Einstein’s Paradox: God’s Omniscience and Man’s Freewill

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Article

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This article is a developed version of chapter 12 of my book 'Ultimate Questions in Philosophy of Religion'.

Summary

Determinism and free will is one of the oldest philosophical issues, perhaps even older than the history of philosophy itself. Absolute determinism voids man's responsibility and hence not only does it contradict our common sense, but also voids the purpose, because of which the Prophets were sent. Absolute free authority of man – to make him act independent from God is impossible and is contrary to the doctrine of Monotheism in Acts. The solution, therefore, is a matter in–between.

There are also two main problems opposing man's free will:

1) God's Omniscience and His foreknowledge of things.

2) God's Omnipotence and His Divine Decree and Act encompassing all that exists.

This article is an attempt to reconcile between God's Omniscience and Omnipotence with man's free will. Determinism in this article is not meant for causative determinism. Although we disagree with determinism, we confirm causative determinism.

This article will also analyse Quranic statements as well as Prophetic Narrations on the issue of determinism and free will.

Introduction

A glance at the world around and within us we can certainly see the Fingerprints (Signs = *Ayaat*) of God on all that exists, from the most minuscule subatomic particle to the macro clusters of galaxies. It is for this reason that scientists who study the natural phenomena are expected to be the first to observe the fingerprints of God and hence acknowledge His existence. Surprisingly, this is not always the case. Why?

Among the many reasons that contribute to the agnostic approach of scientists are some philosophical loopholes they encounter and fail to discover satisfactory answers for. The topic of this chapter is one of the very famous and the most important examples of those ambiguities.

Albert Einstein (1879–1955) was the most celebrated genius scientist of the 20th century. His general theory of relativity is considered the most accurately tested theory known to science. Admitting to the theory of the expansion of the universe, he realized that the universe must have a beginning. If the universe had a beginning then it must have a 'Beginner'. Nevertheless, when he was visited by some priests and rabbis to congratulate him on his discovery of God he confessed that he was still in denial that God was personal. Explaining the dilemma that led him to this denial, he raised the paradox of God's omnipotence and omniscience on the one hand and man's responsibility for his choices on the other:

"*If this being is omnipotent then every occurrence, including every human action, every human thought, and every human feeling and aspiration is also His work; how is it possible to think of holding man responsible for their deeds and thoughts before such as Almighty Being? In giving out punishment and rewards He would, to a certain extent, be passing judgment on Himself. Is this compatible with the goodness and righteousness ascribed to Him?*"[1]

Sadly, none of the clergies Einstein encountered ever gave him a satisfactory answer to his objection. Typically, they responded by saying that God has not yet revealed the answer. They encouraged him to endure patiently and blindly trust the All-Knowing God! Regrettably, Einstein, like many other scientists, ruled out the existence of a personal God.

This chapter aims at solving both facets of Einstein's paradox and proving that unlike the above claim, God has indeed revealed the answer with the Seal of His Prophets; Prophet Muhammad (S) through the teachings of his Pure Family (as).

The Argument

Einstein's paradox stems from one of the most ancient and fundamental philosophical arguments, namely whether or not man's behaviours, thoughts and feelings are driven by something called free will or everything has been predestined and determined and hence man has no choice over his behaviour. The first doctrine in its extreme sense is called *libertarianism* opposing the latter which is called *determinism,* fatalism or predestination. This paradox is believed to be older than philosophy itself.

The Quantum theory explains in principle how to calculate what will happen in any experiment involving physical or biological systems, and how to understand how our world works. We observe determinism in nature based on physical laws.

The time for sunrise and sunset is predetermined and hence can be precisely and with no error predicted. We can, for instance, determine the exact time of a solar eclipse on 25 November 2030 in which 80% of the Sun will be covered in Australia. This foreknowledge leads us to the fact that determinism rules in the physical world.

The argument, therefore, is that are we like deterministic machines with no real freedom of action or do we in fact have some *elbow room*[2], some real choice in our behaviour? Are we mechanisms that follow all of the same deterministic rules as inanimate objects? Are we mechanical components of a mechanical universe, or is there a reality in our feeling of free will, a multitude of behavioural choices to select among?

The question that this article is dealing with is 'can we predetermine human behaviour' and if his behaviour is foreknown whether by other humans or a divine knowledge, how can we hold him responsible for his/her action?

Nothing has been more terrible for humans throughout history than admitting that his destiny is predetermined and he has no choice in it. Freedom has been and will always be the most pleasant word for mankind. Hence, nothing can disturb his mind knowing that all his actions are subdued by a superpower.

This is why the issue of determinism versus free will has always been an issue of concern for philosophers and thinkers throughout history.

Scope of the Paradox

Although we named the above paradox, Einstein's paradox, it is, in fact, one of the most common human problems. Laymen and scientists, atheists and theists all encounter this paradox and the way they treat it shapes the way they live their lives. The validity of both free will and determinism play a vital role for people and scientists in all different walks of life. The shadow of this argument covers the lifestyle of an average man on the street to psychology, sociology, ethics, religion, law and philosophy.

Many people typically blame destiny for their failures. When they fail an exam, a marriage or business, the self is usually the last, if at all, to be blamed. The concept of determinism or free will plays a central role in our thinking about the world particularly in our apportioning praise and blame.

Psychology

Psychologists have a dilemma in explaining human behaviour through psychological principles. On the one hand, if psychology is a science of behaviour, then there should be laws allowing the prediction of behaviour, just as there are gravitational laws to predict the behaviour of a falling object. On the other hand, objects have been raised by individuals who believe that humans control their own behaviours and possess free will.

The behaviourists, for instance, are the most obvious proponents of determinism, dating back to Jon B. Watson who made one of the most deterministic assertions ever. He wrote in 1930: "*Give me a dozen healthy infants... and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take anyone at*

random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select–doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief, and yes, even beggar man and thief."[3]

Other psychologists like William James, who was interested in religion and believed in free will, was reluctant to abandon the concept that behaviours were not free. At one point, he suggested that mind and body operated in tandem, whereas on another occasion he concluded that they interacted. Clearly, James struggled with the issue, and like others was unable to resolve it.

