

Life after death

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- *The Benefits of Belief
in the Resurrection*
- *Qur'anic Arguments in
support of the Resurrection*

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The Benefits of Belief in the Resurrection

In securing a peaceful social order, belief in the resurrection is second only to a belief in God. Why should those who do not believe that they will be called to account strive to live an honest, upright life? But those of us who are convinced of this final reckoning in the other world try our utmost to live a disciplined and upright life. The Qur'an declares:

In whatever affair you may be, and whichever part of the Qur'an you recite, and whatever deed you do, We are witness over you when you are deeply engrossed therein. Not an atom's weight in the Earth and in the heaven escapes your Lord, nor is there anything smaller or greater, but it is in a Manifest Book. (10:61)

There are angels who are entrusted with recording everything that we do. God also has full knowledge and awareness of all our deeds, intentions, thoughts, and ambitions. Those who understand this (and act accordingly) will find true peace and happiness in both worlds. A family and community composed of such individuals feel that they are living in Paradise.

Belief in the resurrection prevents young people from wasting their lives in transitory and trivial things, and gives hope to the elderly as they move

closer to the grave. It also helps children endure the death of loved ones. Children who believe that they will be reunited with their deceased loved ones in a far better world find true consolation in the resurrection. Everyone, regardless of age, gender, or any other artificial, human-devised difference, needs belief in the resurrection as much as they need air, water, and bread.

As this belief leads people to a life of peace, it should be emphasized by intellectuals who seek public peace and security. Those who are convinced of the truth of what the Qur'an declares live a responsible life, and a community composed of such people finds true peace and happiness:

Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (99:7-8)

Children will find true consolation only when they are convinced that their beloved ones have gone to Paradise.

When this belief is inculcated in the hearts of young people, they will not be in search of an identity, but rather will seek to serve their nation

and humanity.

Children are very sensitive and delicate. Extremely susceptible to misfortune, they also are easily affected by what happens to them and their families. When they lose a family member or are orphaned, their world becomes dark and they fall into deep distress and despair. When one of my sisters died during my childhood, I was devastated. I frequently went to her grave and prayed from the bottom of my heart: "O God! Please bring her back to

life again and let me see her beautiful face once more, or let me die so as to be reunited with her.” So, what else other than belief in the resurrection and reunion with deceased loved ones can compensate for the loss of parents, brothers and sisters, and friends? Children will find true consolation only when they are convinced that their beloved ones have gone to Paradise, and that they will be reunited with them.

How can you compensate the elderly for their spent years, their childhood and youth that have been left behind? How can you console them for the loss of their loved ones who preceded them in death? How can you remove the fear of death and the grave from their hearts? How can you make them forget death, which they feel so deeply? Will more and newer worldly pleasures console them? Only convincing them that the grave, which seems to them like an open-mouthed dragon just waiting to devour them, is really a door to another and much better world, or simply a lovely waiting-room opening onto that world, can compensate and console them for such losses.

In its inimitable style, the Qur’an voices such feelings through Prophet Zachariah:

This is a mention of your Lord’s mercy unto His servant Zachariah; when he invoked Him with a secret, sincere call, saying: “My Lord, my very bones have become rotten and my head is shining with gray hair. My Lord! I have never been disappointed in my prayer to You.” (19:2-5)

Do not be afraid of death, for death is not eternal extinction.

Belief in the resurrection is a most important and compelling factor urging us to use our free will properly.

Fearing that his kinsmen would not be sufficiently loyal to his mission after his death, Prophet Zachariah appealed to his Master for a male heir to his mission. This is the cry of all old people. Belief in God and the resurrection gives them the good news: "Do not be afraid of death, for death is not eternal extinction. It is only a change of worlds, a discharge from your life's distressing duties, a passport to an eternal world where all kinds of beauty and blessing wait for you. The Merciful One Who sent you to the world, and has kept you alive therein for so long a time, will not leave you in the grave's darkness and dark corridors opening onto the other world. He will take you to His Presence, give you an eternal and ever-happy life, and bless you with all the bounty of Paradise." Only such good news as this can console the elderly and enable them to welcome death with a smile.

Our free will, which we use to direct our life, makes us unique among all creatures. Free will is the manifestation of Divine Mercy and, if used properly, will cause us to be rewarded with the fruits of Mercy. Belief in the resurrection is a most important and compelling factor urging us to use our free will properly and not to wrong or harm others.

