

QADAR- BELIEF IN PREDESTINATION AND DECREE

QUR'AN - (The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ
سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٍ ﴿١١﴾

(Every person advances through varying states, before and after, and) by God's command attendant angels succeeding one another accompany him, before and after him, to guard him (and record his deeds). God does not change the condition of a people unless they change what is in themselves. When God wills evil for a people (in consequence of their own evil deeds), it cannot be averted, and apart from Him, they have no protector. (Surah Ar – Rad, 11)¹

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ
فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

He to Whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; and He has taken to Himself no child, nor has He any partner (in His dominion or any aspect of His being God); and He creates everything and determines its destiny. (Surah Al – Furqan, 2)²

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

Surely, We have created each and every thing by (precise) measure. (Surah Al – Qamar, 49)³

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=13&min=10&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=25

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=54&min=40&show=10

وَيَرْزُقُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ
حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَدِيعُ أَمْرِهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾

And provides for him from where he does not reckon. Whoever puts his trust in God, He is sufficient for him (for all his needs). God surely executes what He decrees; assuredly God has appointed a measure for everything. (Surah At – Talaq, 3)⁴

وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ ﴿٣﴾

And Who determines (a particular life, nature, and goal for each creature), and guides (it toward the fulfillment of that goal); (Surah Al – A'la, 3)⁵

HADITH

Narrated Hudhaifa:

The Prophet once delivered a speech in front of us wherein he left nothing but mentioned (about) everything that would happen till the Hour. Some of us stored that our minds and some forgot it. (After that speech) I used to see events taking place (which had been referred to in that speech) but I had forgotten them (before their occurrence). Then I would recognize such events as a man recognizes another man who has been absent and then sees and recognizes him.⁶

Narrated 'Aisha:

I asked Allah's Apostle about the plague. He said, "That was a means of torture which Allah used to send upon whom-so-ever He wished, but He made it a source of mercy for the believers, for anyone who is residing in a town in which this disease is present, and remains there and does not leave that town, but has patience and hopes for Allah's reward, and knows that nothing will befall him except what Allah has written for him, then he will get such reward as that of a martyr."⁷

Narrated `Imran bin Husain:

A man said, "O Allah's Apostle! Can the people of Paradise be known (differentiated) from the people of the Fire; The Prophet replied, "Yes." The man said, "Why do people (try to) do (good) deeds?" The Prophet said, "Everyone will do the deeds for which he has been created to do or he

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=65

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=87

⁶ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/82/10>

⁷ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/82/25>

will do those deeds which will be made easy for him to do." (i.e. everybody will find easy to do such deeds as will lead him to his destined place for which he has been created).⁸

Shaykh Ibn Sa'di (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Just as Allaah is the One Who created them – meaning people – He has also created that by means of which they act, namely their abilities and will, then they do various actions of obedience and sin, by the abilities and will which Allaah has created.⁹

It was narrated that 'Ali said:

"The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: 'No slave truly believes until he believes in four things: in Allah alone with no partner; that I am the Messenger of Allah; in the resurrection after death; and in the Divine Decree (Qadar).'"¹⁰

Narrated Anas ibn Malik:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Three things are the roots of faith: to refrain from (killing) a person who utters, "There is no god but Allah" and not to declare him unbeliever whatever sin he commits, and not to excommunicate him from Islam for his any action; and jihad will be performed continuously since the day Allah sent me as a prophet until the day the last member of my community will fight with the Dajjal (Antichrist). The tyranny of any tyrant and the justice of any just (ruler) will not invalidate it. One must have faith in Divine decree.¹¹

Sha'bi said:

"When 'Adi bin Hatim came to Kufah, we came to him with a delegation of the Fuqaha of Kufah and said to him: 'Tell us of something that you heard from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).' He said: 'I came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and he said: "O 'Adi bin Hatim, enter Islam and you will be safe." I said, "What is Islam?" He said: "To testify to La ilahailallah (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah) and that I am the Messenger of Allah, and to believe in all the Divine Decrees, the good of them and the bad of them, the sweet of them and the bitter of them.'"¹²

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/82/3>

⁹ al-Durrah al-Bahiyyah Sharh al-Qaseedah al-Taa'iyah, p. 18

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1250810>

¹¹ <http://sunnah.com/search?q=Three+things+are+the+roots+of+faith%3A+to+refrain+from+%28killing%29+a+person+who+utters>

¹² <http://sunnah.com/urn/1250870>

From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

The Words, The Twenty – Sixth Word, First Topic

Yes, as the Qur'an states, man is totally responsible for his evils, for it is he who wants the evils. Since evils are destructive, man may perpetrate much destruction with a single evil act, like burning down a house with one match, and he becomes deserving of an awesome punishment. However, he does not have the right to take pride in good deeds; his part in them is extremely small. For what wants and requires the good deeds is Divine mercy, and what creates them is dominical power. Both request and reply, reason and cause, are from God. Man only comes to have them through supplication, belief, consciousness, and consent. As for evils, it is man's soul that wants them, either through capacity or through choice, —like in the white and beautiful light of the sun some substances become black and putrefy, and the blackness is related to their capacity— however, it is Almighty God Who creates the evils through a Divine law which comprises numerous benefits. That is to say, the cause and the request are from the soul, so that it is the soul which is responsible, while it is Almighty God Who creates the evils and brings them into existence, and since they have other results and fruits which are good, they are good.