Ethics

The validity of free will has also been a subject of considerable debating among ethical philosophers. It would appear that a system of ethics must imply free will, for the denial of the ability to choose a course of action would seem to negate the possibility of moral judgment. A person without moral judgment is not responsible for his or her actions. In an attempt to resolve this problem ethical philosophers have taken a great variety of position, ranging from absolute determinism to absolute libertarianism.[4]

The following is a typical argument presented by determinist ethicists to denote moral responsibility:

Premise 1: Every action is either caused or uncaused (i.e. a random occurrence).

Premise 2: If the action is caused, then that action was not chosen freely and the person who performed that action is not morally responsible for what he/she has done.

Premise 3: If an action is uncaused (i.e. is a random occurrence), then the person who performed that action is not morally responsible for what he/she has done.

Thus, we are not morally responsible for what we do.

The belief that man's feelings, thoughts and behaviours are all forced on him by one or more determinants has changed the concept of crimes and bad behaviour to be seen as a symptom of illness which requires treatment not punishment. Thus, prisons and jails must be abolished and locked hospital wards substituted for them as needed.[5]

Law

Determinism has its impact on court cases as well. The most famous American trial lawyer of the 20th century, Clarence Darrow, was engaged to defend murderers who had confessed to being guilty. With the following speech he convinced every jury that his clients were not morally responsible for their actions and hence they don't deserve the death penalty.

- *"Everyone knows that the heavenly bodies move in certain paths in relation to each other with seeming consistency and regularity which we call (physical) law. ... No one attributes freewill or motive*

to the material world. Is the conduct of man or the other animals any more subject to whim or choice than the action of the planets? ... We know that man's every act is induced by motives that led or urged him here or there; that the sequence of cause and effect runs through the whole universe, and is nowhere more compelling than with man."

● *"(Man's) legs are levers with which he walks. His back is a lever, by which he is able to lift things, through the contraction of the muscles. His arms are levers which he uses in all the activities of life. There is nothing about him that anybody can find ... which isn't mechanical."*

● *"The principal thing to remember is that we are all the products of heredity and environment; that we have little or no control, as individuals, over ourselves, and that criminals are like the rest of us in that regard."*

Politicians

Politicians and particularly tyrants throughout history have taken advantage of determinism to justify their horrible acts as the will of God. Harsh tyrants who oppressed the masses fooled their subjects with the notion of determinism, i.e. all what happens is preordained by God and man must submit himself to His Will and be pleased with it.

Yazid; the second ruthless Umayyad ruler when confronted by Imam Sajjad (as) after the tragedy of Karbala in a cunning manner said to the Imam: " *How did you see the act of God against your father?!"*[6]

Determinism was so promoted by the Umayyad regime that it was said: "Determinism (*Jabr*) *and assimilating*[7] *are Umayyad and Justice and Monotheism are Alawis*[8]*."*

Theology

Undoubtedly, the paradox of God's Omniscience and Omnipotence and Man's freedom of choice is a basic theological argument. Thus, all metaphysicians; Muslims, Christians and others attempt in dealing with the issue.

1) Christianity

Determinism in Christianity begins with the story of the creation of Adam and Eve as described in the book of Genesis:

"And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:9–13).

Thus, from the biblical point of view the story begins since the time that Adam and Eve were created in

the Garden of Eden. God said, "Adam!" Adam said, "Eve." And, Eve said, "The serpent."! Thus began the pattern of blaming others.

Because morality, duty and the avoidance of sin are also basic elements in Christian teachings, how, it is asked, can people be morally responsible once predestination is accepted? Many attempts have been made by theologians to explain this paradox. Saint Augustine (350–430), the great Father and Doctor of the Church, firmly believed in predestination, holding that only those elected by God would attain salvation; no one however, knows who is among the elect, and therefore all should lead God–fearing, religious lives.

The celebrated French bishop and pulpit orator; Jacques Bossuet (1627–1704) offered another approach, which became widely held; he stated that free will and divine foreknowledge are certain truths that must be accepted even though they are not logically connected. (Extracted from Encyclopedia of Encarta) 9

2) Islam

The paradox of God's Omniscience and Omnipotence and man's freedom of choice can be found in the Holy Quran too.

The first category of the *Aayat* of the Quran seems to show man's freedom of choice as the source of his actions such as:

"Behold! We have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving." (***76:3***)

The second category is those that seem to hold God as the source of man's actions:

"Those who deny our signs are deaf and dumb in darkness. Whom God wills He leads astray, and whom He wills He puts on a straight path." (***6:39***)

Finally the third group of the *Ayaat* are those that bring the two thoughts together:

"Behold! This is a reminder. Then, whosoever will, let him choose a way unto his Lord. But you will not (***so will***) ***unless wills God."*** (***76:29–30***)

The above paradoxical verses do not imply that there is an inconsistency in the Quran. The Holy Quran itself states: ***"Do they not ponder on the Quran? If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much incongruity*** (***ikhtilaf***)***."***(***4:82***). Thus, Muslim scholars have endeavoured in finding a satisfactory reconciliation between the above categories of the Ayaat.

Abu–Ishaq Esfrayeni (who believed in free will) met Qadhi Abdul–Jabbar (who was a determinist) and told him: "Glory be to God Who is free from committing a sin". Meaning as a determinist you hold God responsible for all sins. Qadhi turned around and told him without hesitation: "Glory be to God that

nothing happens in His kingdom but what He Wills."!

Historically, Sunni scholars belong to either of the two main theological schools of thoughts, i.e. Mu'tazili and Ash'ari. The Mu'tazili school was the founder of the full power (*Tafwidh*) of man and his freedom of choice in his behaviour, whereas Ash'ari school on the other hand were determinists (*Jabri*). To them, everything including man's actions are preordained by God and man, although he assumes he has the freedom of choice, in reality he has no authority or choice.