Sahl ibn Sa'd narrates that God's Messenger was told of a young man who stayed at home for days. The Messenger went to visit him. When the Messenger appeared unexpectedly before the young man, he threw himself into the Messenger's arms and died instantly. The Messenger told those around him: "Lay out your friend's corpse. Fear of Hell

frightened him deeply. I swear by Him in Whose hand my life is that God will surely protect him from Hell” (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, 3:539). The Qur’an declares:

Those who fear to stand before their Lord and who curb the desires of the carnal self, Paradise will be their dwelling place. (79:40-41)

In a *hadith qudsi*, God says: “I will not unite two securities, nor two fears” (Kanz al-‘Ummal, 3:141). In other words, those who fear His punishment here will be protected from His punishment there, while those who do not fear His punishment here will not be saved from it there.

‘Umar said, upon seeing a young man bravely protest and resist a wrong: “Any people deprived of the young are doomed to extinction.” Young people have a transforming energy. If you let them waste it in triviality and indul-

Belief in the resurrection directs young people to lead a disciplined, useful, and virtuous life.

gence, you undermine your own nation’s future. Belief in the resurrection stops young people from committing atrocities and wasting their energies on passing pleasures, and directs them to lead a disciplined, useful, and virtuous life.

Belief in the resurrection also consoles the sick. A believer with an incurable illness thinks: “I am dying; no one can prolong my life. Everyone must die. Fortunately, I am going to a place (Paradise) where I will recover my health and youth and enjoy them forever.” Secure in this knowledge, all beloved servants of God, Prophets and saints, welcome death with a smile. During his final minutes of life, the

***The Resurrection
reminds people of their
familial responsibilities.***

Last Prophet said:
“O God, I desire the
eternal company in
the eternal world.”
He had informed his
Companions the day

before: “God let one of His servants choose between enjoying the beauty of this world as long as he wishes and what is with Him. The servant chose what is with Him” (Al-Sirat al-Nabawiyya, 2:642). That servant was the Messenger himself. The Companions understood whom he meant and burst into tears.

Similarly, when ‘Umar ruled over a vast area stretching from the western frontiers of Egypt to the highlands of Central Asia, he prostrated himself before God and sighed: “I can no longer fulfill my responsibility. Let me die and be taken to Your Presence.” Such a strong desire for the other world, the world of eternal beauty, and being blessed with the vision of the Eternally Beautiful One caused the Prophet, ‘Umar, and many others to prefer death to this world.

The world is a mixture of good and evil, right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, and oppressors and oppressed. Many instances of wrong (appear to) go unnoticed, and numerous wronged people cannot recover their rights. Only belief in an afterlife in another world of absolute justice consoles the wronged and oppressed, and dissuades them from seeking vengeance. Similarly, those stricken with affliction and misfortune find consolation in the resurrection, because they believe that whatever befalls them purifies them, and that anything lost in a catastrophe will be restored in the Hereafter as a blessing of the Hereafter, just as if they had given these items as alms.

Belief in the resurrection changes a house into a garden of Paradise. In a house where the young pursue their pleasures, children have no connection with religious

A belief-based family life makes its members feel that they are already living in Paradise.

sentiment and practices, parents are engrossed in procuring all their worldly desires, and grandparents live in an old-folks or nursing home and console themselves with pets, for there are no grandchildren around whom they can love and who can show them the respect they desire—in such a house, life is a burden difficult to bear. Belief in the resurrection reminds people of their familial responsibilities, and as they implement these duties, an atmosphere of mutual love, affection, and respect begins to pervade the house.

This belief leads spouses to deepen their love and respect for each other. Love based on physical beauty is temporary and of little value, for it usually disappears shortly after marriage. But if the spouses believe that their marriage will continue eternally in the other world, where they will be forever young and beautiful, their love for each other remains even though they gradually age and lose their physical beauty.

Such a belief-based family life makes its members feel that they are already living in Paradise. Similarly, if a country orders itself according to this same belief, its inhabitants will enjoy a life far better than what Plato imagined in his *Republic* or al-Farabi (Alpharabios) in his *Al-Madinat al-Fadila* (The Virtuous City). It would be like Madina in the time of the Prophet or the Muslim lands under ‘Umar’s rule.