It is for the above reason that the 'acquisition' (*kasb*) of evil, that is, the desire for evil, is evil, but the creation of evil is not evil. A lazy man who receives damage from rain, which comprises many instances of good, may not say that the rain is not mercy. Yes, together with a minor evil in its creation are numerous instances of good. To abandon that good for a minor evil becomes a greater evil. Therefore, a minor evil becomes like good. There is no evil or ugliness in Divine creation. They rather pertain to His servant's wish and to his capacity.

Furthermore, Divine Determining is both exempt from evil and ugliness with regard to results and fruits, and free from tyranny and ugliness with respect to reason and cause. Because Divine Determining looks to the true causes and acts justly. Men construct their judgements on causes which they see superficially and fall into error within the pure justice of Divine Determining. For example, a judge finds you guilty of theft and sends you to prison. You are not a thief, but you have committed a murder which no one knows about. Thus, Divine Determining also sentenced you to imprisonment, but it sentenced you for the secret murder and acted justly. Since the judge sentenced you for a theft of which you were innocent, he acted unjustly. Thus, in a single thing the justice of Divine Determining and Divine creation and man's wrongful choice or acquisition were apparent in two respects; you can make analogies with this for other things. That is to say, with regard to origin and end, source and branch, cause and results, Divine Determining and creation are exempt from evil, ugliness, and tyranny.

However, vast destruction and innumerable instances of non-existence may result from a single theoretical matter and one instance of non-existence. Through the helmsman of a large ship abandoning his duty, the ship may sink and the labour of all those employed on it go for nothing; all those instances of destruction will result from a single instance of nonexistence. Similarly, since disbelief and rebellion are non-existence and destruction, the power of choice may provoke them through a theoretical matter and cause awesome consequences. For although disbelief is only one evil, it insults the whole universe, accusing it of being worthless and futile, and denies all beings, which display proofs of Divine unity, and is contemptuous towards all the manifestations of the Divine Names. It is therefore pure wisdom that Almighty God utters severe complaints about the unbelievers, threatening them awesomely in the name of the universe and all beings and the Divine Names; it is pure justice that they should suffer eternal punishment. Since through unbelief and rebellion man takes the way of destruction, with a small act of service, he may perform a great many

works. In the face of unbelief therefore, the believers are in need of Almighty God's boundless grace. For due to one troublesome child who is trying to burn down a house, ten strong men who have undertaken to protect and repair it may be obliged to beseech the child's parents, or even have recourse to the king. In the same way the believers are in need of many Divine favours in order to withstand the unmannerly people of rebellion.

In Short: If the one speaking of Divine Determining and the power of choice has perfect belief and is aware of the Divine presence, he attributes the universe and himself to Almighty God, knowing them to be under His disposal. He has the right to speak of them. For since he knows himself and everything to be from Almighty God, he assumes the responsibility, basing it on his power of choice. He accepts that it is the source of evils and proclaims his Sustainer free of fault. He remains within the sphere of worship and undertakes the obligations with which he is charged by Almighty God. Moreover, he does not become proud at his good deeds and achievements; he rather looks to Divine Determining and offers thanks. He sees Divine Determining in the calamities that befall him, and endures them in patience.¹³

The Words, The Twenty – Sixth Word, Second Topic

This is a minute and scholarly investigation addressing scholars in particular.

If you say: "How is Divine Determining compatible with the power of choice?"

The Answer: In seven ways:

- **The First:** The All-Just and Wise One, to Whose wisdom and justice the universe testifies with the tongue of order and balance, gave to man a power of choice of unknown nature which would be the means of reward and punishment for him. We do not know many of the numerous aspects of the All-Just and Wise One's wisdom; our not knowing how the power of choice is compatible with Divine Determining does not prove that it is not so.

- **The Second:** Of necessity everyone perceives in himself a will and choice; he knows it through his conscience. To know the nature of beings is one thing; to know they exist is something different. There are many things which although their existence is self-evident, we do not know their true nature... The power of choice may be included among these. Everything is not restricted to what we know; our not knowing them does not prove the things we do not know do not exist.

- **The Third:** The power of choice is not opposed to Divine Determining, indeed, Divine Determining corroborates the power of choice. Because Divine Determining is a sort of Divine knowledge. Divine knowledge is connected with our will and choice, in which case it corroborates it, it does not nullify it.

- **The Fourth:** Divine Determining is a sort of knowledge. Knowledge is dependent on the thing known. That is, it knows it as it is. The thing known is not dependent on knowledge. That is, the principles of knowledge are not fundamental so that the knowledge directs the thing known with regard to its external existence. Because the essence of the thing known and its external existence look to will and are based on power. Also, pre-eternity is not the tip of a chain reaching into the past which should be considered the end point in the existence of things and a source of compulsion. Rather, pre-eternity holds the past, the present, and the future all at once, looking at them from above like a mirror. In which case, it is not right to imagine an end to past time which stretches back within the sphere of contingency and call it pre-eternity, and to suppose that things enter that knowledge of pre-eternity in sequence, and that oneself is outside it; to reason thus is not right. Consider the following example in order to explain this mystery:

Suppose there is a mirror in your hand and the area to your right is the past and the area to your left, the future; the mirror only holds what is opposite it. Then with a movement it holds both sides, but it cannot hold all of it. However low the mirror is held, less will appear in it, and the higher it rises, the area it encompasses expands, until it can hold both sides in their entirety simultaneously.

