁷⁶ and pairs of all other things.⁷⁷

He gives the heavens' canopy its order and perfection⁷⁸ and night its darkness and splendour,⁷⁹ the expanse of the earth its moisture, pastures, and mountains;⁸⁰ springs,⁸¹ streams,⁸² and seas⁸³ ships⁸⁴ and cattle;⁸⁵ pearls and coral;⁸⁶ sun and shadow;⁸⁷ wind and rain;⁸⁸ night and day;⁸⁹ and things we humans do not know. It is He who gives life to dead land and slakes the thirst of His creatures⁹⁰ and causes the trees to grow into orchards full of beauty and delight.⁹¹

To God belong the dominions of the heavens and the earth and everything between them.⁹² To Him belong the east and the west. Withers ever you turn, there is His presence, for He is all—pervading.⁹³ Neither slumber can seize Him, nor sleep.

His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving His creatures, for He is the most high and supreme in glory,⁹⁴ exalted in might; and wise.⁹⁵ It is He who gives life and death and has power over all things.

God is not only the creator, but also the cherisher,⁹⁶ sustainer,⁹⁷ protector,⁹⁸ helper,⁹⁹ guide,¹⁰⁰ and reliever of distress and suffering¹⁰¹ of all His creatures, and is most merciful, most kind, and most forgiving.

God has not created the world for idle sport.¹⁰² It is created with a purpose, for an appointed term,¹⁰³ and according to a plan, however hidden these may be from us humans. “God is the best of planners.”¹⁰⁴ He it is who ordains laws and grants guidance,¹⁰⁵ creates everything and ordains for it a proportion and measure,¹⁰⁶ and gives it guidance.¹⁰⁷

There is not a thing but with Him are the treasures of it, but He sends them down in a known measure.¹⁰⁸

The world is not without a purpose or a goal; it is throughout teleological and to this universal teleology human beings are no exception. To every one of them there is a goal [109](#) and that goal is God Himself. [110](#)

God is all knowledge. He is the Truth. [111](#) With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but He. [112](#) He witnesses all things, [113](#) for every single thing is before His sight in due proportion. [114](#) Verily, nothing on the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Him, not even as much as the weight of an atom. Neither the smallest nor the greatest of things are but recorded in a clear record. [115](#)

On the earth and in the sea not even a leaf does fall without His knowledge. [116](#) Should not He that created everything know His own handiwork? He is full of wisdom. [117](#) He understands the finest of mysteries. [118](#) He knows what enters the earth and what comes forth out of it; what comes down from heaven and all that ascends to it. [119](#) He knows every word spoken. [120](#)

No secrets of the heart are hidden from Him, [121](#) for He has full knowledge of all things, open or secret. [122](#) He knows and would call us to account for what is in our minds, whether we reveal it or conceal it. [123](#) Two other attributes of God and our basic values are always mentioned together in the Qur'an. These are justice and love, the latter including among other attributes the attributes of munificence, mercy, and forgiveness.

God is the best to judge [124](#) and is never unjust, [125](#) He does not deal unjustly with man; it is man that wrongs his own soul. [126](#) On the Day of Judgment, He will set up the scales of justice and even the smallest action will be taken into account. [127](#) He is swift in taking account, [128](#) and punishes with exemplary punishment. [129](#) He commands people to be just [130](#) and loves those who are just. [131](#)

For those who refrain from wrong and do what is right there is great reward, [132](#) and God suffers no reward to be lost. [133](#) People's good deeds are inscribed to their credit so that they may be requited with the best possible award. [134](#)

Divine punishment is equal to the evil done. It may be less, for, besides being most just, God is most loving, most merciful, and forgiver of all sins, [135](#) but it is never more. [136](#) Such is not, however, the case with His reward. He is most munificent and bountiful and, therefore, multiplies rewards for good deeds manifold. [137](#) These rewards are both of this life and the life hereafter. [138](#)

