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Resurrection: Islamic & Scientific Perspectives Ibrahim B. Syed, Ph. D. President Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc.

Islamic Perspective

Every living creature is destined to die. This is the natural law. Or everything that is born will die. To the Muslims this is the law of Allah(swt). Hence human beings are no exception. Death is the cessation of ordinary human existence. Questions concerning the origin of death and the destiny of the dead, as well as rituals regarding the dead, are elements in all religions.

In Islam, death is the common destiny willed by Allah(swt) for all living things. Death is a passing state for human beings between earthly existence and immortal life in the hereafter(Aakhirah). The onset of death is traditionally conceived in terms of a personal encounter with an angel of death dispatched by Allah(swt). Prevailing Islamic doctrine conceives death as a disengagement of the soul from the body, the outward sign of which is the cessation of breathing. This event marks the end of the predetermined period of mundane life that is to be accounted for at the last judgment, the Day of Judgment(Qiyamah), when the body and soul are again reunited and resurrected for consignment to the splendid gardens of paradise or torturous fires of hell. Between death and resurrection, individuals are subjected to a preliminary trial in the grave by the angels Munkar and Nakir and given a preview of their destiny in the Hereafter (*Aakhirah*).

Aqeeda (Muslim Creed)

The principal points of the Muslim Creed are: Belief in Allah (the God), God's Angels, God's Messengers, God's Books, Belief in life after death (*Aakhirah*); the Day of Resurrection (*Qiyamah*) and *Qadr*. The fifth point in Muslim creed is to believe in life after death; to believe in the Day of Resurrection. This is the most important article of faith in Islam. It is in fact, the basis upon which Islam builds its whole philosophy of Life. A person cannot be a Muslim until after he/she accepts this principle. The advent of resurrection or *Qiyamah* is more frequently mentioned in the Noble Quran than any other happening. On the day of *Qiyamah*, all human beings will be resurrected and will have to pass through God's judgment on their actions during this ephemeral life on earth. All this is vividly described in the Noble Quran.

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YOUTH CORNER

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

By Jamaal al-Din Zarabozo (islamreligion.com)

The importance of the prayer in Islam cannot be understated. It is the first pillar of Islam that the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, mentioned after mentioning the Testimony of Faith, by which one becomes a Muslim. It was made obligatory upon all the prophets and for all peoples. God has declared its obligatory status under majestic circumstances. For example, when God spoke directly to Moses, He said,

"And I have chosen you, so listen to that which is inspired to you. Verily, I am God! There is none worthy of worship but I, so worship Me and offer prayer perfectly for My remembrance." (Quran 20:13-14)

Similarly, the prayers were made obligatory upon the Prophet Muhammad during his ascension to heaven. Furthermore, when God praises the believers, such as in the beginning of the chapter entitled 'al-Muminoon' (the Believers), one of the first descriptions He states is their adherence to the prayers.

Once a man asked the Prophet about the most virtuous deed. The Prophet stated that the most virtuous deed is the prayer. The man asked again and again and for the first three times, the Prophet answered, **"The prayer,"** then on the fourth occasion he stated, **"Jihad in the way of God."**[1]

The importance of prayer is demonstrated in many of the Prophet's statements. For example, the Prophet said,

"The first matter that the slave will be brought to account for on the Day of Judgment is the prayer. If it is sound, then the rest of his deeds will be sound. And if it is incomplete, then the rest of his deeds will be incomplete."[2]

The importance of the prayers lies in the fact that no matter what actions one performs in his life, the most important aspect is one's relationship to God, that is, one's faith (*imaan*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), sincerity (*ikhlas*) and worship of God (*ibaadah*). This relationship with God is both demonstrated and put into practice, as well as improved and increased, by the prayer. Therefore, if the prayers are sound and proper, the rest of the deeds will be sound and proper; and if the prayers are not Continued on page.....3

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sound and proper, then the rest of the deeds will not be sound and proper, as the Prophet himself stated.