¹³ <http://www.erisale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.477>

Whatever occurs in the areas reflected in the mirror in this position cannot be said to precede or follow one another, or to conform to or oppose one another. Divine Determining is part of pre-eternal knowledge, and in the words of the Hadith, pre-eternal knowledge is "at an elevated station which from its lofty view-point encompasses everything that has been and will be from pre-eternity to post-eternity." We and our reasoning cannot be outside of it so we can be like a mirror to the area of the past.

• **The Fifth:** Divine Determining has a connection with cause and effect. That is, this effect will occur through this cause. In which case, it may not be said that "Since so-and-so's death is determined at such-and-such a time, what fault has the man who fired the rifle through his own choice, for if he had not fired it, the other still would have died?"

Question: Why may it not be said?

The Answer: Because Divine Determining specified that so-and-so's death would occur through the man's rifle. If you suppose that he did not fire the rifle, then you are supposing that Divine Determining had no connection with it, so with what would you decree his death? If you imagine cause and effect to be separate like the Jabriyya, or you deny Divine Determining like the Mu'tazila, you leave the SunniSchool and join the heretics. We people of truth say: "If he had not fired the rifle, we do not know if he would have died." The Jabariyya say: "If he had not fired it, he still would have died." While the Mu'tazila say: "If he had not fired it, he would not have died."

• **The Sixth:**⁶ According to Maturidi, inclination, the essence of the power of choice, is a theoretical or relative matter and may be attributed to God's servants. But Ash'ari considered it to have existence, so did not attribute it to them. However, according to Ash'ari, the power of disposal within inclination is a theoretical matter, which makes the inclination and the disposal together a relative matter lacking a definite external existence. Theoretical or relative matters do not require causes through which, for their existence, necessity would intervene and nullify the will and power of choice. Rather, if the cause of the theoretical matters acquires the weight of preference, the theoretical matter may become actual and existent. In which case, at that juncture, it may be abandoned. The Qur'an may say to a person at that point: "This is evil; do not do it." Indeed, if God's servants had been the creators of their actions and had had the power to create, then their wills would have been removed. For an established rule in the sciences of religion and philosophy is: "If a thing is not necessary, it may not come into existence [of itself]." That is, there has to be a cause for a thing to come into existence. The cause necessarily requires the effect. Then no power of choice would remain.

If you say: Preference without a cause or attribute to cause the preference is impossible. Whereas the theoretical or relative matter we call human acquisition sometimes does a thing and sometimes does not; if there is nothing to cause the preference, preference without something to cause it would necessarily occur, and this demolishes one of the most important bases of theology?

The Answer: A being preferable without something to make it preferable is impossible. That is, a being deemed preferable or superior without a cause or attribute to make it so is impossible. But preference without something to cause it is permissible and occurs. Will is an attribute, and its mark is to perform a work such as that.

If you ask: "Since the one who creates the murder is Almighty God, why do you call me a murderer?"

The Answer: Because according to the rules of grammar, the active participle is derived from the infinitive, which is a relative matter. It cannot be derived from the verbal noun, which is an actual or existent matter. The infinitive is our acquisition; so we are called the murderer. The verbal noun is Almighty God's creature. Something which gives an inkling of responsibility cannot be derived from the verbal noun.

• **The Seventh:** For sure, man's faculty of will and power of choice are weak and a theoretical matter, but Almighty God, the Absolutely Wise One, made that weak and partial will a condition for the connection of His universal will. He in effect says: "My servant! Whichever way you wish to take with your will, I will take you there. In which case the responsibility is yours!" If the comparison is

not mistaken, you take a powerless child onto your shoulders and leaving the choice to him, tell him you will take him wherever he wishes. The child wants to go to a high mountain so you take him there, but he either catches cold or falls. So of course you reprimand him, saying, "You wanted to go there," and you give him a slap. Thus, Almighty God, the Firmest of Judges, makes His servant's will, which is utterly weak, a condition, and His universal will follows it.

In Short: O man! You have a will known as the power of choice which is extremely weak, but whose hand in evil acts and destruction is extremely long and in good deeds is extremely short. Give one of the hands of that will of yours to supplication, so that it may reach Paradise, a fruit of the chain of good deeds, and stretch to eternal happiness. And give its other hand to the seeking of forgiveness, so that it may be short for evil deeds and will not reach the Zakkum-tree of Hell, which is one fruit of that accursed tree. That is, just as supplication and reliance on God greatly strengthen the inclination to do good, so repentance and the seeking of forgiveness cut the inclination to do evil, putting an end to its transgressions.¹⁴