Islam, no less than Christianity, lays emphasis on the basic value of love. Whenever the Qur'an speaks of good Christians, it recalls their love and mercy. [139](#) God is loving, [140](#) and He exercises His love in creating, sustaining, nourishing, sheltering, helping, and guiding His creatures; in attending to their needs, in showing them grace, kindness, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness, when having done some wrong, they turn to Him for that; and in extending the benefits of His unlimited bounty to the sinners no less than to the virtuous. [141](#)

It is, therefore, befitting for man to be overflowing in his love for God [142](#) and be thankful to Him for His loving care. [143](#)

God is all good, free from all evil (quddus). [144](#) He is also the source of all good [145](#) and worthy of all praise. [146](#)

The Qur'an uses synonymous words for beauty and goodness (husn wa khair). The word radiance or light (Nur) is also used to signify beauty. God is the beauty (Nur) of the heavens and the earth [147](#) and His names (attributes) are also most beautiful (asma al-husna). [148](#) He is the creator possessed of the highest excellence. [149](#) He creates all forms and evolves them stage by stage (al-bari al-musawwir). [150](#)

Everything created by Him is harmonious and of great beauty. [151](#) Notice the beauty of trees and fields and the starry, heaven. [152](#) He is the best bestower of divine colour to man [153](#) who has been made in the best of moulds [154](#) and has been given the most beautiful shape. [155](#) How lovable is the beauty of animals whom you take out for grazing at dawn and bring home at eventime. [156](#)

Throughout history God has sent messages of great excellence, [157](#) and given the best of explanations in His revealed books. [158](#) Therefore, people must follow the best revealed book (ahsan al-kitab). [159](#) How beautiful is the story of Joseph given in the Scripture. [160](#)

God's judgment is of the highest excellence, [161](#) and belief in the Day of Judgment of extreme beauty. Of great excellence is the speech of the righteous that call to God, [162](#) for they invite people to Him by beautiful preaching [163](#) and say only those things which are of supreme excellence. [164](#)

The Qur'an lays the greatest stress on the beauty of action. It exhorts mankind to do the deeds of high value, [165](#) for God loves those who do excellent deeds. It wants men to return greetings with greetings of great excellence [166](#) and repel evil with what is best, [167](#) for in so doing they enhance the excellence of their own souls. [168](#)

Patience is graceful (sabr-i jamil) [169](#) and so is forgiveness. [170](#) Excellence of conduct shall not be wasted. [171](#) Those whose deeds are beautiful shall be given the highest reward [172](#) in this world and better still in the next. [173](#) They shall be given in paradise the most beautiful abodes and places for repose [174](#), and excellent provisions shall be made for them. [175](#)

God's Relation to Man

God created man's spirit out of nothing [176](#) and created mankind from this single spirit. He created his mate of the same kind and from the twain produced men and women in large numbers. [177](#)

From the point of view of personal history and perhaps also from the point of view of the evolutionary process, man is created for an appointed term [178](#) as a being growing gradually from the earth, [179](#) from an extract of certain elements of the earth, [180](#) then by receiving nourishment from the objects of

sustenance,[181](#) and being endowed with life.

Like all other living beings,[182](#) taking the form of water[183](#) or watery clay or adhesive mud[184](#) moulded into shape in due proportions[185](#) as a life_germ, a leech-like Clot[186](#) of congealed blood,[187](#) growing into a lump of flesh, further developing into bones clothed with flesh, and finally emerging as a new creation,[188](#) a human being in two sexes,[189](#) gifted with hearing and sight, intelligence, and_affectio,[190](#) destined to become God's vicegerent on earth,[191](#) decreed to die one day,[192](#) and destined to be raised again on the Day of Resurrection.[193](#)

The form in which he will be raised again he does not know.[194](#) The whole of mankind is one family, because it is the progeny of a single pair.[195](#)

In reality, man is the highest of all that is created, for God has created him in the most beautiful of moulds.[196](#) He is born with the divine spirit breathed into him,[197](#) even as for the Hindu, Greek, and Christian sages he is made in the image of God.