In reality, the prayer is performed properly – with true remembrance of God and turning to Him for forgiveness – it will have a lasting effect on the person. After he finishes the prayer, his heart will be filled with the remembrance of God. He will be fearful as well as hopeful of God. After that experience, he will not want to move from that lofty position to one wherein he disobeys God. God has mentioned this aspect of the prayer when He has said,

"Verily, the prayer keeps one from the great sins and evil deeds" (Quran 29:45)

Nadwi has described this effect in the following eloquent way,

Its aim is to generate within the subliminal self of man such spiritual power, light of faith and awareness of God as can enable him to strive successfully against all kinds of evils and temptations and remain steadfast at times of trial and adversity and protect himself against the weakness of the flesh and the mischief of immoderate appetites.[3]

The overall affect that the properly performed prayers should have upon humans is described in other verses in the Quran:

"Verily, man was created impatient, irritable when evil touches him and ungenerous when good touches him. Except for those devoted to prayer those who remain constant in their prayers..." (Quran 70:19-23)

As for the Hereafter, God's forgiveness and pleasure is closely related to the prayers. The Messenger of God said,

"God has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows, prostrations and khushu[4], has a promise from God that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no promise from God. He may either forgive him or punish him."

The prayers are a type of purification for a human being. He turns and meets with his Lord five times a day. As alluded to above, this repeated standing in front of God should keep the person from doing sinful acts during the day. Furthermore, it should also be a time of remorse and repentance, such that he earnestly asks God for forgiveness for those sins that he committed. In addition, the prayer in itself is a good deed that wipes away some of the evil deeds that he performed. These points can be noted in the following hadith of

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The word, *Qiyamah*, occurs 68 times in the Quran, and the word Hereafter occurs 118 times in Yusuf Ali's translation of the Quran. The Quran argues that resurrection is rationally possible. "O mankind! if you have a doubt about the Resurrection(consider) that We created you out of dust then out of sperm then out of a leech-like clot then out of a morsel of flesh partly formed and partly unformed in order that We may manifest (Our Power) to you; And We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term then do We bring you out as babes then(foster you) that you may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die and some are sent back to the feeblest old age so that they know nothing after having known(much). And (further) you see the earth barren and lifeless but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred(to life) it swells and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth(in pairs)."

(Quran, 22.:5)

Commenting on this verse, Allama Yusuf Ali says "If they really have doubts in their minds about the life after death, they have only to turn their attention either to their own nature, or to the nature around. How wonderful is their own physical growth, from lifeless matter, to seed, fertilised ovum, foetus, child, youth, aged, and death! How can they doubt that the Author of all these wonderful stages in their life here can also give them another kind of life after the end of this life?

Or, if they look at external nature, they see the earth dead and barren and Allah's fertilising showers bring it in to life, growth and beauty in various forms. The Creator of this great pageant of Beauty can surely create yet another and a newer world. The stages of man's physical growth from nothing till he completes the cycle of this life are described in words whose accuracy, beauty, and comprehensiveness can only be fully understood by biologists. Parallel to the physical growth, may be understood man's inner growth, also by stages and by Allah's creative artistry."

Temptations of this world and its transitory pleasures often make man forget that the life hereafter is an impending actuality. Many of those who claim to believe in the life to come, act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no bearing to their present activities and manner of living. The Quran repeatedly reminds men that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment. Some possibilities are: Nuclear warfare, huge meteors/ asteroids striking the earth, deadly epidemics, natural disasters: tornadoes, earth quakes, volcanoes, etc., Ozone hole, pollution, depletion of fuel in the sun, etc.

The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and guard and navigate clear of all forms of sin and impiety, for when the Promised Hour comes it will come and without any prior notice. Hence in the Quran almost every Surah mentions who moves and acts of his own free will; protects himself and ensures the preservation of the species. Most importantly, there is the moral aspect of man's being, which is endowed with the consciousness of good and evil, the faculty to discriminate between the two, and the power to do good as well as malevolence. Man's nature demands that good deeds should have good results and evil deeds should lead to evil consequences.

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Man is endowed with the faculty to discriminate justice from tyranny; truth from falsehood; right from wrong; mercy from cruelty; kindness from malevolence; generosity from meanness; trustworthiness from breach of trust, etc. These qualities are not abstract ideas but are actually experienced in human life and have a deep and far-reaching effect on human civilisation. Hence man's nature demands that his acts should lead relentlessly to their moral consequences; in the same way as they lead to their physical effects.