The Words, The Twenty – Sixth Word, Third Topic

Two men travelled to the seat of government of a king, and there entered his private palace, a place of rare wonders. One of them did not recognize the king and laying hands on everything and stealing them, wanted to settle there. However, he experienced certain difficulties, for he had to manage the palace and its park, oversee its revenues, work its machines, and feed its strange animals; he suffered constant distress. The paradise-like park became hell for him. He pitied everything. He could not govern them. He passed his time regretfully. Then this thieving, unmannerly man was cast into prison as a punishment. The second man recognized the king and knew himself to be his guest. He believed that all the matters in the park and palace occurred through the regulation of the law, and that everything functioned with perfect ease in accordance with a programme. Leaving the difficulties to the king's law, he benefited with complete enjoyment from all the pleasures of that Paradise-like garden, and relying on the king's mercy and the efficacy of the administrative laws, he saw everything as agreeable and passed his life in perfect pleasure and happiness. He understood the meaning of the saying: "He who believes in Divine Determining is saved from grief."¹⁵

FethullahGulen – Questions And Answers – a thematic tafseer

Qadar- Divine Decree

What Is The Meaning Of Divine Decree And Destiny And Why Is Belief In Destiny Included In The Essentials Of Faith?

Introduction

The original Arabic word translated as 'destiny' is 'Qadar', meaning, in its derivations, determination, giving a certain measure and shape, dividing and judging. As a term, it is defined by Islamic scholars as Divine measure, determination and judgement in the creation of things.

Before proceeding to go into details relating to the subject of Divine Decree and Destiny, we had better give the translation of some relevant verses:

With Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them. He knows what is in the land and

¹⁴ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.480>

¹⁵ <http://www.erasale.com/index.jsp?locale=en#content.en.201.486>

the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it, not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, naught of wet or dry but it is in a Manifest Book. (al-An'am, 6.59)

There is nothing hidden in the heaven or the earth but it is in a Manifest Book. (al-Nazl, 27.75) It is We Who bring the dead to life.

We record what they send (of their lives and conduct to the Hereafter) and what is left of them. All things we have kept in a Manifest Record. (Ya Sin, 36.12)

They say: 'When (will) this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?' Say: 'The knowledge is with God only, and I am but a plain warner.' (al-Mulk, 67. 25-6)

Nay, but it is a glorious Qur'an. On a Preserved Tablet. (al – Buruj, 85. 21-2)

In a sense, Decree and Destiny are of the same meaning, but in another, Destiny means pre-determination or pre-ordinance, while Decree means execution of this ordinance or putting it into effect.

To define more clearly and elaborately, Destiny means that from the microcosm (atoms) to the macrocosm (the universe as a whole), from particles to galaxies, God Almighty, Who knows everything down to the minutest and Whose Knowledge includes all space and time while Himself is absolutely beyond all time and space, gives existence in His Knowledge to all things or beings and assigns to each a certain shape, life-span, function or mission and certain particularities. This can be understood by an analogy-God's is the highest comparison, and He is absolutely beyond all comparisons and different from whatever a man conceives of Him -with an author's having the full and exact knowledge of the book he will write and arranging it in his mind in chapters, sections, paragraphs, sentences and words before writing it. In this sense, Destiny is almost identical with Divine Knowledge or Destiny is a title of Divine Knowledge, and is also called the Manifest Record or the Supreme Preserved Tablet.

Destiny also means that God makes everything according to a certain, particular measure and in exact balance. The Qur'an declares: God knows what every female bears and what the wombs absorb and what they grow. And everything with Him is measured. (Al Ra'd, 13.8)

The sun and the moon are made punctual according to a calculation. The stars and the trees adore, in subservience to Him. And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the balance, that you exceed not the balance, but observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof. (Ar-Rahman, 55. 5-9)

The exact balance and harmony in the universe clearly show the existence of Divine Destiny; that is, the universe, as a whole and with all the individual things or beings in it, which display an exact measure, balance, order and harmony, shows that everything is determined, measured, created and governed by God Almighty. Assertions like determinism, which is upheld by many, including even the supporters of the Marxist ideology, in explaining the order and operation of the universe including the human kingdom, are a tacit admission of Destiny, even though absolute determinism is incompatible with Islam in explaining the actions of man.

All seeds, fruit stones, measured and proportioned forms, and the extraordinary order and harmony of the universe, and its operation for billions of years without displaying the slightest breakdown or deviation in any part of it, all this demonstrates that everything takes place according to the absolute determination of God Almighty, Who is the All-Knowing and the All-Powerful. Each seed or fruit stone and even each ovum fertilized by a male sperm is like a case formed by Divine Power into which Divine Destiny has in-built the future life-history of a plant or an animal being. Divine Power

employs atoms or particles according to the measure established by Divine Destiny as building blocks in growing the particular seed into the particular plant and the particular fertilized ovum into the particular being. This means that the future life-history of that plant or the animal being and the principles to govern its life are pre-recorded in the seed or the fertilized ovum as determining factors and processes.

Although the basic materials from which plants and animal beings, including human beings, are formed are the same, there is an almost infinite variety between species and individuals. The plants and animals that grow from the same constituent basic elements display such harmony and proportion, and yet such abundant diversity, that man cannot help but conclude that each of them is individually given its particular form and measure. It is Divine Destiny which establishes this measure.

