

THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE NECESSITY OF THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

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Citation format: Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri, Mir Habeebullah Quadri, "The Islamic perspective on the necessity of the day of judgement", CIFIA Global Journal, Vol 6, January 2023

Abstract

This paper addresses the important question of the necessity of the day of Judgement from an Islamic perspective. This is a theological question which is correlated with many other important questions in theology and philosophy, namely, the question of free will, the necessity of the existence of evil, and the relationship between God and his sentient creatures (primarily humans). We shall start with an introductory section which briefly overviews some of the necessary terminology to understand the context of the question. Next, we shall address the question of free will, determinism, and existence of evil. Given the vastness of each of these topics, we shall delve into them, purely from the focus of explicating the necessity of the day of judgement. We shall finally address the Islamic perspective on this matter at the very end to make sure that the reader has a complete overview on the subject before delving into the focus of this article. If you (the reader) feel confident enough to skip this necessary albeit detailed preamble, then you are welcome to do so. However, we shall recommend the readers to go through the entire article in detail to build an informed opinion.

Keywords – Soteriology, Judgement, Religion, Islam, Qiyamah

Introduction

People of the world are generally divided into two major categories, (i) those who believe in one God or many gods and those who do not believe in the existence of God. Those who believe in the existence of God(s) are divided into two major categories, (i) Abrahamic religions, and (ii) non-Abrahamic religions. The people who do not believe in the existence of God are divided into 3 major categories, (i) Atheists, (ii) Negative Atheists, and (iii) Agnostics. Non-Abrahamic religions do not believe in the Day of Judgement, as they believe in transmigration of soul and reincarnation. Judgement Day is one of the fundamental beliefs of Abrahamic religions which

consists of (i) Christianity, (ii) Judaism, and (iii) Islam.

This paper specifically details the Islamic perspective on the necessity of the day of resurrection. Therefore, below is a list of topics that shall NOT be discussed within this article.

Topics that are out of scope of this article:

1. The beliefs of Non – Abrahamic faiths, i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., about the day of resurrection / judgement and their correlation with Islamic beliefs
2. The beliefs of Abrahamic faiths, i.e., Christianity and Judaism about the day of resurrection / judgement and their correlation with Islamic beliefs
3. A cross comparison between Islam and other religions on this topic.
4. The argument of proving the existence / non-existence of God.
5. A generalized deep dive into the following Philosophical topics:
 - a. Free will vs Determinism
 - b. Necessity of Evil / Understanding Evil
 - c. The cosmological argument
 - d. Detailed analysis of the attributes of God.

I have written several articles that are published in the CIFIA Global Journal that have delved into the above topics in detail. I recommend the

readers to peruse through some of the past issues of the journal to read on these topics.

Having understood what this article is not about, we shall now list the topics that have been covered.

Topics discussed in this article:

1. Important terminologies
2. The theological relationship between Allah and his creatures
3. Allah's knowledge
4. The Islamic concept of death
5. The philosophy of free will vs determinism in the context of the day of judgement
6. Islamic understanding on the necessity of evil
7. Islamic perspective on the necessity of the day of judgement

The brunt of the argument within this article has been made in the last two sections, i.e., Islamic understanding on the necessity of evil and Islamic perspective on the necessity of the day of judgement. If you (the reader), would like the skip the previous sections to read the crux of this article, you are welcome to do so. However, for a complete understanding of this subject, we highly recommend you go through every section in this article in the order presented.

The theological relationship between Allah and his creatures

To understand the Judgement Day which will be conducted by the Creator of this Cosmos, we need to understand the nature of existence of this Cosmos and its relationship with its Creator.

As per Islamic monotheism, all shapes, forms, and bodies in the Cosmos are Allah's creatures and are dependent upon His existence. This does not mean that everything is God or God is in everything as that understanding is known as pantheism which is contrary to Islamic monotheism.

Islamic monotheism

Muslims believe that Allah is one, not in a mathematical sense, but in the sense that He does not have any partner. He is not begotten, and no one has begotten Him. He does not resemble with His creatures. He is above the considerations of body, shape, form, etc. Divinity cannot be associated with anything in this Cosmos except Him. His existence, with His attributes is eternal and everlasting.

The Quran says, [nothing is like Him, and He is the Seer and Hearer.] (42-11). And [peoples' eyes (be it physical eye, or heart eye, or spiritual eye) cannot see Him. He sees their eyes (them). He has minute vision and is aware of everything] (6-103).

It is important to remember that, though the creations have their beginning from the knowledge of Allah, and the knowledge of Allah is eternal with Him, but the difference is, the attribute of Allah to be the Creator and God is exclusive with Him. As far as the creatures are concerned, their attribute is 'servanthood'. They are required to worship Him, and no one else in the Cosmos. There are no gods (or lower gods) and Divinity cannot be associated with any individual, or group or the humanity as a whole, saying they are part of God or God is in them. Thus, Islamic understanding is different from the pantheism theory.