***“If You punish them,
they are Your slaves; if
You forgive them,
surely You are the All-
Mighty, the
All-Wise.”***

To have a better understanding of how the Prophet built that society, we will provide several examples of his sayings concerning the resurrection and the afterlife:

O people! You will be resurrected barefoot, naked, and uncircumcised. Listen to me with full attention: “The one who will be first clothed is Abraham, upon him be peace.” Heed what I will say: “That day some from my Umma will be seized on the left side and brought to me. ‘I will say: O Lord! These are my Companions.’ I will be told: ‘You do not know what disagreeable things they did after you.’ Then I will say as the righteous servant [meaning Jesus] said: ‘I was a witness over them while I continued to stay among them. When You took me You became the Watcher over them. You are Witness over all things. If You punish them, they are Your slaves; if You forgive them, surely You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.’” (Bukhari, *Anbiya*, 8:48)

Since God created them, the children of Adam have not experienced an event more terrible than death. However, death is easier than what will follow it. They will suffer such terror that sweat will cover their bodies until it becomes like a bridle around their chins, until it grows into something like a sea on which, if desired, vessels could be sailed. (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 3:154)

People will be resurrected in three groups: those who combined fear of God with expectation [fearing His punishment but never despairing of His mercy and forgiveness], those who [because they frequently “faltered”] will try to go to Para-

dise "mounted on a mule" in twos, threes, fours ... or tens. The rest will be resurrected into Fire; [since they constantly pursued sins worthy of Hellfire], if they want to sleep in the forenoon, Hell will go to sleep with them; when they reach night, Hell will reach night with them; when they reach morning, Hell will reach morning with them, and when they reach evening, Hell will reach evening with them. (Bukhari, Riqaq, 45)

God's Messenger made sure that his Companions understood exactly what Hell was, and roused in them a great desire for Paradise by conveying its good tidings to them. As a result, they lived in great consciousness of Divine reward and punishment. They were very sensitive to religious obligations and the rights of people; two of them once appealed to the Messenger to solve a disagreement. After hearing them, the Messenger said:

I am a human being like you, so I will judge according to what you say. It is possible that one of you speaks more convincingly and I may judge in his favor. However, God will judge rightly in the Hereafter according to the truth of the matter. The wrong-doer will meet his due punishment, while the innocent will meet his reward. (Bukhari, Shahadah, 27)

This was enough for each Companion to concede his claimed right. The Messenger advised them: "Divide the disputed goods in half, and then draw lots. Each one should consent to his share wholeheartedly and without regret."

Sa'd ibn Rabi' was severely wounded at the Battle of Uhud. While taking his last breath, he whispered to Muhammad ibn Maslama, who brought him

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ishment, while the
innocent will meet
his reward.***

greetings from the Mes-
senger: "Take my greet-
ings to God's Messen-
ger. By God, I sense the
fragrance of Paradise
beyond Uhud."

Qur’anic Arguments in support of the Resurrection

Although scientific findings, like the second law of thermodynamics, show that existence is on the way to destruction, even a collision of two planets could destroy the universe. Existence is a calculated organism that is extremely

delicate; it is a system with parts that are subtly dependent upon one another. A human body is made up of trillions of cells. As a

The first origination of the universe and humanity indicate their “second origination.”

single deformed, cancerous cell can kill the entire body, any serious deformation anywhere in the universe also could “kill” it. Our death sometimes comes unexpectedly and without any visible, diagnosable reason. Do we know whether or not the universe might “die” all of a sudden, unexpectedly, from a “disease” or a “heart attack”? Maybe our old world has terminal cancer because we abuse it so.

God’s universal acts point to the resurrection. The Qur’an offers evidence in support of the resurrection. To impress upon the human heart the wonder of what the Almighty will accomplish in the Hereafter, and to prepare the human mind to accept and understand it, the Qur’an presents the wonder of what He accomplishes here. It gives examples of God’s comprehen-

sive acts in the macro-cosmos and, at times, presents His overall disposal of the macro-cosmos, normo-cosmos, and micro-cosmos (the universe, humanity, and atoms, respectively).

The first origination of the universe and humanity indicate their “second origination.” The Qur’an presents the phenomenon of the universe’s creation, which it defines as the *first origination* (56:62), while describing the raising of the dead as the *second origination* (53:47), to prove the resurrection. It also directs our attention to our own origin, arguing:

You see how you progressed—from a drop of sperm to a drop of blood, to a blood clot suspended on the wall of the womb, from a suspended blood clot to a formless lump of flesh, and from a formless lump of flesh to human form—how, then, can you deny your second creation? It is just the same as the first, or even easier [for God to accomplish]. (22:5; 23:13-16)

The Qur’an makes analogies between the resurrection and God’s deeds in this world. It sometimes alludes to the deeds God will perform in the future and in the Hereafter in such a way that we are convinced of them by drawing analogies to what we observe here. It also shows similar events here and makes comparisons between them and the resurrection. One example is as follows:

Has not man seen that We have created him from a sperm-drop? Then lo, he is a manifest adversary. And he has coined for Us a similitude, and has forgotten the fact of his creation, saying: “Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away?” Say: “He will revive them Who produced them at the first, for He is Knower of

all creation” Who has made for you fire from the green tree, and behold! you kindle from it. Is not He Who created the heavens and the Earth able to create the like of them. Aye, that He is! For He is the All-Wise Creator. (36:77-81)

The Qur’an likens the universe to a book unfolded. At the end of time, its destruction will be as easy for God as rolling up a scroll. As He unfolded it at the beginning, He will roll it up and, manifesting His absolute Power without any material cause, will re-create it in a much better and different form:

On that day We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books. As We originated the first creation, so We shall bring it forth again. It is a promise (binding) upon Us. Truly We shall fulfill it (as We promised it). (21:104)

The Qur’an likens the resurrection to reviving Earth in spring following its death in winter, and

Nature experiences death in winter, but spring revives the soil.

mentions how God disposes of atoms and molecules while creating us in stages. Nature experiences death in winter, but spring revives the soil. Dried-out pieces of wood send out shoots and yield leaves and fruit that are similar—but not identical—to those that existed in previous years. Innumerable seeds that fell onto the soil in the previous autumn now begin to germinate and grow into different plants; never is there any confusion. God’s raising the dead on the Day of Judgment will be like this:

Among His signs is that you see the soil dry and barren; and when We send down rain upon

it, it stirs to life and swells. Surely, God Who gives the dead soil life will raise the dead also to life. Indeed, He has power over all things. (41:39)

and:

Look at the prints of God's Mercy: how He gives life to the soil after its death. Lo! He verily is the Reviver of the dead (in the same way), and He is able to do all things. (30:50)

In particular, *suras* 81, 82, and 84, the All-Mighty alludes to the resurrection, as well as the vast revolutions and Lordly deeds that shall take place at that time, in images that we can relate, by analogy, to what we see on Earth—scenes that we

Surely God Who gives the dead soil life will raise the dead also to life.

have witnessed in the autumn or spring. With awe in our hearts we then accept what the intellect might otherwise refuse to believe.

As giving even the general meaning of these three *suras* would take a great deal of time, let's examine one verse: *When the pages are spread out* (81:10). This implies that during the resurrection everyone's deeds will be revealed on a written page.

At first, this strikes one as strange and incomprehensible. But as the *sura* indicates, just as the renewal of spring parallels another resurrection, "spreading out the pages" has a very clear parallel. Every fruit-bearing tree and flowering plant has its own properties, functions, and deeds. It worships according to its glorification of God, which is how it manifests His Names. Its deeds and life record

are inscribed in each seed that will emerge next spring. With the tongue of shape and form, these new trees or flowers offer an eloquent exposition of the life and deeds

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of the original tree or flower, and through their branches, twigs, leaves, blossoms, and fruits spread out the page of its deeds. He Who says: *When the pages are spread out* is the same Being Who achieves these feats in a very wise, prudent, efficient, and subtle way, as dictated by His Names the All-Wise, All-Preserving, All-Sustaining and Training, and All-Subtle.

In its many verses, the Qur'an warns us that we were not created with a lack of goals and thus can do whatever we want. We are responsible beings, and whatever we do is recorded. Our creation, from a drop of fluid through several stages, the utmost care that is shown to our creation and the importance that is attached to us, demonstrate that we have great responsibilities. We will be called to account for whatever we do in this world; this will occur in another world. In addition, our creation through stages is manifest evidence of God's Power, Who is also able to raise the dead to life.

General Arguments for the Resurrection

A close analysis of the functioning of the universe shows that two opposed elements are found everywhere, that they are deep-rooted, and result in good and evil, benefit and harm, perfection and imperfection, light and darkness, guidance and misguidance, belief and unbelief, obedience and rebellion, and fear and love. The resulting continual conflict of

opposites causes enough incessant alteration and transformation to produce the elements of a new world. These opposed elements eventually will lead to eternity and materialize as Paradise and Hell. The eternal world will be made up of the essential elements of this transitory world, which then will be given permanence.

***God's absolute
Justice requires that
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from the wicked in
the Hereafter.***

Paradise and Hell are the two opposite fruits growing on the two branches of the tree of creation, the two outcomes of the chain of creation, the two cisterns filled by the two streams of things and events, and two poles to which beings flow in waves. They are the places where Divine Grace and Divine Wrath manifest themselves, and will be full of inhabitants when Divine Power shakes up the universe.