The adherents of every school consider the verses of the Quran that is contradictory to their doctrine as ambiguous and hence interpret them on the basis of the verses that seem compatible with their thoughts. It must be noted that since the reign of al-Mutawakkil; the Abasid King the school of Ash'ari was declared the official school of the Islamic state. Thus, the mainstream Sunni scholars of the past and present are Ash'ari and hence determinists in their thought.[10]

The Shi'a theologians, however, following the teachings of Ahul-Bayt denote both absolute determinism and free will and suggested a path in between. It is repeatedly narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) to have said: *"Neither determinism (Jabr), nor full authority (Tafwidh), rather a matter in between."*[11]

The author of this text is a firm believer of this approach and considers this doctrine the most satisfactory answer to the paradox.

Solution of Einstein's Paradox

The reality is that modern philosophy has failed to suggest any convincing answer to the paradox and in the end they have reached the same conclusion as the average man on the street if not worse than that, as some suggest in the end that we have no real behavioural choices, but we continue to behave as if we do!

Or to say: God has not revealed the answer to us yet. Grin and bare it until I solve the paradox for you. It is for this reason that the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt, whilst explaining the topic in a simple language, have discouraged the general public not to indulge in it.

Problems of Determinism

1. Determinism is a futile attempt against man's common sense. Any healthy human feels strongly that he has the power of choice. No one can deny that man, by his very instinct, finds that in many aspects of his life he has a behavioural choice. You did not have to read this article and you do not have to. It is absolutely your choice whether to continue with the rest of this paper or not. Numerous courses of action are undoubtedly our choice, denying which is the denial of a self-evident knowledge.

"Beyond doubt we possess a certain power of choice

You cannot deny the plain evidence of the (*inward*) *sense.*

One never says 'Come' to a stone

How should any one request a brickbat to keep faith.

One never says to a human being, 'Hey, fly!'

Or 'Come, O blind man, and look at me!'[12]

2. If all people have , is an illusion of behavioural choice, if people are just machines behaving in the only way they can, then what about personal responsibility? How can man be chastised or rewarded for his action if he has no choice in how he behaves?

Imam Ali (as) in response to a fatalist said: " *Do you think the One* (*God*) *Who prohibited you* (*from a sin*) *is getting smart on you*!"[13]

The Imam means if we did not have the power to refrain from sinning, God would not prohibit us from it.

If man like inanimate objects has no authority to choose, then why is it that we blame man for his actions not the stone?

Rumi; the universally renowned mystic poetically says:

Do you ever say to a stone, 'Come tomorrow; and if you don't come, I will give your bad behaviour the punishment it deserves'?[14]

Determinists, who cannot deny the destructive moral effect of their doctrine on society, respond to the question by claiming that we hold people responsible for their actions because we know from historical experience that this is an effective means to make people behave in a socially acceptable way!

They argue that "*people who break the rules set by society and get punished may be behaving in the only way they can, but if we did not hold them accountable for their actions, people would behave even worse than they do with the threat of punishment*!"[15]

The holder of this opinion has unconsciously contradicted himself. If people's behaviour is predestined, the rules of punishment and rewards should not make any difference in what is preordained for them to do.

Thus, the rules would be unable to make man act any better or worse, he would rather act –according to determinism– as it is preordained for him.

To rebuke the dogma of determinism, Rumi presents his argument in the form of a fascinating tale. The story is about a fatalist who tries to justify his evil deed by divine providence and the practical answer he

receives:

A certain man was climbing up a tree and vigorously scattering the fruit in the manner of thieves.

The owner of the orchard came along and said (to him), O rascal, where is your reverence for God? What are you doing?

He replied: If a servant of God eats from God's orchard the dates which God has bestowed upon him as a gift,

Why do you vulgarly blame (him)? Stinginess at the table of the All-Rich Lord!

O Aybak[16]*, said he, 'fetch the rope, that I may give my answer to Bu'l-Hasan (to this fine fellow)'*

Then at once he bound him tightly to the tree and thrashed him hard on the back and legs with a cudgel.

He (the thief) cried, 'Pray, have some reverence for God! Thou art killing me miserable who am innocent.'

He answered, 'With God's cudgel this servant of His is soundly beating the back of another servant.

'Tis God's cudgel, and the back and sides belong to Him:

I am (only) the slave and instrument of His command.'

He (the thief) said, 'O cunning knave, I make a recantation of Necessitarianism: there is free-will, there is free-will, (thee is) free-will.'[17]

Fallacy of Determinists

The common mistake of determinists is that they assume free will is equal to chaos and if free will is accepted then people become totally unpredictable and chaos reigns. Similarly, the assumption is if the action is caused then the action was not chosen freely. Thus, the moral determinists argued that the action is either caused hence determinism and no moral responsibility, or uncaused and in this case again there is no moral responsibility due to chaotic situation.

The answer to the fallacy is that every action is certainly caused. One of the causes of human actions is his free will and the ability to choose a certain way he wishes. Thus, still he is morally responsible for his choices.

Fallacy of Darrow's Argument (in the court of law)

If Leopold and Loeb were not morally responsible for their behaviour, it was because of what others had done to them. But these others, in turn, were not morally responsible for what they had done, since they

were the product of what had earlier been done to them. And so on, and so on. The argument works like a line of dominos; it is – in effect – the domino theory of moral non–responsibility. If someone is to be regarded as not morally responsible for what he does because he is the product of someone else's actions, then, ultimately, no one is responsible for anything he/she does.

It is interesting to note that one of Darrow's biographers' reports that although Darrow constantly insisted that his clients did not deserve blame, he himself was a very vain and proud man who thought that he himself, deserved high praise. If no one is responsible for their actions, then why should Darrow be responsible and praised for his cunning presentation? That biographer comments that Darrow never quite saw, or admitted, this inconsistency in his own views!

Free will and Epistemic Determinism (The problem of foreknowledge)

Epistemic determinism was the philological paradox that Einstein was trapped in and failed. It is one of the primary problems leading to determinism. The problem of the foreknowledge exists whether the person is an atheist or theist.

The following is the standard argument for epistemic determinism. It alleges to show that foreknowledge is incompatible with free will.

Secular version

- *If X knows that you are going to do* (*some action*) *A, then you must do A.*
- *But if you must do A, then you have no choice in the matter.*
- *Thus if X knows* (*beforehand*) *what you are going to do, then you have no free choice.*
- *Foreknowledge is incompatible with free will*.