Allah's knowledge

Some people say that Allah created everything from nothing. Their statement is true, but the question is where were people before their creation? The answer is they were known to Allah, individually and collectively, before their creation. Allah knew every detail about them as to how they will be born, where they will live and die, what they will eat and what will be their nature. In other words, all creation and this Cosmos was in Allah's knowledge before creation.

Allah's knowledge is an attribute of Allah which is also eternal with Him. Similar are his other attributes of Allah, like He is living, and He is eternal and everlasting.

Allah created this Cosmos with matter, and for us to appear in this world, we needed bodies of matter which were provided to us. After our death, these bodies remain here as these are buried in dust, where they decompose and become part of earth.

The question is, how did we exist in Allah's knowledge before our creation? The answer, for our understanding purpose is, as the painter knows individual details of his painting, then draws them on the canvas, in the same way we were in Allah's knowledge as individual and collective units of dependent existences.

Allah's existence is known as 'Absolute existence' and our existence is known as 'dependent existence' or 'temporary existence' or 'relative existence'.

Allah's absolute existence or His Being cannot be confined to appear in a shape, form, or body, as He is free from the consideration of time, shape, body, form of any kind, creature like or divine or exclusive.

The Quran says, 'there is none like Him (112-4). And 'nothing is like Him' (42-11).

The Quranic verses that apparently point towards hands, face, eyes of Allah are allegorical, for explanation purposes to human beings. Some sects among Muslims, like Salafis, Wahhabis, Deobandis, and like-minded draw textual / literal meanings of these verses and started claiming that their God has a physical body and is sitting over the skies. They worship this Sky God five times a day.

Quran says, 'He (Allah) is who has sent down to you (O' Prophet ﷺ) the Book (the Quran). Some verses of it are definite in meaning (Ayaat-e-Muhkamaat). These form the mother of the Book (the basic there in) and the rest are figurative (metaphorical) (Ayaat-e-Mutashaabihaat). But they, in whose minds there is a tendency to deviate from truth, take the metaphorical (verses in their literal / textual sense) craving discord, and craving to give them their own interpretation, although none knows the reality about them except Allah. And those who make it right approach to knowledge could only say 'we believe therein all that is from our Lord'. None

can catch their significance except those gifted with insight.' (3-7).

Attributes of Allah are many. Two of his important attributes are (i) Omnipotence, and (ii) wisdom. Meaning Allah is Omnipotent (Almighty). He can do anything that is required for his creatures. He is also wise and knows how to serve equitable justice to people, individually and collectively.

The meaning of death in Islam

The life cycle of human being in this world starts at birth and ends in his/her death. Meaning death is a natural part of our life. After our death our bodies get decomposed into dust. To scientists, philosophers and medical fraternity, our life is limited to this world.

However, when we look at person who is alive in this world, moving, we realize that there is something associated with his body which keeps him moving and the death is the result of break up of this association. In religions, this is known as the association of soul and body. When the soul leaves the body, the human being is considered as dead.

Muslims believe that there is life after death as the soul is associated with another body in the life after death and that the human being will be resurrected and will be answerable for his deeds on the Day of Judgement. Resurrection is generally associated with reuniting the spirit or soul of the person with his body after his death. All Abrahamic religions believe that every human being ever lived on planet earth, will be resurrected in the end time to answer for his deeds. The nature of resurrection is debated by philosophical theologians who say that resurrection is the renewal of psychosomatic unity of human personality with the body after death. Meaning, it is a continuation of personal identity of a person beyond his death.

Another question usually asked is, if creatures, i.e., humans existed in Allah's knowledge, and Allah's knowledge is eternal, then is the existence of a human being eternal?

The answer is when we say Allah's knowledge is His attribute, therefore eternal with him, then

whatever is there in His knowledge is also eternal with him. And that includes His creatures. But Allah knew his creatures as His 'servants' and divinity cannot be associated with them as that is His exclusive attribute. Allah's knowledge consists of two aspects, (i) about Himself, and (ii) about His creatures. His knowledge about His creatures is known as 'His awareness'.

The philosophy of free will vs determinism in the context of the day of judgement

As per the law, if a person was not free when he committed an act, he is not held responsible for that act. It means, the person should be free from external factors as well as he should have free will, only then will he be held responsible for his actions.

The scope of free will is debated by the philosophers as some philosophers say that as per 'determinism theory', the cause and effect in this cosmos are pre-determined. There are two aspects of determinism theory, (i) the whole Cosmos is a single determined system, and (ii) there are several determinism systems in the cosmos.

The philosophical debates are generally related to, is free will possible within the paradigm of cosmic determinism? Some say it is not possible as they consider the whole cosmos as a single determined system. Those who believe in several determined systems in the cosmos say that human actions are related to reasoning, motivations, desires, and cravings as per the demands of their nature.