If a man kills another human being, the moral consequence of the act should be the punishment of the criminal commensurate with the damage that he has caused to the family whose member was killed. It is possible that the offender may go scot free and even remain happy and become prosperous after having killed another human being. Justice demands that the offender must be punished. Since this has not happened in this world, it has to take place in the life Hereafter(*Aakhirah*). Genghis Khan, Hitler and others caused grave harm to millions of people for countless generations. Under the natural laws that govern the system of the Universe they could not possibly be awarded punishment commensurate with their crimes and acts of senselessness. Even if Genghis Khan or Hitler were to be torn to pieces, this punishment would not be commensurate with the wrongs they perpetrated on humanity. Between 1974 and 1979 Pol Pot killed millions of Cambodians. Thus we see killing, adversity and suffering at the hands of the vested interests. Is it possible to make restitutionm to such men and women adequately in this short span of life, within the limits of the physical laws that govern the world? The laws that govern the present system of the Universe do not allow an opportunity for complete retribution for the killings of millions of Cambodians. On the other hand, great prophets, the sages and the pious and virtuous men and women called mankind to the truth and the right path, and guided them out of darkness into light. Their ideas and teachings and practical examples have benefited millions of men and women for centuries; doing good for mankind, bracing against the tempest of consequences of human actions. Also the actions of humans during their short span of life on earth often have effects so widespread and lasting that their full consequences take thousands of years to unfold and manifest themselves fully. And it is impossible for any person, under the present laws of nature to attain such a long longevity on earth. It is logical to argue that while the present physical world and its natural laws are enough for the material and animal constituents of man, they are quite inadequate for the moral elements of his being. Hence there is a need for another world where the law of ethics is the governing law and the laws of nature are subservient to it; where life is eternal; where the moral consequences of human actions in the material world that could not manifest themselves there, should manifest themselves fully and in proper form. It demands a world where truth and righteousness, and not materialistic things, carry weight; where fire burns only such things as deserve to be burned according to the moral law; where happiness and comfort are the lot of the virtuous, and pain and misery the plight of the wicked. Both nature and reason demand such an order. The Quran assures us that the world that our natures as well as our reason demand, shall be a reality one day.

There is no instrument to determine with certainty whether there is any life beyond death. Science can neither affirm nor deny *Aakhirah*. The question of whether there is any life after death lies completely outside the realm of scientific knowledge. Anyone who declares, in the name of science, that there is no life after death, therefore, makes a very unscientific statement. If a person is of the view that the life of this world is the only life and that there is no life of any kind after this, that person will develop a moral attitude without any accountability for his/her actions in this world. A radically different kind of attitude and approach is bound to result if he/she believes that this life is to be followed by another life where one will have to render account for all of one's acts in this world and that one's ultimate fate in the Hereafter will depend upon one's conduct in this life.

The Quran reveals that this Universe, which was created in accordance with the physical laws, will be demolished at one stroke; and it will be replaced by another world. God Almighty will then resurrect all the human beings who were born from the beginning of creation down to its end, and will make them appear (resurrect) before Himself on the day of Qiyamah. The records of all the deeds of individuals, communities, and mankind at large, will be there without the slightest error or omission. Also there will be complete reports of the effects and consequences of all human actions in the material world. All of the generations of men affected by them, will be present in the witness box. Every particle affected, in any way, by the deeds or words of men will tell its own story. And the limbs, the ears, eyes and all other parts of the human body will stand witness as to how they were used or abused in life. On the basis of this unimpeachable evidence and those complete records, Allah(swt), the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, will decide each case with perfect justice and pronounce the reward or penalty as the case may be. The reward, as well as the punishment, will be of a magnitude that cannot even be estimated by the limited standards of the material world. The virtues whose beneficent effects extend over several centuries in this world will be fully rewarded there, and neither death nor illness, nor old age, will be to cut short the enjoyment of the reward. On the other hand, the evil deeds whose effects and consequences blight the lives of millions in this world for hundreds of years will be punished fully, and neither death nor coma will be able to relieve the pain and suffering of the guilty. The Noble Prophet(s) has said the following in one of his moving sermons thus:

I swear by Allah that all of you will certainly die, just as you go to sleep at night. Then surely you will all be raised again as you wake up in the morning. Then you will definitely be judged for the deeds you had been doing. You will get rewards for good deeds and punishment for the evil ones; it will either be the everlasting life of Paradise or the endless torment of Hell-fire.

(Cf.Sermons of the Holy Prophet, reproduced in Nahajul Balagha)

To the Quraish, the concept of *Aakhirah* and *Qiyamah* were way above their heads. One may ask why Allah should not be able to recreate the form of man which came into being out of scattered particles of clay and was then again turned into earth.

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The Quran makes repeated references to this matter, saying for example:

"We created you from earth and return you to earth and then bring you forth once more."

(Quran, 20:55)

In this verse, our attention is drawn to the creative power of the Creator. Through the presentation of the past and future of man in this world and the Hereafter, in a single panorama, solace and assurance are given to man's unquiet and sceptical soul.