Religious version

– God is Omniscient, i.e. God knows everything (that is true) about the past, the present, and the future. In addition (it has been claimed), God has given human beings free will so that human beings can choose between good and evil.

– But if God knows beforehand what you are going to choose, then you must choose what God knows you are going to choose. If you must choose what God knows you are going to choose, then you are not truly choosing; you may be deliberate, but eventually you are going to choose exactly as God knew you would. There is only one possible upshot of your deliberating.

– Thus if God has foreknowledge, then you do not have free will; or, equivalently, if you have free will, then God does not have foreknowledge.

As you can see epistemic determinism remains a puzzle whether one is a theist or an atheist.

A number of Christians have accepted the argument, and in doing so, have proceeded to live their lives in a different manner than many others, including the majority of Christians. Thus, none of the clergies Einstein encountered ever gave him a satisfactory answer.

A famous poem is related to Omar Khayyam; the famous Iranian poet of the 11th and 12th century A.D. who belonged to the school of Ash'aris:

I drink wine and whoever is my mate
My drinking is easy for him
God knew my drinking from before the creation
Thus, if I don't drink, His foreknowledge is ignorance![18]

Fallacy of Epistemic Determinism

In order for us to discover the fallacy of epistemic determinism let me place their argument in a real example. I shall discuss it with both the knowledge about the past as well as the future.

1. Knowledge about the past

We know that Imam Ali (as) was assassinated by Ibn Muljam in the year 40 AH.[19]

Let's suppose a group of people today argue about the murder of Imam Ali (as).

Mr. A says: It was Shimr.

Mr. B says: It was Ma'moon.

Mr. C says: It was Ibn Muljam.

Does Mr. C's asserting a truth today somehow or other 'FORCE' Ibn Muljam to kill Imam Ali (as)?! Obviously not!

2. Knowledge about the future

For the foreknowledge about the future I will mention an example from a natural law which is based on exceptional evidences such as solar or lunar eclipses and then we will examine an example from human life.

– Today (10th August 2001) I ask: "When will be the next lunar eclipse in Australia?"

Mr. A says: 12th October

Mr. B says: 30th October

Mr. C says: 25th December

The correct answer is what Mr. B has said. But will Mr. B's asserting a lunar eclipse somehow or other 'FORCE' the eclipse to occur? Obviously not!

–We have a historical fact that: "Imam Ali (as)was murdered by Ibn Muljam in the year 40 AH."

Now in the year 10 AH I ask: Who will kill Imam Ali (as)?

Mr. J answers: Shimr.

Mr. M answers: Ibn Muljam.

Mr. D answers: Jo'dah.

Will Mr. M's asserting a truth in the year 10 AH somehow or other 'FORCE' Ibn Muljam to kill Imam Ali (as)?! Of course not! The most one may say is that the one who knows about the atrocity is morally responsible to inform the victim about the plot. In terms of man's accountability for his action, God has removed this objection from Himself by sending numerous Prophets and Messengers warning man for the consequences of his actions.

Therefore, the future will be just what it is going to be. None of us can change the future. But that does not mean that we do not have free will. We cannot change the future from **what it is going to be**. But we **can** change the future from what **it might have been**.

In other words, man has the freedom of choice to choose a certain pattern of behaviour. His behaviour is governed by the law of causality. Among many causes for his actions is his free will. However, if Mr. A in any way discovers the causes of Mr. B's action –including the choice that he will exercise– it does not conclude that A was the cause of B's action, nor does it mean B did not have any choice. Therefore, **foreknowledge about an occurrence is not the cause of it**.

Conclusion

● Foreknowledge no more 'forces' the future to be a certain way, than true reports in history books 'force' the past to have been a certain way.

● Free will is compatible with believing in an Omniscient God.

● Man is determined to have free will and hence, responsible for his/her deeds.

Religious determinists still hold on to a proof called the Divine Decree and Measure (*al–Qadha and al–*

Qadar)[20]. I shall deal with this proof, also, later in this article.

Description of the Behaviour of Different Beings

Inanimate Objects (Inorganic Objects)

Inanimate objects from a tiny atom to the super-giant galaxies also behave in a set systematic manner. The natural laws are therefore descriptive not prescriptive. That means we cannot defy for instance, the law of gravity. We can only describe it. The Prescriber (God) has ordained it in the way it is. To this end, unless external factors disturb the motion of electrons they continue their motion. Thus, quantum physics enables us to predict all natural phenomena in nature. It is for this reason that all philosophers agree that determinism overshadows nature.

Plants

The kingdom of plants is a bit more different than that of inanimate objects. Of the characteristics of plants is adaptation to new environments, which implies the accommodation of a living organism to its environment. The roots of a tree change their way when encountering underground obstacles.

Animals

Free will becomes more vivid when we arrive at the kingdom of animals. Without any external factors involved a bird can fly in various directions. The animal behaviour is however, limited to its instincts. Yet, some animals can be trained to act against their instinct. A wild lion will be trained to play various games in a circus by the order of the trainer.

Mankind

The scope of the variety of behaviours can be observed more in human actions. Nature has a set path of being; plants can adjust themselves with their new environment. Animals have a wider realm of behaviour yet limited at the border of their instincts. It is only human behaviour that can go beyond his instinct and be governed by his intellect and mind.

Therefore, human behaviour is different to physical objects in that physical objects have a set up behavioural pattern which, they cannot disobey. Fire burns and water inevitably cools it down. But human behaviour is sometimes, like animals, governed by instinct and at other times by his intellect based on his calculations and preferences. To this end, it is a self-evident knowledge that man enjoys a kind of free will that other creatures lack[21].

Free will and the Problem of Divine Destiny

Fate or destiny is an event (or a course of events) that will inevitably happen in the future. All monotheistic religions somehow believe in Divine Destiny in that God– being the sole Ruler of the worlds– so orders all events within the universe that the end for which it was created may be realized. In Catholicism they prefer to call it Divine Providence 22. In Islam it is called *al–Qadha* (Divine Decree) and *al–Qadar* (Divine Measure).

The idea of Fate as a power in the world was also discussed amongst ancient Greek philosophers in an attempt to find a cause for events which appeared to follow no definite law. The other option would be chance or luck.