A single seed displays Destiny in two ways: one by demonstrating the Manifest Record (ImamunMubin), the other by displaying the Manifest Book (KitabunMubin). The Manifest Record is, as was pointed out above, another title for Divine Knowledge and Command, comprehensive of the universe both as a whole and with all its parts, big or small, and all the events in it. As everybody knows, the seed of a plant is also its 'memory'. That is, a plant which grows from a seed also results in multiple seeds, in which the entire life-history of the plant have been recorded so that they can grow into new plants, which are almost identical with the original because plants do not have conscious spirits endowed with free will. Thus, besides demonstrating the Manifest Record and therefore Divine Destiny and Knowledge in which everything is present or exists with all its individualized particularities, a seed also indicates the Supreme Preserved Tablet (LawhunMahfuz) and corresponds to human memory in the human kingdom. By the way, since it indicates that the life-histories of creatures are recorded, a seed also points to afterlife.

The Manifest Book is another title for Divine Will and God's creational and operational laws of the universe. If we call the Manifest Record Destiny Formal or Theoretical, the Manifest Book can be referred to as Destiny Actual. The future full- grown form of a plant or an animal being, which displays all the content of the seed or fertilized ovum, can be understood as its Destiny Actual.

In short, like seeds or plants or fertilized ovums and animal beings, everything in the universe clearly points to Divine Destiny, determining, judging, giving measure, particularizing and individualizing. True dreams which bring news of certain future events, are another, undeniable indication of Destiny or Divine 'pre-determination'.

Question

Why is belief in Destiny included among the essentials of faith?

Answer

Because of self-conceit and the weakness of devotion, man tends to attribute to himself his accomplishments and good deeds and feels proud of himself. Whereas, as the Qur'an explicitly states, God creates you and what you do (al-Saffat, 37.96), it is the Divine Compassion which demands good deeds and the Power of the Lord which creates them. Whoever ponders over his life, he will realize and confess to himself that God has directed him to good acts, usually prevented him from doing wrong deeds and by endowing him with the sufficient capacity, power and means required for any accomplishment, favoured him with many accomplishments and good deeds. God guides man to good deeds and makes him succeed in willing and doing them, so the real cause of a man's good deeds is the Divine Will. A man can possess and own them by means of faith and sincere devotion and by praying to God to be able to deserve them, consciously believing in the necessity of

doing them and being pleased with what God has ordained for him. He can never be boastful of his good deeds and accomplishments and put on airs among people; what behoves him is to always be thankful to God and humble.

On the other hand, while attributing to himself his accomplishments and good deeds, man likes to absolve himself of his sins and misdeeds by ascribing them to Destiny. However, since God never likes a sin or wrong act, nor approves it, it is man himself who causes sins and commits them by his free will. Yet it is God Who creates sins (in the sense of enabling them to take place or giving them external existence) as well as good acts, simply because if He did not do so, the free will with which He has endowed man, would be annulled. Man wills to commit his sins. As was explained earlier, God calls man to good deeds, guides him to them and always inspires them in him, but man commits sins of his own free will and disobeys his Creator. Therefore, man is completely responsible for his sins and misdeeds. However, in order to protect himself against sins and the temptations of Satan and his carnal self, man must both try to remove his inclinations towards sins through repentance and asking forgiveness for them, and direct and exhort himself to do good deeds through prayer, devotion and trust in God.

In short, man has free will and is enjoined to follow the religious obligations and refrain from sins and wrong deeds. He cannot by any means ascribe his sins to God. Divine Destiny exists so that the believer does not grow proud of his good deeds by ascribing them to himself. Rather he must be thankful to God because of them. Man has free will so that the rebellious carnal self does not rid itself of the consequences of its sins by ascribing them to Destiny.

A second, important point to mention is that man usually complains about past events and the misfortunes that have struck him. Worse than that, he cannot save himself from falling into despair and abandoning himself to a dissipated life. He may even go so far as to complain against God. However, Destiny exists so that a man should relate past events and misfortunes to it in order not to be driven to despair and provide himself with relief, security and consolation. On the other hand, as will be discussed below, since Destiny does not exclude human free will, man is responsible for his future life and whatever he does consciously and intentionally.

In sum, whatever is (including misfortunes) should be considered in the light of Destiny, and what is to come, and sins and questions of responsibility, should be referred to human free will. In this way, the extremes of fatalism (jabr) and the denial of the role of Destiny in human actions (i'tizal, the view of the Mu'fazila) may be reconciled.¹⁶

FethullahGulen – Questions And Answers – a thematic tafseer

Divine Decree and Destiny From Different Viewpoints

Divine Decree and Destiny in relation to Divine Knowledge

As was pointed out earlier (in previous issues), God is beyond all comparison and whatever we conceive of Him, He is different from it. We can only acquire some knowledge of Him, not of His Divine Essence, but His Attributes and Names, by meditating on His acts and creatures and studying them. However, in order to understand His acts, sometimes we have to resort to comparisons, as is

¹⁶ <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/What-Is-The-Meaning-Of-Divine-Decree-And-Destiny-And-Why-Is-Belief-In-Destiny-Included-In-The-Essentials-Of-Faith>

allowed in the Qur'anic verse, God's is the highest comparison. Thus, in order to get some glimpse of the relation between Divine Knowledge and Destiny and Decree, we may ponder the following comparison:

Suppose there is an extremely skilful man, who is an engineer as well as an architect and a builder. He wants to build a magnificent house. First, he must have conceived of what kind of a house he wants to build. This is the existence of the house in the builder's mind. Then, the skilful man draws a detailed plan of the house. This is the existence of the house as an actual design or plan. Afterwards, he puts this design into practice and builds the house according to it. This is the material existence of the house. The house is recorded in numerous memories, and even if it is destroyed completely, it continues to live in these memories and in the mind and plan of its builder. This is the final form of the house's existence and has acquired some sort of perpetuity.