Human perfection, therefore, consists in being dyed in divine colour[198](#) _ in the fullest achievement and assimilation of divine attributes, for God desires nothing but the perfection of His light,[199](#) the perfection of these attributes in man.

The sole aim of man, therefore, is a progressive achievement of all divine attributes_all intrinsic values. God encompasses[200](#) and cherishes[201](#) mankind. He is always near man[202](#) nearer than his jugular vein.[203](#) He is with him wheresoever he may be and sees all that he does.[204](#) Whithersoever he turns, there is the presence of God, for He is all_pervading.[205](#) He listens to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Him.[206](#)

Soul

The soul of man is of divine origin, for God has breathed a bit of His own spirit into him.[207](#) It is an unfathomable mystery, a command of God, of the knowledge of which only a little has been communicated to man.[208](#) The conscious self or mind is of three degrees.

In the first degree it is the impulsive mind (nafs ammarah) which man shares with animals; in the second degree it is the conscientious or morally conscious mind (nafs lawwamah) struggling between good and evil and repenting for the evil done; in the third degree it is the mind perfectly in tune with the divine will, the mind in peace (nafs mutma'innah).[209](#)

Theory of Knowledge

Man alone has been given the capacity to use names for things[210](#) and so has been given the knowledge which even the angels do not possess.[211](#) Among men those who are granted wisdom are indeed granted great good.[212](#)

Understanding raises a man's dignity.[213](#) Those who do not use the intellect are like a herd of goats, deaf, dumb, and blind[214](#) no better than the lowest of beasts.[215](#) The ideal of the intellect is to know truth from error. As an ideal or basic value for man wisdom means the knowledge of facts, ideals, and values.

There are three degrees of knowledge in the ascending scale of certitude (i) knowledge by inference (*ilm al-yaqin*),[216](#) (ii) knowledge by perception and reported perception or observation (*ʿain al-yaqin*),[217](#) and (iii) knowledge by personal experience or intuition (*haqq al-yaqan*)[218](#) –a distinction which may be exemplified by my certitude of (1) fire always burns, (2) it has burnt John's fingers, and (3) it has burnt my fingers. Likewise, there are three types of errors: (i) the errors of reasoning, (ii) the errors of observation, and (iii) the errors of intuition.

The first type of knowledge depends either on the truth of its presupposition as in deduction, or it is only probable as in induction. There is greater certitude about our knowledge based on actual experience (observation or experiment) of phenomena.

The second type of knowledge is either scientific knowledge based on experience (observation and experiment) or historical knowledge based on reports and descriptions of actual experiences. Not all reports are trustworthy. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the character of the reporter. If he is a man of shady character, his report should be carefully checked.[219](#)

Scientific knowledge comes from the study of natural phenomena. These natural phenomena are the signs of God[220](#) symbols of the Ultimate Reality or expressions of the Truth, as human behaviour is the expression of the human mind.

Natural laws are the set ways of God in which there is no change.[221](#) The study of nature, of the heavens and the earth, is enlightening for the men of understanding.[222](#) The alternation of day and night enables them to measure serial time.[223](#)

They can know the ways of God, the laws of nature, by observing all things of varying colours – mountains, rivers, fields of corn, or other forms of vegetation, gardens of olives, date – palms, grapes, and fruit of all kinds, though watered with the same water, yet varying in quahty;[224](#) by studying the birds poised under the sky and thinking how they are so held up[225](#) and likewise by observing the clouds and wondering how they are made.[226](#)

Those who think can know God and can conquer all that is in the heavens and the earth[227](#) night and day, and the sun the moon, and the stars.[228](#) Knowledge of the phenomenal world which the senses yield is not an illusion, but a blessing for which we must be thankful.[229](#)

No less important for individuals and nations is the study of history. There is a measure and law in human society as much as in the whole cosmos.[230](#) The life of every nation as a collective body moves in time and passes through rises and falls, successes and reverses,[231](#) till its appointed period comes to an end.[232](#) For every living nation there are lessons in the history of the peoples that have lived in the

past.