In the beginning of this chapter we mentioned that Einstein's paradox had two facets. On the one hand, he had a problem with the Omniscience of God and His foreknowledge about things happening. On the other hand, he raised the question of God's Omnipotence and its paradox with man's free will.

The main problem of man's free will is the difficulty of its reconciliation with the notion of Divine Destiny; i.e. His Omnipotence. If all events are eventually related to God and are His Acts, if nothing occurs in the universe save by the Will of God, then how could man still enjoy a free will?

This paradox is more complicated than the paradox of foreknowledge and free will. It is also a paradox that all those who believe in an Omnipotent God face. The question, therefore, is given the belief in the Divine Destiny are we not helpless in the face of Destiny? If God has a decree on all matters, how could man possibly will against the Divine Decree? If he is unable to do so, then how could we still believe in man's free will?

Definition of Divine Decree

I propose that the answer to this paradox also rests under the principle of *'neither determinism nor free will, but a matter in between*.'

Before we embark on the answer, we need to first understand the meaning of Divine Decree and Measure (*al–Qadha* & *al–Qadar*) in the Islamic doctrine.

The term '*al–Qada'* literally means 'decree'. A judge in Arabic is called '*al–Qadhi'* because he is the one who issues the decree to finalize a dispute between two people. The term '*al–Qadar'* means 'measure and specification of something'.

Everything that exists, exists due to the Divine Decree (*al–Qadha*) and the way it exists in terms of its shape, form and limitations is due to the Divine Measure (*al–Qadar*).

Types of Divine Decree and Measure

The Divine Decree and Measure is either in creation or in legislation. The first is when God wills to create something.

"The Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it: Be"– and it is." (***2:117***)

The latter is with regards to His legislations and laws. Such as His laws with reference to respecting parents:

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be dutiful to your parents." (***17:23***)

The Divine Decree in creation is also either His foreknowledge about things or His Actions. The Divine Decree in action is either irrevocable or revocable.

The Solution of the Paradox of Divine Destiny

The irrevocable divine decree in action is such as the decree of 'death' for all contingent beings. ***"All that is on it*** (***earth***) ***is perishable."***(***55:26***) According to this divine decree all of mankind must inevitably die. Man is destined to die and he has no choice on that.

However, the date, the place and the manner of death are all part of the revocable decree of God. That means man with his good or evil actions can postpone or hasten his destiny of how and when to die. For instance, one of the effects of adultery, or cutting the bonds of relation is that they will hasten the death of the sinner. On the other hand, keeping the bond of relation, paying charity and supplication may postpone the death of a person. This doctrine in Islamic theology is called '*al-Bada*' (to change a decree to another decree). The Holy Quran states:

"Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (***what He wills***)***. And with Him is the Mother of the Book."*** (***13:39***)

According to the above Ayah, Allah has two types of decrees; one in His Book of Blots and Confirm (*al-Mahw wal-Ithbat*) and the other is the Preserved Book (*al-Louhul-Mahfouz*) or the Mother of the Book (*Ommol-Ketab*). The irrevocable decrees belong to the Preserved Book, whereas the revocable decrees are part of the Blots and Confirms Book. Thus, man with his actions can change a revocable divine Decree.

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as): *"Surely those who die due to their sins are more than those who die for their normal death. And those who live due to their righteous deeds are more than those who live their normal lives."*[23]

An irrevocable Divine Decree is based on God's Wisdom and is beyond man's choice and hence he is not accountable for it.

A revocable Divine Decree is based on the law of causality, part of which is man's free will. For instance, God has empowered man to choose adultery or marriage although He has the foreknowledge about his choice. The action of man whether he chooses adultery or marriage is also eventually from God, for had God did not enabled man to act, he would not be able to act upon either of them. (Monotheism in Acts) However, the foreknowledge of God about man's choice, as well as empowering him to act upon either of the vicious or virtuous actions does not free man from responsibility. For, as much as the foreknowledge of God does not force man to act, enabling man to act also does not force him to a certain act.

Determinism and Free Will in the Quran

The Holy Quran approaches the issue of determinism and free will from different angles. The Quran in some instances seems to advocate determinism limiting every action and will to the action and the will of God. In other instances, holds man in charge of his action.

Failure to understand the content of the Ayaat, some interpreters of the Quran such as Imam al-Fakhr al-Razi (543-606 A.H) following the Ash'ari school of thought believe in determinism. Others such as al-Zamakhshari (467-538 A.H) representing the Mu'tazili school of man's full authority highlights the *Ayaat* that holds man responsible for his actions interpreting the other groups of *Ayaat* in a way to suite his school of thought. Non-Muslims, on the other hand, remained in the state of confusion claiming that the Quran does not give any clear or consistent impression on the subject.

The Shi'a interpreters, however, based on the teachings of the Noble Family of the Prophet do not see any contradiction among the *Ayaat* of the Holy Quran, nor do they need to incline to either of the wrong dogmas of determinism or indeterminism.

On principle, the Holy Quran whilst holding man responsible for his actions teaches the principle of Monotheism in Acts, i.e. God is the ultimate source of all that exists. The combination of these two notions conclude that God has empowered man with free will without signing out the full authority to man. Thus, when man wills something, he only wills so because God has willed to give him the power of free will. The will man has therefore, is encompassed by the will of God. For instance, when man wills an evil deed, it is correct to say it is his will because he has exercised his will power, and thus he deserved to be punished for his action.

Similarly, it is correct to say the evil deed is from God, for God enabled man to enjoy the free will. However, this does not hold God responsible for man's wrong doing. Simply, because **he did not have to exercise his free will on an evil deed**[24].

The Holy Quran condemning the assumption of the hypocrites' states:

***"Wheresoever you may be, death will overtake you even if you are in fortresses built up strong and high! And if some good reaches them, they say, "This is from Allah", but if some evil befalls them, they say, "This is from you* (*O Muhammad*)*." Say: All things are from Allah, so what is wrong with these people that they fail to understand any word?"*(*4:78*)

The notion of the above Ayah is monotheism in Acts in that all that happens is ultimately from God, for even our power of free will is from God. However, to prevent the reader from concluding determinism Allah states in the following *Ayah*:

"Whatever of good reaches you, is from Allah, but whatever of evil befalls you, is from yourself." (***4:79***)

God in this *Ayah* has related the good deed to Himself and the evil to man himself, for anything bestowed to man from God is good. Free will is a blessing God has bestowed upon man and hence it is good and whatever good he earns from it is also good and hence from God. The abuse of free will to commit evil is man's choice and hence it is related to him.