Another, similar comparison.

Before starting to write a book, an author must have the full content or knowledge of the full meaning of the book in his mind. This is the existence of the book as knowledge or as meaning. The existence of something (as in the examples for the book or house) as knowledge or meaning, is its essential existence. Even if this knowledge or meaning is not put into words or into practice, it exists in the mind. Therefore, although it needs 'matter' to be visible in the material world and known by others, knowledge or meaning is the essence in existence, upon which material existence depends.

In order to make his knowledge on a subject or the meaning in his mind visible and known by others in the material world, the author must express it in words. So, before putting it in words, he arranges it in chapters, sections and paragraphs, that is, he makes a detailed plan. Then, he writes it out and gives it material existence. Even if the book is completely destroyed and removed from the earth, it continues to live in numerous memories and in the mind of its author.

Likewise, God has full and exact knowledge of the universe as a whole and with all its parts down to the minutest particles. In order to have a glimpse of the infinite extent of His Knowledge, we can ponder the verses whose literal translations are as follows:

It may be that you dislike a thing although it is good for you, and love a thing although it is bad for you. God knows, but you know not. (al-Baqara, 2.216)

Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your breasts or reveal it, God knows it. He knows all that the heavens and the earth contain; and He has power over all things.' (Al 'Imran, 3.29)

With Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it; not a grain amid the darkness of the earth, nothing of wet or dry, but (it is) in a Manifest Book. (al-An'am, 6.59)

Say: 'If the ocean were ink for the words of my Lord, assuredly the ocean would be used up before the words of my Lord were finished, even if We brought another (ocean) like it, for its aid.' (al-Kahf, 18.109)

Even if He had not created the universe, the universe would still exist in His Knowledge. Since God Himself is beyond all time and space and all time and space is united in His Knowledge in a single point, and since His Knowledge does not depend on time and space, in relation to Him and His eternal, all-encompassing Knowledge, there cannot be things like precedence or posteriority or sequence or division of time. Time and space are only two dimensions of creation.

Everything eternally exists in God's Knowledge. God knows all things with the exact peculiarities of each, and Divine Power clothes a thing in material existence according to Divine Will. This transference from Knowledge to the realm of material existence takes place within the limits of time and space. Knowledge and Will are two essential Attributes of Divine Being: God knows things; things exist in Knowledge, Will determines them with all their peculiarities according to a certain measure, and Power gives them material existence. The relation which we are trying to explain between Divine Knowledge and Destiny, is best expressed in the verse, the literal translation of which is as follows:

There is not a thing but with us are the stores thereof. We send it not down save in appointed measure. (al-Hijr, 15.21)

Divine Decree and Destiny in relation to registry and duplication

Everything which exists in Divine Knowledge in individualized form according to a certain measure or, if we may say so, as a plan or project, is in a Record which the Qur'an calls 'the Supreme Preserved Tablet' (al-Buruj, 85.21) or the Manifest Record (Ya Sin, 36.12). The Qur'an explicitly states that nothing befalls us save that which God has decreed or preordained for us (al-Tawba, 9.51) and there is not a moving creature on the earth, nor a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are communities like mankind, and that God has neglected nothing in the Record (al-An'am, 6.38). This Record or the Supreme Preserved Tablet is a title for Divine Knowledge in relation to creation. We can also call it the original Register. In the 'process' of creation, this Register is duplicated. Its first, most comprehensive copy or duplication which comprises the whole of creation is called in the Qur'an the 'Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation' or the 'Manifest Book'. While the Supreme Preserved Tablet or the Manifest Record relates to the originals of creatures in Divine Knowledge and the principles and laws of creation, the Manifest Book or the Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation is the reality and, metaphorically, a page of the stream of time. Divine Power transfers things from the Supreme Preserved Tablet onto the Tablet of Effacement and Confirmation. In other words, Divine Power arranges things on the page of time or attaches them in turn to the string of time. Nothing changes on the Supreme Preserved Tablet; everything is fixed there, but in the 'process' of creation, God effaces what He wills, and confirms and establishes what He wills. (al-Ra'd, 13.39).