It should, therefore, study the “days of God,” the momentous periods of history, the periods of divine favour and punishment, the periods of nations glory and decline.[233](#) People should traverse the earth to see what had been the end of those who neglected the laws of nature, the signs of God.[234](#) Those who do not guide others with truth and so do not act rightly, even though their days are lengthened, are gradually brought down by such means as they do not know.[235](#)

God never changes the condition of a people until they change it themselves, but once He wills it, there can be no turning it back.[236](#) Therefore, it is all the more important to take lessons from the past. In the stories about the past there are instructions for men of understanding.[237](#) Even the bare outlines of the rise and fall of nations, of great events of history, and their consequences provide object lessons for their guidance and warning.

Let them remember momentous events of the lives of such peoples and societies as the Israelites,[238](#) the Magians,[239](#) the Sabians,[240](#) the Romans,[241](#) the Christians,[242](#) the people of Saba,[243](#) the people of Madyan,[244](#) of `Ad,[245](#) of Thamud,[246](#) of Lot,[247](#) Companions of the Cave, the Seven Sleepers,[248](#) the Companions of al-Rass,[249](#) the Companions of the Rocky Tract,[250](#) and those of the Inscription,[251](#) and Gog and Magog;[252](#) prophets like Noah,[253](#) Abraham,[254](#) Isma`il,[255](#) Isaac,[256](#) Jacob,[257](#) David,[258](#) Solomon,[259](#) Joseph,[260](#) Moses,[261](#) Aaron,[262](#) Elisha,[263](#) Jonah,[264](#) Jesus;[265](#) and other personages great for their piety, power or wisdom, e.g., Mary,[266](#) the Queen of Saba,[267](#) Dhu al-Qarnain[268](#) (probably Cyrus of Iran), and the Pharaoh[269](#) (Thothmes I of Egypt), and Aesop.[270](#)

So much importance has been given to history that fifteen chapters of the Qur'an have been given the titles bearing historical significance.[271](#) Nor indeed has the study of contemporary history been ignored. The Qur'an refers to contemporaneous events such as the battle of Badr,[272](#) the battle of Tabuk,[273](#) the trade and commerce of the Quraish,[274](#) the hypocrisy of those who were enemies pretending to have embraced Islam, and the animosity of persons like abu Lahab and his wife.[275](#)

God reveals His signs not only in the experience of the outer world (afaq) and its historical vistas, but also through the inner experience of minds (anfus). Thus, the inner or personal experience is the third source of knowledge. Experience from this source gives the highest degree of certitude. Divine guidance[276](#) comes to His creatures in the first instance from this source. The forms of knowledge that come through this source are:

- (1) divinely-determined movement—movement determined by natural causes, as in the earth,[277](#) and the heavens,[278](#)
- (2) instinct, e.g., in the bee to build its cell,[279](#)
- (3) intuition or knowledge by the heart,[280](#)

(4) inspiration as in the case of Moses mother when she cast her tenderly suckled child into the river,[281](#) and

(5) revelation as in the case of all true prophets,[282](#) God's messengers.

Man's Power

God has subjected for the use of man, His vicegerent on the earth,[283](#) everything in the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon; day and night; winds and rain; the rivers and the seas and the ships that sail; pearls and corals; springs and streams, mountains, moisture, and pastures; and animals to ride and grain and fruit to eat.[284](#)

Free Will

God has given man the will to choose, decide, and resolve to do good or evil. He has endowed him with reason and various impulses so that by his own efforts he may strive and explore possibilities. He has also given him a just bias, a natural bias towards good.[285](#) Besides this He has given him guidance through revelation and inspiration, and has advised him to return evil with good,[286](#) to repel it with what is best (ahsan).[287](#) Hence if a man chooses to do good, it is because in giving him these benefits God has willed him to do so.

