

## Our actions: Taqdir

Are our actions really ours? Or are we just a tool in the hands of Allah? The Shi'ahs say: "Taqdir means that, 'Allah possesses foreknowledge of human actions. But He does not compel any man to act in any particular way.'" [1](#)

To make it clear, it should be explained here, that man's conditions or actions are of two kinds (i) Those actions about which he can be advised, ordered, praised or blamed. Such actions are within his power and are dependent upon his will. (ii) Such conditions about which he cannot be praised or blamed, like life, death, etc. Such conditions are outside his sphere of will or power. For example, we can advise a patient to consult this or that doctor and remain under his treatment; but we cannot advise him to become cured. Why this difference? Because getting treatment is under his power, but getting cured is not in his power. It is something which comes from Allah.

But even our freedom of action is a gift of Allah. He has given us the power, the freedom, the strength, the limbs, the wisdom and everything with which we do any work. Therefore, we are not independent of Allah, because our freedom is not only given but even sustained by Him. But our actions are not compelled by God, because He, after showing us the right and wrong ways, and after enjoining us to do right, has left us to our own freewill. If we go wrong, it is our own choice.

Ash-Shaykh as-Saduq says: "Our belief in this respect is what has been taught by al-Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq: 'There is no compulsion (by God) and no relinquishing the authority (of God); but a condition between these two conditions.' Then the Imam was asked: 'How is it?' He said: 'Suppose you see a man intending to commit a sin; and you forbade him; but he did not listen to you; and you left him; and he did commit that sin. Now when he did not pay heed to you and you left him, it cannot be said that you ordered him or allowed him to sin.'" [2](#)

In other words, we believe that God has given us power and will and then has left us free to do what we like. At the same time, He has taught us, through the prophets, what is right and what is wrong. Now, as He is Omniscient, He knows what our actions will be in different times of our life. But this knowledge does not make Him responsible for our actions more than a meteorologist can be responsible for cyclones and storms, if his forecasts come true. True forecasts are the result, not the cause, of the

impending event.

The Sunnis on the other hand say that Allah is the Creator of all our acts. “No act of any individual, even though it is done purely for his benefit is independent of the will of Allah for its existence; and there does not occur in either physical or an extra terrestrial world the wink of an eye, the hint of a thought, or the most sudden glance, except by the degree of Allah . . . of His power, desire and will. This includes evil and good, benefit and harm, success and failure, sin and righteousness, obedience and disobedience, polytheism and belief.” [3](#)

[1.](#) Al-I'tiqadat.

[2.](#) Al-I'tiqadat

[3.](#) Al-Ghazali: as quoted in Shia of India, pg. 43

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