In this world, oppressors depart with their oppressive power intact and the oppressed are still humiliated. Such wrongs will be brought before the Supreme Tribunal, for God would be unjust and imperfect if He allowed them to be ignored. Indeed, God sometimes punishes the guilty in this world. The suffering endured by previous disobedient and rebellious peoples teaches us that everyone is subject to whatever correction God Almighty's Splendor and Majesty chooses to apply. So, as declared in: *Keep apart on this day, O you criminals* (36:59), God's absolute Justice requires that He separate the good from the wicked in the Hereafter and treat each group accordingly.

Our place among creation is unique, for in ourselves we contain some aspect of all that exists in the universe. Our mental and spiritual faculties rep-

resent angelic and other spiritual worlds, such as that of symbols or immaterial forms. But because of our inborn capacity to learn and our

This world cannot judge an individual's actual worth.

possession of free will, we can surpass even the angels. Our physical or biological being represents plants and animals. Although contained in time and space, our spiritual faculties and other such powers as imagination allow us to transcend them. Despite our unique and priceless worth when compared with other members of creation, some of us die at birth and others when we are still quite young. In addition, we long for eternity and desire eternal life, and some of our senses or feelings are satisfied with nothing less. If we could choose between eternal life with severe hardship during this life and eternal nonexistence after a short luxurious life, we would probably choose the former, maybe even to the extent of preferring eternal existence in Hell to eternal nonexistence. God, the All-Merciful and All-Wise, did not condemn us to eternal nonexistence or implant within us the desire for eternity so that we would suffer while trying to fulfill an impossible, yet heart-felt, desire. So Divine Wisdom requires the existence of an eternal world.

This world cannot judge an individual's actual worth. Although we have a relatively small physical body, our mental and spiritual faculties allow us to embrace the whole universe. Our acts are not restricted only to this world, and therefore cannot be bound by time and space. Our nature is so universal that even the acts of the first man affect the last man's life and character and all of existence. Restricting human beings to a physical entity, a very short life span, and limited space, as materialists do,

shows a complete misunderstanding and lack of appreciation for what each human being really is.

Only the scales of the other world, which weigh an atom's weight of good and evil, can weigh such deeds accurately.

This world's scales cannot weigh the intellectual and spiritual value of Prophets and their achievements, or the destruction caused by such monsters as the Pharaoh, Hitler, or Stalin. Nor can they weigh the true value of sincere belief and moral qualities. What is the proper reward for a martyr who has sacrificed everything for the sake of God, for others, or for such universal human values as justice and truthfulness; or for a believing scientist whose dedicated research results in an invention that benefits all people until the Last Day?

Only the scales of the other world, which weigh an atom's weight of good and evil, can weigh such deeds accurately:

We set up a just balance for the Day of resurrection. Thus, no soul will be treated unjustly. Even though it be the weight of one mustard seed, We shall bring it forth to be weighed; and Our reckoning will suffice. (21:47)

Even if nothing required the resurrection, the sole necessity of weighing our deeds would require an infinitely just and sensitive balance to be established.

Although God does whatever He wills, none of His acts are without purpose. Based on this fact, His universal Wisdom requires the resurrection. If it did not, we would have to answer the following questions: Is it conceivable that the Majestic Being, Who manifests the Sovereignty of His being Lord via the universe's inclusive and perfect order and

purposiveness, justice and balance, would not reward believers who seek His protection as Lord and Sovereign, believe in His Wisdom and Justice, and obey them through worship?

God's Justice is necessarily deferred to a Supreme Tribunal, where we will be rewarded or punished in full.

Would He allow those who deny His Wisdom and Justice, rebel against Him or ignore Him, to remain unpunished? As this impermanent world contains scarcely a thousandth part of His Wisdom and Justice with respect to humanity, most unbelievers depart unpunished and most believers are unrewarded. Thus, God's Justice is necessarily deferred to a Supreme Tribunal, where we will be rewarded or punished in full.

In short, we were created for universal purposes. This is even stated in the Qur'an:

Did you reckon that We only created you in vain, and that to Us you would not be returned?
So, exalted is God (from exerting Himself in what is vain), the Sovereign, the Truth. There is no god but He; Lord of the Noble Throne.
(23:115-16)

We were not created for mere play or sport, nor is eternal non-existence in the grave our ultimate destiny. Rather, we were created for an eternal life prepared for us by all of our actions and for an eternal world full of eternal beauty and blessing (Paradise) or evil and wickedness (Hell).