He never changes the gracious benefits which He has bestowed on a people until they change themselves.[288](#) Therefore, whatever good come from man or to man is ultimately from God.[289](#) On the other hand, his nature has a bias against evil, his reason is opposed to it, and he has been given a warning against it through the revealed books; therefore, whatever evil comes from him or to him is from his own soul.[290](#)

If God had willed He would have destroyed evil or would not have allowed it to exist, and if it were His will, the whole of mankind would have had faith, but that is not His plan?[291](#) His plan envisages man's free use of the divine attribute of power or freedom to choose[292](#) and take all judicious and precautionary measures to suit different situations.[293](#)

In the providential scheme man's role is not that of a blind, deaf, dumb and driven herd of goats.[294](#) So even his free choice of evil is a part of the scheme of things and no one will choose a way unto God, unless it fits into that scheme or is willed by God.[295](#)

There is no compulsion in faith. God's guidance is open to all who have the will to profit by it.[296](#) Whosoever wills, let him take the straight path to his Lord.[297](#) Truth is from God, then whosoever wills, let him believe it; and whosoever wills, let him reject it.[298](#) The prophets are sent to every nation[299](#) for guiding the whole of mankind. Their duty is to preach, guide, and inspire by persuasion and not to drive or force people to anything, nor to watch over their doings or dispose of their affairs.[300](#) They cannot

compel mankind against their will to believe.[301](#)

Death

Death of the body has been decreed by God to be the common lot of mankind.[302](#) Wherever a man is, death will overtake him even if he is in a tower strong and high.[303](#) No soul can die except by God's leave, the term being fixed as if by writing,[304](#) but every soul shall be given a taste of death[305](#) and in the end brought back to God[306](#) and duly judged on the Day of Judgment, and only he who is saved from fire will be admitted to paradise; it is then that he will have attained the goal of his life. As compared to that life, the life of this world is only a life of vainglory.[307](#)

Life after Death

There are some who think revival after death is far from their understanding[308](#) and ask how they shall be raised up after they have been reduced to bones and dust.[309](#)

Let them recall to mind that they were created out of nothing; first as dust, then a sperm, then a leech-like clot, then a piece of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, kept in a womb for an appointed term, then brought out as babes and then fostered so that they reached an age of full strength; and further, let them ponder over the fact that the earth is first barren and lifeless but when God pours down rain, it is stirred to life, it swells, and puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs.[310](#)

Let them understand that He who created the heavens and the earth is able to give life to the dead, for He has power over all things.[311](#)

God created man from the earth, into it shall he return and from it shall he be brought out again.[312](#) For everyone after death there shall be an interval (Barzakh)lasting till the Day of Resurrection.[313](#) On that day all the dead shall be raised up again.[314](#) Even as God produced the first creation, so shall He produce this new one.[315](#) We do not know in what form we shall be raised,[316](#) but as a parable[317](#) the Qur'an describes the Day of Resurrection as follows

On that day there shall be a dreadful commotion.[318](#) The heaven shall be rent asunder[319](#) and melted like molten brass.[320](#) The sun folded up and the moon darkened shall be joined together,[321](#) and the stars shall fall, losing their lustre.[322](#) In terrible repeated convulsions,[323](#) the earth shall be shaken to its depths and pounded into powder.[324](#) The mountains shall crumble to atoms flying hither and thither[325](#) like wool,[326](#) the oceans shall boil over, there shall be a deafening noise, and the graves shall be turned upside down.[327](#)

A trumpet shall be blown,[328](#) no more than a single mighty blast,[329](#) and there shall come forth every individual soul[330](#) and rush forth to the Lord[331](#) – the sinners as blackened,[332](#) blinded,[333](#) terror-smitten[334](#) with eyes cast down[335](#) and hearts come right up to their throats to choke;[336](#) and the

virtuous, happy and rejoicing.[337](#)

Then all except such as it will please God to exempt shall fall into a swoon.[338](#) Then a second trumpet shall be sounded, when, behold! they will all be standing and looking on. The earth will shine with the glory, of the Lord and the record of deeds shall be opened.[339](#)