The Ayaat That Seem to Mean Determinism

Determinists have referred to many *Ayaat* to prove their false claim. As mentioned earlier the notion of all such *Ayaat* is to announce God's full authority and that He is the sole source of all that exists. That however, does not conclude that man is forced upon his actions. The following are some examples of those *Ayaat*:

1. ***"Verily, those who disbelieve, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment."*** (***2:6-7***)

Al-Razi in his Tafsir says: "*The Sunni* (*theologians*) *referred to the* (*above*) *Ayah and many other similar Ayaat to prove the permissibility of responsibility on what is beyond man's ability. The reason being, Allah in these Ayaat has informed us that certain people will never believe. Thus, if they ever believe the true knowledge of God will turn to false, which is impossible."*[25]

We already answered the argument of God's foreknowledge and proved that the foreknowledge is not the cause of an action.

Moreover, the disbelievers in the Ayah are only those who, due to their stubbornness, deny the truth and hence they refused to believe in God due to their wrong choice. Thus, warning is indifferent to stubborn disbelievers for **they** are not willing to consider it.

Similarly, God has set a seal on their tools of knowledge as a punishment for their denial of the truth. Insomuch as if someone lived in a dark room for a long time he may eventually lose his sight.

2. ***"They*** (***hypocrites***) ***say: Have we any part in the affair? Say: Indeed the affair belongs wholly to Allah."*** (***3:154***)

The deterministes claim that the above *Ayah* clearly states that all the affairs–which include man's actions–, are by Divine Decree and Measure. Thus, God's (Decree) is the cause of man's action.

Firstly, we learned earlier that although Divine Decree and Measure overshadows all affairs, it does not free man from responsibility, as his free will is part of the Divine Decree.

Secondly, the above *Ayah* is part of the *Ayaat* narrating the battle of Uhud. In short, in the battle of Uhud, the Muslim army despite their initial victory were defeated. When they returned home, the hypocrites cast doubt on the truth of Islam, claiming that if we were right the affair (victory) would be ours. The Almighty Allah in response to them states: ***"Say: The affair*** (***victory***) ***belongs to Allah."*** Thus, God deprived them of the victory because of their abuse of free will and their disobedience.

3. ***"Then Allah sends astray who He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."*** (***14:4***)

The deterministes claim that the above *Ayah* is very explicit that guidance and misguidance is by the will of God and hence man has no will in it. Thus, those who believe or disbelieve, they do so because God so willed it for them. It is for this reason, they further their claim, that Prophet Noah (as) said to his people:

"And my advice will not profit you, even if I wish to give you good counsel, if Allah's Will is to keep you astray. He is your Lord! And to Him you shall return." (***11:34***)

One may however wonder if guidance and misguidance is by the will of God not man, then why did God send Messengers for mankind? Why did the Messengers of God endeavoured to invite **all** people to the Right Path? If man has no choice in his guidance or misguidance, then the Divine system of punishment and reward will not be just. It is for this reason that the deterministes had to also deny the justice of God, claiming that mankind is the creation of God and hence has no right to question the Action of God. God is entitled to send a criminal to Heaven and a pious person to Hell if He so wills!

The Difference between Guidance and Misguidance

In order to understand the meaning of the *Ayah* under consideration, we shall make a short detour and reflect on the notion of 'guidance and misguidance' in the Quran. 'Guidance' (*Hedayat*) means to kindly show the way. 'Misguidance' (*Dhalal*) means to go astray from the right path.

The difference between guidance and misguidance is that guidance is an instruction that always initiates from a guide and if a traveller accepts the instruction and acts accordingly, and then he will be guided. Whereas, misguidance is the act of a traveller and occurs when the traveller either lacks any guidance or chooses to ignore the instruction of the guide.

The Almighty Allah always initiates guidance. He has sent numerous Prophets with Scriptures. He has exposed countless Signs before man.

"Thus, makes Allah His Signs clear to you, that you may be guided." (***3:103***)

Then if man accepts the Divine guidance, he will be guided.

"So if they submit (***themselves***)***, they are rightly guided."*** (***3:20***)

Therefore, because guidance always initiates from God and He is the source of it, He announces the guidance to Himself alone.

"Verily, you guide not whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who are the guided." (***28:56***)

Misguidance, on the contrary, always begins from man. For misguidance only occurs, when there **is** guidance yet man due to his wrong choice, decides against it.

"These are they who have purchased misguidance for guidance." (***2:16***)

"And he who changes Faith for disbelief, verily, he has gone astray from the Right Path." (***2:108***)

Similarly, because it is Allah who –based on the law of causality– has given the property of 'misguidance' to certain acts such as 'changing faith to disbelief', '***disobedience of God and His Messenger'*** (***33:36***) and the like, it is correct to say that God sends them astray. ***"When they turned away, Allah turned their hearts away."*** (***61:5***) For example, cyanide is a fatal poison. It kills because God has given a property to it that if anyone takes it, it almost kills the person immediately. Now, the vicious act of suicide (misguidance) began from the person but came to into effect because of the natural property of cyanide (that God has given to it).

Thus, although Gods sends whoever He wills astray, He **only** sends the wrong doers astray, due to their wrong choice and the effect of their evil choice.

"By it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby. And He misleads thereby only those who are disobedient." (***2:26***)

"Say: O Allah! Possessor of the kingdom, You give the kingdom to whom You will, and You endure with honor whom You will, and You humiliate whom You will. In Your Hand is the good. Verily, You are Able to do all things." (***3:26***)

***"And never say of anything, I shall do such and such thing tomorrow. Except* (*with saying*)*, If Allah wills!"* (*18:23-24*)**

***"But you* (*people*) *cannot will, unless Allah wills. Verily, Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise."* (*76:30*)**

***"And had Allah willed, He could have gathered them together* (*all*) *on true guidance."* (*6:35*)**

***" And had your Lord willed those who are on earth would have believed , all of them together."* (*10:99*)**

The above *Ayaat* are some of the statements of the Quran about the 'Will of God'.