The dismayed people who imagine that the body of man disintegrates as a result of chemical and microbial actions within the soil, and that it cannot be restored to life, to them the Quran says:

"The unbelievers say: Is this not strange that we should be brought back after dying and turning to dust? Such a return is impossible. But We are fully aware of what the earth takes from them and it is We Who possess the Preserved Tablet."

(Quran, 50:2-4)

This verse refers, then, to a group of unbelievers who deny the resurrection of the dead. It reminds them that Allah knows full well where the elements are that once made up their bodies before being dispersed and returned to the storehouse of nature. He will reassemble those elements on the plain of resurrection, thus reconstructing the body in a way the unbelievers thought impossible. This reconstruction will follow entirely the structure and contents of the body as it previously existed, and be based entirely upon it

The convincing logic of the Quran

When the Prophet of Islam(s) expounded the topic of *Qiyamah* (resurrection) to the pagan Arabs, a Bedouin named Ubayy bin Khalaf picked up a decayed bone and set out for Madinah to visit the Prophet(s). In the hope of refuting the arguments of the Prophet and the logic of the Quran on which they were based, he raised up the bone, as if it were a valuable and convincing piece of evidence, and crumbled it to dust, scattering the pieces in the air. Then he addressed the Prophet Muhammad(s) these crude, unadorned words inspired by his rebelliousness and ignorance: "Who will restore to life the scattered particles of this rotten bone?" He believed that he would thus be able to refute the arguments of the Prophet(s) and to destroy the belief of others in resurrection of the dead. His ignorant mode of thought prevented him from having any correct notion of the creation of being, so that he imagined that the scattered particles of a decayed bone could not possibly be brought back to life. He adamantly maintained that the reassembling of the countless particles of the body was unacceptable to man's reason.

We know that Ubayy bin Khalaf was cursed by the Prophet(s) for putting the intestines of a camel on the back of the Prophet(s). He was killed in the battle of Badr and his body parts were mutilated but he was not thrown in the well. (Sahih Bukhari Hadith 5.193)

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The Noble Quran replied with this persuading argument based on convincing logic: "(O Messenger) say: "Who first brought them to life will restore them to life. He has knowledge of all His creation. .. Is the Creator Who brought into being the heavens and the earth, incapable of creating the like thereof? Certainly He is the Creator and All-Knowing."

(Quran, 36:79-81)

The Quran invites man to contemplate the whole vast structure of creation together with the innumerable phenomena and minutiae it contains, using his wisdom and the intelligence which are his means for recognising the principles underlying the universe. Thus cloning enables man to realise that the restoration of life to man through resurrection is not more difficult than the initial creation out of a mass of different materials that were compounded together.

Man may well ask himself how the breath of life may be infused anew into the particles of his body once they have been scattered in the recesses of the earth, and how lifeless matter may be brought back to life although its constituent elements have been dispersed. But the dispersal does not result in their permanent alienation from each other, and the human intellect can well understand that the infinite and eternal creative power of God has no difficulty whatsoever in compounding afresh those scattered elements so that they begin pulsating with life anew.

The Noble Quran reminds man of Allah's unlimited power to restore all the minute qualities and precise details of man's limbs with the following words:

"Does man imagine that We are not capable of reassembling his decayed bones? We are able even to restore his fingers to their previous state."

(Quran, 75:3-4)

In this verse Allah selects to mention out of all the marvel's of man's composition the lines in his fingers as an example of His power. In the whole world, two people cannot be found with exactly identical fingerprints. This unique quality of fingerprints, first indicated in the Quran remained unknown until their discovery by British scientists in 1884.

In February 1997 it was publicised that a Scottish scientist cloned a lamb. The western scientists speculated the possibility of cloning a human being. Some Muslim scholars think that it is impossible to clone a human being. Because the human being is different from all of God's creations in that the human being has a soul. The argument is since science cannot clone a soul, a human being cannot be cloned. Looking at the past history of science, it is possible to clone a human being in our life-time. A clone is like a photocopy of the original or an identical twin who is much younger in age. If an identical twin has a soul, then a human clone will also have a soul. A clone cannot be grown in a laboratory but in a surrogate mother's womb. The surrogate mother provides all the nutrients for the cloned cell to grow to become an embryo, a foetus and then after delivery a human child, just like the lamb Dolly. The only difference between a normal child and a cloned child is in the genes. The normal child has 23 chromosomes from the mother and 23 chromosomes from the father or 23 pairs in every cell of the body except the germ cells or gametes (sperm or ova). The clone child will have 23 pairs of chromosomes of one parent.