All shall fully remember their past deeds.[340](#) Anyone who will have done an atom of good shall see it and anyone who will have done an atom of evil shall see it.[341](#) They shall also recognize one another,[342](#) though each will have too much concern of his own to be able to be of help to others.[343](#) They will have neither a protector, nor an intercessor except God[344](#) or those whom permission is granted by Him and whose word is acceptable to Him.[345](#)

They shall all now meet their Lord.[346](#) The scale of justice shall be set up, and not a soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least; and if there be no more than the weight of a mustard seed, it will be brought to account,[347](#) and all shall be repaid for their past deeds.[348](#) There will be a sorting out of the sinners and the righteous.[349](#) The sinners will meet a grievous penalty but it shall not be more than the retribution of the evil they will have wrought.[350](#)

All in proportion to their respective deeds and for a period longer and shorter shall go through a state of pain and remorse,[351](#) designated in the Qur'an as hell, and the righteous saved from hell shall enter a state of perpetual peace, designated as paradise.

Paradise has been described in the Qur'an by similitude[352](#) in terms of what average human beings value most: dignity, honour, virtue, beauty, luxury, sensuous pleasures, and social discourse—and hell in terms of what they all detest. People shall be sorted out into three classes.[353](#)

(1) Those who will be foremost and nearest to God, with whom God is well-pleased and who are well pleased with God. They shall have no fear, no grief, no toil, no fatigue, no sense of injury,[354](#) no vanity, and no untruth.[355](#) They shall enjoy honour and dignity, and, dressed in fine silks and brocade and adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls,[356](#) shall live forever in carpeted places. They will recline on thrones encrusted with gold and jewels facing one another for discourse.

They will be served by youths of perpetual freshness, handsome as pearls,[357](#) with goblets, beakers, and cups filled out of clear fountains of crystal white and delicious drinks free from intoxication and after-aches, which they will exchange with one another free of frivolity and evil taint.[358](#) They shall be given fruit and flesh of their own choice in dishes of gold to eat, and shall get more than all they desire.[359](#)

Their faces shall be beaming with the brightness of bliss.[360](#) They shall have as companions chaste women, their wives,[361](#) beautiful like pearls and corals.[362](#) Those who believe and whose families follow them in faith, to them God shall join their families, their ancestors, their spouses, and their offspring.[363](#) Rest, satisfaction, and peace will reign all round. This will be their great salvation;[364](#) but their greatest

reward, their supreme felicity, will consist in being in the presence of God.[365](#)

(2) Companions of the right hand who shall have their abode in another garden. They will sit on thrones on high in the midst of trees, having flowers, pile upon pile, in cool, long-extending shades by the side of constantly flowing water. They will recline on rich cushions and carpets of beauty,[366](#) and so will their pretty and chaste companions,[367](#) belonging to a special creation, pure and undefiled. They will greet one another with peace. They will also have all kinds of fruits, the supply of which will not be limited to seasons.[368](#) These are parables of what the righteous shall receive.[369](#)

(3) Companions of the left hand who shall be in the midst of a fierce blast of fire with distorted faces and roasted skin, neither alive nor dead,[370](#) under the shadows of black smoke. They shall have only boiling and fetid water to drink[371](#) and distasteful plants (zaqqum) to eat.[372](#) Nothing shall be there to refresh or to please.

The fire of hell shall, however, touch nobody except those most unfortunate ones who give the lie to truth.[373](#)

But for these similitudes, we cannot conceive the eternal, bliss and perpetual peace that awaits the righteous in the life hereafter,[374](#) nor can we conceive the agony which the unrighteous will go through. They will, however, remain in their respective states only so long as it is the will of God and is in accordance with His plans.[375](#)

Neither is the bliss of paradise the final stage for the righteous, nor is the agony of hell the final stage for the unrighteous. Just as we experience the glowing sunset, then evening, and then the full moon at night one after another, even so shall everyone progress whether in paradise or in hell stage by stage towards his Lord, and thus shall be redeemed in the end.[376](#)

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[2.](#) Ibid., X1II, 13.