We describe two types of wills for God; one is 'Divine Will in creation' (*Eradatu-Takwini*), and the other is called 'Divine Will in legislation' (*Eradatu-Tashri'i*).

The divine will in creation is unbreakable. Man cannot disobey the divine will in the order of the solar system, the direction of the sunrise and the sunset, etc. Thus, when God wills something in creation i t must occur accordingly. The divine will in legislation includes all religious do's and don'ts. Although God wills man to worship Him alone, be pious and refrain from sins, man by exercising free will granted to him by God may disobey the will of God in legislation.

The notion of the will of God is that all that exists is subjugated by Divine will. Having said that, it does not mean the will of God is like an idle wish! The will of God is based on the law of causality that the Almighty God has introduced to this world. The law of causality is also part of His will and subjugated to his will. If God did not so will, there would be no law of causality. Thus, God grants the kingdom to whoever He wills, but according to the law of causality that He has set forth in this world.

To this end, when God says: ***"And had your Lord willed those who are on earth would have believed"*** He means- whilst He knows best about His Words- Had your Lord willed He would have created man like angels with no freedom of choice and then all mankind- like angels- would have believed in God. However, God did not will that, rather He willed to give the power of choice to man for the purpose of testing for which he is created. Therefore, the *Ayaat* of the 'will of God' confirm man's freedom of choice in the matter of the will of God in legislation. In fact, justification of man's transgression by the will of God is the excuse of the disbelievers.

***"And those who joined others in worship with Allah said: If Allah had so willed neither we nor our fathers would have worshipped aught but Him."* (*16:35*)**

The meaning of the fifth and the sixth Ayah should be understood on the principle of monotheism in Acts. That means every action including man's free will is eventually caused by God; the Creator and is always subjugated by His will. Should God ever will to remove man's free will He is Mighty over it. Had God not granted will power to mankind, he would have not been able to will. Thus, we do not really will

but what God has willed. This however, does not negate man's free will for God has so willed that we willingly choose a course of action. For instance, when you laugh, God has so willed that you can willingly laugh. God did not have this will for animals and hence they cannot choose to laugh. Thus, the meaning of 'you cannot will except what God wills' is that had God not granted you will power and all the means to exercise your will, you would not have been able to will.

"And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones." (***7:179***)

The determinists such as al-Fakhr al-Razi refer to the above *Ayah* claiming that the *Ayah* is unambiguously declaring that many of the jinn and mankind are created for Hell; hence they are destined to be hell bound. In order for us to have a correct understanding of the *Ayah* it is imperative to read the whole *Ayah*.

"And surely, We have created many of the jinn and mankind for Hell. They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones." (***7:179***)

As you can see the rest of the Ayah gives the reason because of which they are hell bound; i.e. because they chose not to utilize their senses to know God. Thus, in the matter of religion they became heedless.

The Omniscient God prior to the creation of jinn and mankind knows that many of these two types of His creation will misuse the freedom that will be granted to them to go astray. Thus, when He creates them He has created them for Hell, for He knows they will **choose** to go astray. Therefore, it is accurate to say they are created for Hell, though they themselves are responsible for their destination.

In other words, the will of God for creation of jinn and mankind – apart from their wrong choice– is to bestow His Mercy upon them and admit them into His eternal Paradise.

"Except him on who your Lord has bestowed His Mercy and for that did He create them." (***11:119***)

Then He made a path to reach out to that destination; i.e. worshipping Him alone. Thus, He also created the jinn and mankind to worship Him.

"And I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (***Alone***)***."*** (***51:56***)

Nonetheless, the wrong choice of the jinn and mankind not only changes their destination, but also changes the path and the purpose of their creation.

"No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees before

We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah." **(*57:22*)**

This is the problem of God's foreknowledge and man's free will with which we dealt with in length in the previous chapters. Al-Fakhr al-Razi in his interpretation of the Quran under the *Ayah*: ***"As for those who are wretched, they will be in the Fire... and those who are blessed, they will be in Paradise ."*** **(*11:106-108*)** says: "*God in these Ayaat has already decreed that a group of people on the Day of Judgment are prosperous while others are wretched. Thus, it is impossible to be otherwise, or else His Decree will turn false, and His knowledge becomes ignorance, and this is impossible*."

I trust with all the previous explanations you will be able to prove that it is in fact, al-Razi's knowledge that is changed to ignorance and his claim that is false, not the knowledge and decree of God.

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

The determinists have interpreted the term *Qadar* to mean Divine Pre-ordainments for all things including man's action, and hence man has no free will.

To rebuke their claim we need to firstly read the preceding *Ayah* to the one under consideration:

***"The Day they will be dragged on their faces into the Fire: Taste you the touch of Hell."* (*54:48*)**

Thus, the *Ayah* under consideration is a response to a question that if one asks about proportion of the punishments with the sins, the answer will be that God has made a measure for everything and hence there is a just proportion between every type of sin and its punishment, for there is a measure for all things. The *Ayah* could also mean that Allah had made a measure and limitations and order for all things. The Sun, the Earth, animals and their variety, as well as all different types of the inanimate each have their own set measure and order. Man's action based on the Divine Pre-ordainments is governed by his free will.

***"While Allah has created you and what you make"* (*37:96*)**

The determinists claim that the above *Ayah* is explicit that whatever we make (our action) is created by Allah. Thus, man has no free will. This claim is again based on isolating the *Ayah* from its contents. The above *Ayah* is part of the proofs of Prophet Ibrahim (as) against the idolaters who were worshipping the idols that **they** had carved, ignoring the fact that those pieces of wood were also part of the creation of God, and hence could not be creators!

Prophet Ibrahim (as) in an attempt to refer them to their common sense says:

***"How do you worship that which you* (*yourselves*) *have carved? While Allah has created you and what you make."* (*37:95-96*)**

The Holy Quran Denotes Determinism

Determinism is the logic of Satan

According to the teachings of the Quran, Satan was the founder of determinism. In the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, when God cursed Satan for his disobedience, he justified his vicious deed by blaming God for his evil action. Thus, he promises to take revenge from the offspring of Adam and Eve.