The second kind of duplication is like this:

After birth, everyone is registered in a registry of births. Then, according to the information in this state register of persons, everyone is given an identity document. Similarly, everyone is registered on the Supreme Preserved Tablet with all his personal characteristics, particularities, and future life-history down to the smallest details. This original register of everyone is copied out by angels, and the part of it which relates to the life of the body is encoded in cells as information or laws. However, for this information to be used or for the body to work and come to life, the spirit has to be breathed into the body. The other part of the copy of the original register which relates to man's life as a conscious, intelligent being is fastened around his neck as an invisible book (al-Isra', 17.13). During his whole life, man enacts whatever is in that book. However, that does not at all mean that Destiny or the pre-determination of a man's life history compels him to behave in a certain way. As we are trying to explain, Destiny is some sort of knowledge. It is like this: for example, you send someone to a place to do some job. You have previously procured whatever he will need during that journey and given him necessary instructions to do the job. Since you knew in advance how he would behave in every step of his journey, you have recorded all the details of that future journey in a notebook and placed it in a secret pocket in the jacket of that man. He starts out unaware of the notebook in the pocket and behaves however he wills during the whole of his journey. Together with

him, you dispatch two of your most reliable men to follow him wherever he goes, observe all his acts and record on a videotape secretly whatever he does and says and however he acts. On his return, you compare the video-tape recordings with the content of the notebook in his secret pocket and see that there is not the slightest difference between them. Afterwards, you call him to account for whether he did the job in accordance with your instructions and either reward him or punish him or forgive him.

As in the example above, God, Who knows everything in advance and is beyond all time and space, pre-recorded in registers the life-histories of all people to come to the world. Angels copy out the registers and fasten around each person his own record or register, which is what we call destiny or fate. God's fore-knowledge and recording of whatever a man will do in his whole life never compels the man to do that. He acts of his own free will and does of his free will whatever he does. All his life is recorded by two angels, whom we call KiramunKatibun (noble scribes). On the Judgement Day, the recordings of his life by these angels will be presented to him and he will be told to read his Book:

Every man's book of life-history (fate) have We fastened around his neck, and We shall bring forth for him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. (It will be said unto him): 'Read your book. Your own self suffices as a reckoner against you this day. (17.13-4)

Divine Decree and Destiny in relation to Divine Will

As pointed out above, God registers everything in His Knowledge in a record and gives it its own particular characteristics, appointing for it its life-span and provision. He also (pre-)records when and where one will be born and die and what one will do during one's whole lifetime. All this takes place by Divine Will.

It is through Divine Will that everything and every event, whether in the realm of Divine Knowledge or in the realm of material existence, including man's life, is (pre-)determined and given a certain course or direction. Nothing occurs beyond the scope of the Divine Will.

Consider that, for example, there are innumerable alternatives before an embryo in the female womb: whether it will grow as an animate being or come to the world or not, when and where it will be born, how long it will live, when and where it will die, etc. All beings are different from one another in complexion and countenance, down to the fingerprints, in character, in likes and dislikes, and so on, although they are all formed from the same basic elements. Again, for a particle of food which enters a body either in the stage of embryo or full development, there are countless alternatives where it will go and be settled. If, for example, a single particle which must go to the pupil of the right eye and be settled there, were to go to the right ear, this might result in an anomaly. Thus, it is by the all-encompassing Divine Will that everything occurs according to a miraculously calculated plan, and it is again by the Divine Will that there is a miraculous order and harmony in the universe. No leaf falls, nor a single seed germinates under earth, but God wills it to do so.

Man's free will is also included in the Divine Will. Nevertheless, the relation between the Divine Will and man's free will is not the same as that between the Divine Will and the lives of other things or beings. God Almighty has endowed man with the power of choice-free will-and, taking into account his future choices in life, (pre-)determined his life down to its smallest details. As explained above, God's (pre)determination of man's life and actions is like knowing them in advance. We should, however, add that the theistic conception of God is not correct. That is, God did not leave the universe to itself after He had created it. We are contained by time and space and therefore cannot draw exactly true conclusions about the relation between the Creator and the creation. Also, we are

unable to perceive eternity; we have little true information about the material domain of existence. God is beyond all time and space; He is infinite and eternal. He holds the universe in His 'hand' and controls and manages it however He wills. However, in order that we might catch some glimpse of His actions and acquire some knowledge of Him and His Attributes, He places on His manifestations the limits of time and space. Other-wise, life would not be, nor could we have any knowledge of Him and the universe. Therefore, all the explanations we have made so far about His Will and Destiny, should be considered in the light of the fact that we can approach the subject only from within the bounds of this life, which is limited by time, space and matter, and also from within the bounds of our very existence.

In sum, the Divine Will dominates over the whole of creation, and nothing is or occurs beyond Its scope. It is by the Divine Will that there is a miraculous order and harmony in the universe, and everything and every event is given a certain direction and certain characteristics of its own. However, the Divine Will does not exclude man from having a free will.

Divine Decree and Destiny in relation to creation

There are two aspects of the relation between Divine Decree and Destiny and creation:

1. As a determining and compelling factor, except for the realm where man's free will has a part, Destiny is absolutely dominant. Everything occurs, all events take place, according to the measure, determination, judgement and direction of Destiny. God is the absolute owner of sovereignty in the whole universe and He acts and disposes however He wills in His Kingdom. He does whatever He wills and no one can call Him to account for His acts. He is absolutely Just and Wise and also absolutely Merciful and Compassionate. Therefore, whatever He does is good and He never wrongs any of His creatures.