[3.](#) Ibid., V, 49; XLVI, 12.

[4.](#) Ibid., II, 106; XIII, 39; XVI, 101.

[5.](#) Ibid., X, 1.

[6.](#) Ibid., III, 7.

[7.](#) Ibid., II, 186; XXXI, 30

[8.](#) Ibid., II, 115; VI,.62; XX, 111; XXXI, 30; XXXII, 2; LV, 27; CXII, 2

[9.](#) Ibid., LVII, 3.

[10.](#) Ibid., VI, 103.

[11.](#) Ibid., XXX,. 28.

[12.](#) Ibid., XXIV, 35.

[13.](#) Ibid., XXX, 27.

[14.](#) Ibid., XXX, 28.

[15.](#) Ibid.. XIV, 4; XLIII, 3.

[16.](#) Ibid., LIX, 24

[17.](#) Ibid., II, 255; XL, 65.

- [18.](#) *Ibid.*, 1VII, 3.
- [19.](#) *Ibid.*, II, 163; V, 75; VI, 19; XVI, 22, 51; XXIII, 91; XXXVII, 1–5; XXXVIII, 65–68; LVII, 3; CXII, 1–4.
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- [23.](#) *Ibid.*, IV, 40; V, 45; VII, 29, 167; X, 109; XIII, 6; XVI, 90; XXI, 47; XXIV, 39; LVII, 25.
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- [26.](#) *Ibid.*, II, 255; XX, 111.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, XXIV, 36.
- [28.](#) *Ibid.*, II, 163; III, 18; VI, 19; XVI, 22, 51; XXIII, 91; XXXVII, 4; XL, 2; CXII, 2.
- [29.](#) *Ibid.*, CXII, 1.
- [30.](#) *Ibid.*, XVI, 51; CXII, 4.
- [31.](#) *Ibid.*, VI, 22–24, 136–37; XXIII, 92; LIX, 23.
- [32.](#) *Ibid.*, XXIII, 91–92.
- [33.](#) *Ibid.*, V, 75–76.
- [34.](#) *Ibid.*, II, 116; VI, 100; X, 68; XIX, 35; XXIII, 91; XXXVII, 151, 157.
- [35.](#) *Ibid.*, CXII, 3.
- [36.](#) *Ibid.*, VI, 100–01.
- [37.](#) *Ibid.*, XXV, 3.
- [38.](#) *Ibid.*, XVII, 22, 39; XXI, 22; XXIII, 117; XXV, 68; XXVI, 213; XXXVII, 35–36; LI, 51; LII, 43.
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- [40.](#) *Ibid.*, V, 75.
- [41.](#) *Ibid.*, XLIII, 19.
- [42.](#) *Ibid.*, X, 4; XXX, 11.
- [43.](#) *Ibid.*, XCVI, 1.
- [44.](#) *Ibid.*, XXX, 27.
- [45.](#) *Ibid.*, XXXV, 1.
- [46.](#) *Ibid.*, XLI, 11.
- [47.](#) *Ibid.*, XXI, 30.
- [48.](#) *Ibid.*, VII, 54; X, 3; XXXI, 10; XXXII, 4; LVII, 4.
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- [50.](#) *Ibid.*, LXX, 4.
- [51.](#) *Ibid.*, LIV, 50.
- [52.](#) *Ibid.*, XVI, 77.
- [53.](#) *Ibid.*, VI, 73; XIX, 35.
- [54.](#) *Ibid.*, VI, 34.
- [55.](#) *Ibid.*, VI, 115.
- [56.](#) *Ibid.*, VII, 54; LXXXVII, 2–3.
- [57.](#) *Ibid.*, VII, 54; XVI, 12.
- [58.](#) *Ibid.*, III, 83; XIII, 15.
- [59.](#) *Ibid.*, XXXVI, 38–39.
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- [63.](#) [Ibid.](#), XXIII, 18.
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- [65.](#) [Ibid.](#), XVI, 77.
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- [69.](#) [Ibid.](#), CXIII, I.
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- [71.](#) [Ibid.](#), XIII, 3.
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- [301.](#) Ibid., X, 99.
- [302.](#) Ibid., LVI, 60.
- [303.](#) Ibid., IV, 7 8.
- [304.](#) Ibid., III, 145.
- [305.](#) Ibid., III, 145; XXI, 35
- [306.](#) Ibid., XXIX, 57.
- [307.](#) Ibid., III 185
- [308.](#) Ibid., 1, 3.
- [309.](#) Ibid., XVI, 38; XVII, 49; XIX, 66–72; XXLI. : 1: XLVI. 33; 1. 20–22, 41–44; LXXV, 1–15; LXXIX, 6–12; LXXXVI. 5–8.
- [310.](#) Ibid., XXII, 5.
- [311.](#) Ibid., X1VI, 33.
- [312.](#) Ibid., XX, 55.
- [313.](#) Ibid., XXIII, 100.
- [314.](#) Ibid., XVI, 38–39.
- [315.](#) Ibid., XXI, 104.
- [316.](#) Ibid., LVI, 61.
- [317.](#) Ibid., XXX, 27, 58.
- [318.](#) Ibid., LXXIX, 6–9.
- [319.](#) Ibid., XXV, 25, LXXIII, 18.
- [320.](#) Ibid., LXX, 8.
- [321.](#) Ibid., LXXV, 7–9; IXXXI, 1.
- [322.](#) Ibid., LXXXI, 2.
- [323.](#) Ibid., XCIX, 1.
- [324.](#) Ibid., LXXXIX; 21.
- [325.](#) Ibid., XGVII 88; III, 9–10; LVI, 4–6; LXXVII 10.
- [326.](#) Ibid., LXX, 9.
- [327.](#) Ibid., LXXXII, 4; XCIX, 2.
- [328.](#) Ibid., XX, 102; XXVII, 87; 1, 20.
- [329.](#) Ibid., XXXVI, 29
- [330.](#) Ibid., XXXI, 28.
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- [332.](#) Ibid., LXXX, 40–41.
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- [335.](#) Ibid., LXXIX, 9.
- [336.](#) Ibid., XL, 18.
- [337.](#) Ibid., LXXX, 38–39.