"He (Satan) said: Because you have sent me astray, surely I will sit in wait against them (human beings) on Your Straight Path." **(*7:16*)**

The Holy Quran quotes the same logic from the disbelievers. They justify their wrong doings by claiming that their disbelief is due to the Will of God.

"Those who took partners (in worship) with Allah will say: If Allah had willed, we would not have taken partners (in worship) with Him, nor would our fathers, and we would not have forbidden anything (against His Will). Likewise, belied those who were before them, till they tasted Our Wrath. Say: Have you any knowledge (Proof) that you can produce before us? Verily, you follow nothing but guess and you do nothing but lie." **(*6:148*)**

Moreover, there are many *Ayaat* in the Quran stating that:

"Allah likes not disbelief for His slaves (people)." **(*39:7*)**

And that:

"Allah never commands evil deeds. Do you say of Allah what you know not?" **(*7:28*)**

Amazingly, al-Fakhr al-Razi, adhering to his blind determinism in justification of a similar *Ayah* in Chapter 16 says:

"Allah blames them not for their lies but because by saying so, they have denied the message of the Prophets and questioned God's Action. For a slave is not allowed to say: O God! Why did you or did not do this?!" **(*16:35*)**

The destiny of every nation is in their hand

Several *Ayaat* in the Quran are explicit in that the destiny of every nation depends on their actions. God has pre-ordained a law in this world that good deeds beget prosperity whereas evil deeds bring about annihilation.

"That is so because Allah will never change a grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own selves." **(*8:53*)**

No Social Determinism

The Almighty God gives many examples in the Quran to disprove the claim of social and circumstantial determinism. According to the teachings of the Quran it is not a sound argument to blame society for our wrong doings.

The Quran gives the examples of the magicians of pharaoh who despite their society and Pharaoh's threats believed in Moses (as) until they sacrificed their lives for their faith[26]. A similar example is that of the wife of Pharaoh; the queen of the kingdom of Egypt who also gave up her royal life for her faith in Moses (as)[27].

On the other hand, the Holy Quran gives the example of the son of Prophet Noah (as), who although he enjoyed the blessing of a heavenly father, was perished with other disbelievers in the Flood[28].

Man's free will is a Divine Principle

Unless man enjoys free will and has the ability to choose right or wrong, the mission of the Prophets and their teachings as well as the creation of hell and heaven would be void. Thus, man's free will – not full authority to make him independent from God– is a Divine Principle. Here is the final word of the Quran against determinists:

"And say: The truth is from your Lord. Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills , let him disbelieve. Verily, We have prepared for the wrong-doers, a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them." (***18:29***)

1. Einstein, 'The World As I See It', p.24.
2. I have borrowed the expression of elbow room from the name of a book written by Prof. Daniel C. Dennett on the topic of free will and fate.
3. Watson, 1930, p. 104. John Broadus Watson (January 9, 1878 – September 25, 1958) was an American psychologist who established the psychological school of behaviorism. Watson promoted a change in psychology through his address Psychology as the Behaviorist Views it, which was given at Columbia University in 1913. Through his behaviorist approach, Watson conducted research on animal behavior, child rearing, and advertising. In addition, he conducted the controversial "Little Albert" experiment and the Kerplunk experiment. He was also editor of Psychological Review from 1910 to 1915.
4. Prof. Norman Swartz http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/swartz/freewill1.htm [2]
5. Ibid.
6. Al-Moqarram, Maqtalul-Husain, p.351.
7. Tashbih: comparing God to created things.
8. Alawis: the theology of the followers of Imam Ali (as).
9. For further information visit Catholic Encyclopaedia at http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12378a.htm [3]
10. For a modern example of Ash'ari thought consider the article of Dr. Ahmad Shafaat http://www.islamicperspectives.com/IslamAndDeterminism1.htm [4]
11. Majlesi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.5 p.83.
12. The Mathnawi, Book V, verses 2967-2969 (Translated by R. A. Nicholson).
13. Majlesi, Baharul-Anwar, vol.5. p.58.
14. The Mathnawi, Book V, verses 3007, 3008.

15. Daniel Dennett, Elbow Room: http://www.answers.com/topic/elbow-room [5]
16. An expression for the servant in Farsi.
17. The Mathnawi, Book V, Verses 3077-3086.
18. Khayyam; Quatrains, Q.76.
19. Majlesi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.71, p.140.
20. Majlesi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.5 p.58.
21. Majlesi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.5, p.17.
22. See Catholic Encyclopedia http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12510a.htm [6]
23. Majlesi, Bihar al-Anwar, vol.71, p.140.
24. See Catholic Encyclopedia under 'Fate': http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05793a.htm [7]
25. Al-Razi, al-Tafsir al-Kabeer, vol.1. p.286.
26. See 20:70-72: "And the magicians were cast down making obeisance; they said: We believe in the Lord of Haroun and Musa. (Firon) said: You believe in him before I give you leave; most surely he is the chief of you who taught you enchantment, therefore I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will certainly crucify you on the trunks of the palm trees, and certainly you will come to know which of us is the more severe and the more abiding in chastising. They said: We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to He Who made us, therefore decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide about this world's life".
27. See 66: 10-11: "Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Nuh and the wife of Lut: they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said: Enter both the fire with those who enter. And Allah sets forth an example to those who believe the wife of Firon when she said: My Lord! build for me a house with Thee in the garden and deliver me from Firon and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people."
28. See 11: 44-46: "And it was said: O earth, swallow down your water, and O cloud, clear away; and the water was made to abate and the affair was decided, and the ark rested on the Judi, and it was said: Away with the unjust people. And Nuh cried out to his Lord and said: My Lord! surely my son is of my family, and Thy promise is surely true, and Thou art the most just of the judges. He said: O Nuh! surely he is not of your family; surely he is (the doer of) other than good deeds, therefore ask not of Me that of which you have no knowledge; surely I admonish you lest you may be of the ignorant."

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