Harry G. Frankfurt (b. 1929), a US philosopher says 'free will' has two aspects, (i) the freedom of will of a person, and (ii) his freedom of action. He calls the freedom of will as first order desire and the freedom of his action as his second order desire. For example, a person desired to drink a soft drink. He went to a shop and looked at the variety of soft drinks on sale. He started contemplating as to which of the soft drink he would buy to drink. This is his first order desire that brought him to the soft drink shop. The

second order desire would be when he chooses the soft drink and consume.

Suppose after buying the soft drink, he remembered that he was a diabetic and the soft drink contains excessive sugar which could be harmful to him. Thus, he returned the soft drink and came back without drinking it. The free will happens when the first order desire or his intention is resulted into an action by drinking the soft drink of his choice.

Islamic understanding on the necessity of evil

The Islamic perspective of free will consists of two aspects, (i) cosmic, and (ii) individual. At cosmic level, generally we cannot go against the nature, and we will have to function under the parameters of our environment. We cannot jump down from a cliff as we will die.

As far as we, as individuals are concerned, we are completely free to act as per our desires, reasoning, motivations, and cravings. Allah's support is available to every one of us, but our actions appear as per our nature. Like the sunlight is coming to everything on this planet but when it gets reflected from various things, it is reflected in different colors. These colors are as per their individual capacities. This is the reason we see the colorfulness in this world.

It is often noticed that a tyrant kills millions of people, spends his life in luxury and dies while he is still in power. Looking at his example, others also join him in tyranny and this way bloodshed in different countries is continued for decades. What is the deterrent for such people? It also happens that good and courageous people fight against the tyranny of the few, but they are jailed or tortured to death, and they die in agony. How will they be compensated for their efforts? Surely, they will be compensated on the day of Judgement, the tyrant will be punished, and the victim is rewarded in their next life. The Hell and Paradise are part of the creation of this Cosmos. This is the reason that people are cautioned about their behavior. If they choose evil, they will

get retribution for this, if not in this world, it will surely be given to them in the afterlife.

When people meditate about the structure and working of this Cosmos, they realize many things and they find answers to many of the questions that arise in their minds. Allah does not ignore the ones who are fighting against the injustice in this world. He must have a strong justice system in place to run this cosmos. When we understand this, we understand the necessity of the Judgement Day and the existence of life after death.

Islamic perspective on the necessity of the day of judgement

Having covered all corners of the argument, we are left with one key aspect, which is, understanding the reason behind the process of birth, death, and finally, resurrection for the sake of judgement. According to Islam, this cycle has been ordained for two sentient creatures of God, i.e., the Humans and the Jinns. Both these creatures share the luxury and responsibility of having a conscience, i.e., free will on an individual level to commit moral / good actions or immoral / bad actions. What is moral and immoral has been shared with these creatures in detail by God through the holy texts and Prophets.

A question is generally asked by people is, since Allah is aware of the natures of the people, then what purpose does this process serve as the good can be sent directly to Paradise and the evil is sent directly to Hell.

The answer to this question is, Paradise and Hell are the part of this Cosmos and the purpose of creation of this cosmos cannot be confined to the individual natures of human beings or Jinns.

The aspect of knowing about someone is different from seeing someone doing that act. Like we know that generally children crave for an ice cream and if you keep it accessible, they will surely eat it. However, there are some obedient children, to whom, if you say not to eat ice cream when they have cold, they will abide by it and for their action you will feel happy and will say thank you to them. When they are healthy, you will feel

like rewarding them with whatever ice cream they desire.

Those who eat ice cream when their throat is infected, they will suffer for it because they were warned about it in advance.

Similar is the case with people. The fact is that the people are free to choose Paradise and Hell for themselves. Allah knowing about it, does not entail that He is forcing them to enter the Paradise or Hell.

The Quran says, [Do they not ponder about their own selves? Allah has created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them for a purpose and for an appointed time. Yet many deny they will ever meet with their Lord.] (8-30).

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said, Allah was a Hidden treasure, then He wanted to be known (to his creatures), therefore He created this, Cosmos.

Conclusion

In this paper, we took a comprehensive approach towards understanding the necessity of the day of judgement from an Islamic perspective. We started with explaining Islamic monotheism and the theological relationship between Allah and his creatures. Next, we elaborated what is Allah's knowledge and the meaning of death. After briefly discussing the issues related to free will and determinism, in the context of the day of judgement, we discussed two key issues that were the focus of the article.

First, we considered what is the necessity of evil from an Islamic standpoint. Having successfully elaborated on that, we next discussed the necessity of the day of judgement from an Islamic perspective. This paper conclusively explicated the necessity of the day of judgement. By the Islamic doctrine, there is no uncertainty about the occurrence of this preordained day. Our hope is that the readers of this paper will take heed of this and assess their own standing in this regard.

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About the Author(s)



Ash Shaikh Mir Asedullah Quadri is well known all over the world for his explanation of Islamic Tawheed, Sahih Iman, Sahih Islam and Sahih Ihsan. He is a scholar, historian, and poet. He is the author of Tafseer-e-Asedi, Irshad Al Asedi, Fusus Al-Iman and over 1000

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