- [338.](#) Ibid., XXXIX, 68.
- [339.](#) Ibid., XXXIX, 69.
- [340.](#) Ibid., VI, 28; LXXXIX, 23.
- [341.](#) Ibid., XCIX, 6–8.
- [342.](#) Ibid., X, 45.
- [343.](#) Ibid., LXXX, 37.
- [344.](#) Ibid., VI, 51.
- [345.](#) Ibid., XX, 109.
- [346.](#) Ibid., XIX, 95.
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- [348.](#) Ibid., XXXVI, 54.
- [349.](#) Ibid., XXXVII, 21; LXXVII, 13–14.
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- [353.](#) Ibid., IVI, 7–56.
- [354.](#) Ibid., VII, 43; XXXV, 33–35; LXV, 46–48.
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- [358.](#) Ibid., XIX, 61–63; LII, 23.
- [359.](#) Ibid., XLII, 22; 1, 35.
- [360.](#) Ibid., LXXXIII, 24.
- [361.](#) Ibid., XLIII, 70.
- [362.](#) Ibid., LV, 56–58.
- [363.](#) Ibid., XIII, 23.
- [364.](#) Ibid., V, 122.
- [365.](#) Ibid., 1, 35; LIV, 55.
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- [367.](#) Ibid., LV, 70–77.
- [368.](#) Ibid., V, 122; IX, 20–21, 7–2; XV, 45–48; XXXVII, 40–49; XXXIX, 20; LII, 17–24; LV, 6–78; LVI, 10–39, 88–91.
- [369.](#) Ibid., XLVII, 15.
- [370.](#) Ibid., XX, 74.
- [371.](#) Ibid., XIV, 16–17.
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- [373.](#) Ibid., XCII, 15–16.
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