We cannot interfere with the operation of the universe: the sun always sends us heat and light completely independent of us, the earth rotates around itself and the sun; days, months, seasons and years come and go one after the other and we cannot do anything with respect to whatever happens in 'nature'. There are innumerable instances of wisdom in all such acts of God, and they are all to the use and benefit of man, so what falls on man is to study and reflect on His acts and try to find the instances of wisdom in them:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding. Those that remember and mention God standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth. 'Our Lord! You have not created this vain. Glory be to You! Protect us from the punishment of the Fire.' (Al 'Imran, 3.190-91)

Man should also reflect on whatever befalls him in his life. God never wills evil for His creatures, so, as the Qur'an explicitly states, whatever of evil befalls a man is from himself (al-Nisa', 4.79); it is because of his sins. God allows misfortunes to strike man in order to either forgive his sins or promote him to higher ranks. But this does not mean that He always punishes a man with some misfortunes because of every sin of his; He overlooks many of his sins without punishing him.

2. The second aspect of the relation between Divine Destiny and creation concerns the religious injunctions and prohibitions, which relate to human free will.

While Divine Destiny is absolutely dominant and compelling in the part of existence where man's free will has no part, such as the creation and control of all things and beings or animate and inanimate bodies, and the movement of planets and all 'natural' events or phenomena, in the

human realm, It takes man's free will into consideration. However, as God creates all things and events in 'nature', He also creates whatever man wills and does. This is so because God has honoured man with free will and prepared for him an eternal abode. Although He desires His servants to always will and do good and insistently invites them to it, He does not refrain from giving external, physical existence to their bad choices and evil acts, however displeased with them He is.¹⁷

FethullahGulen – The Essential Of Islamic Faith – a thematic tafseer

Divine Decree and Destiny, and Human Free Will

The Arabic word translated as destiny is qadar. In its derivations, this word also means determination, giving a certain measure and shape, dividing, and judging. Muslim scholars of Islam define it as Divine measure, determination, and judgment in the creation of things.

Before discussing Divine Decree and Destiny further, consider the following relevant verses:

With Him are the keys of the Unseen. None but He knows them. He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it, not a grain amid the darkness of the soil, naught of wet or dry but it is in a Manifest Book (KitabunMubin). (6:59)

There is nothing hidden in the heaven or the Earth but it is in a Manifest Book. (27:75)

It is We Who bring the dead to life. We record what they send (of their lives and conduct to the Hereafter) and what is left of them. All things we have kept in a Manifest Record (ImamunMubin). (36:12)

They ask: "When (will) this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?" Say: "The knowledge is with God only, and I am but a plain warner." (67:25–26)

Nay, but it is a glorious Qur'an. On a Preserved Tablet (LawhunMahfuz). (85:21–22)

In one sense, Decree and Destiny mean the same thing. In another sense, however, Destiny means to predetermine or preordain, while Decree means to implement or put into effect. To be more precise, Destiny means that everything that exists, from subatomic particles to the universe as a whole, is known by God Almighty. His Knowledge includes all space and time, while He Himself is absolutely free both of them. Everything exists in His Knowledge, and He assigns to each a certain shape, life span, function or mission, and certain characteristics.

Consider the following analogy: Authors have full and exact knowledge of the books they will write, and arrange its contents before writing it. In this sense, Destiny is almost identical with Divine Knowledge, or is a of Divine Knowledge. It is therefore also called the "Supreme Preserved Tablet" (or the "Manifest Record"). Destiny also means that God makes everything according to a certain, particular measure and in exact balance:

God knows what every female bears and what the wombs absorb and what they grow. And everything with Him is measured. (13:8)

The sun and the moon are made punctual according to a calculation. The stars and the trees adore, in subservience to Him. And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the balance, that you exceed not the balance, but observe the balance strictly, nor fall short thereof. (55:5-9)

The universe's exact measure and balance, order and harmony, as well as that of all it contains, clearly show that everything is determined and measured, created and governed by God Almighty. Therefore, Divine Destiny exists. Such assertions as determinism, which is upheld by many people and even some Marxists, to explain this obvious universal order and operation are tacit admissions of Destiny. But we have to clarify one point here: According to Islam, absolute determinism cannot be used in the context of human action.

¹⁷ <http://www.fountainmagazine.com/Issue/detail/Divine-Decree-and-Destiny-From-Different-Viewpoints>

All seeds, measured and proportioned forms, and the universe's extraordinary order and harmony (which has continued for billions of years without interruption or deviation) demonstrate that everything occurs according to God Almighty's absolute determination. Each seed or ovum is like a case formed by Divine Power into which Divine Destiny inserts the future life-history of a plant or a living being. Divine Power employs atoms or particles, according to the measure established by Divine Destiny, to transform each seed into a specific plant, and each fertilized ovum into a specific living being. This means that the future life-history of these entities, as well as the principles governing their lives, are prerecorded in the seed or the fertilized ovum as determining factors and processes.

Plants and living beings are formed from the same basic materials. However, there is an almost infinite variety between species and individuals. Plants and living beings grow from the same constituent basic elements, and display great harmony and proportion. And yet there is such abundant diversity that we are forced to conclude that each entity receives a specific form and measure. This specific form and measure is established by Divine Destiny.¹⁸

¹⁸ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/faith/essentials-of-the-islamic-faith/24572-divine-decree-and-destiny-and-human-free-will>