Muslims should welcome the technology of cloning of humans. Because this scientific accomplishment is in itself an indication of the reality of resurrection; it provides a method which joined together with reflection, may permit us to understand *Qiyamah* (resurrection) and prove it scientifically.



TEN LESSONS FROM THE GRANDPARENTS OF JESUS

By Raiiq Ridwan (understandquran.com) [edited by IslamReligion.com]

It's quite interesting that even the grandparents of Jesus (peace be upon him) are mentioned in the Quran, albeit briefly. We know that his maternal grandfather was called Imran, but not much else is known about him. We also know that his maternal grandmother (name not known) prayed fervently for the birth of a child that she could devote to the service of God. In chapter Ale Imran (chapter 3) God says:

"God chose Adam, Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of Imran over all other people. They are descendants of one another. God hears and knows all. Imran's wife said, 'Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You, so accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all,' but when she delivered, she said, 'My Lord! I have given birth to a girl' – and God fully knew what she had delivered – 'and the male is not like the female. I name her Mary and I seek Your protection for her and her offspring from Satan, the accursed.'" [Quran 3:33-36]

So what lessons can we learn?

1. You can be among great people for doing things that no one knows about. We do not really know much about Imran. However, God mentions his family among the chosen ones and places his name next to Adam, No-ah, and Abraham (peace be upon them) – all magnificent prophets in their own right. God named the third chapter in the Quran Ale Imran – the Family of Imran.

2. Do good without seeking approval and even if people are not appreciative. Going on from the last point – we do not really know much about the actions of Imran. We know he was the father figure in a successful family that is mentioned throughout the Quran, but not much else is known. However, we know he was a pious man. And God-consciousness can make us great, even if people do not appreciate.

3. Make the effort, even if you do not see the end result. Scholars say that Imran died even before Maryam was born, so he did not actually see his daughter grow up to be a great woman. However, he still did his part in setting up a household that was pious, and he encouraged religiosity in his house. He never saw his daughter become one of the greatest women to have ever lived or his two grandsons John and Jesus become prophets or when his son-in-law Zechariah took care of his daughter. He paved the way for that and God rewards him for it.

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4. He allowed his wife to make decisions. The wife of Imran decided that her child would be dedicated to the service of God, and there was no hint of any opposition from him. It is quite clear that they were both partners in righteousness that helped one another achieve good deeds – just like how an Islamic marriage should be.

5. Make supplication before a child is born. Mary's mother is supplicating for her child even before she is born. That is something that we need to pick up today.

6. Be careful—society does affect us. Mary's mother was from a society that really did not value women. She initially fell into the same trap when she thought giving birth to a baby girl would ruin her plans of letting her child take the path of God, and that is something we are affected by even today. And yet God shatters those stereotypes.

7. **Reform in society starts with women – invest in them.** God wanted to reform the Children of Israel, and He chose a woman. He chose Mary instead of a man. God is showing us through this that if we truly want to be successful as an Ummah we really need to start investing in our girls and helping them achieve success in both this world and the next.

8. What God gives is always better. The mother of Mary hoped for a son, but she got a daughter. Her daughter ended up being one of the greatest women in history. What God gives us is better for us even if we do not understand.

9. Accept what God gives and do your best with it. As soon as realization hit the mother of Mary, she immediately supplicated for her daughter again after birth. She accepted what God had given her, and she immediately went about preparing her daughter for the task. Whatever we get in life, we need to learn to make the best of it. Just like Mary turned out more suitable than any other man, we don't know what it is that will turn out the best for us.

10. The supplication of a mother is powerful. Mary's mother made supplication seeking refuge from Satan for Mary and her offspring. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said that the only two human beings who were not touched by Satan were Mary and Jesus. *Subhan Allah* (How Perfect is God!), what power the supplication of a mother carries!

FOOTNOTES:

[1]The translation of the Arabic word Ummah is nation. However, it means more than a country with borders; it is a fellowship of men women and children united in their love for One God and their admiration for Muhammad, the Prophet of God.

the Prophet, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him:

"If a person had a stream outside his door and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?" The people said, "No filth would remain on him whatsoever." The Prophet then said, "That is like the five daily prayers: God wipes away the sins by them." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)

In another hadith, the Prophet said,

"The five daily prayers and the Friday Prayer until the Friday prayer are expiation for what is between them." (Saheeh Muslim)

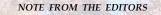
FOOTNOTES:

[1]This is form a hadith recorded by Ahmad and ibn Hibban. According to al-Albani, the hadith is hasan. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Sahih al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1982), vol. 1, p. 150

[2]Recorded by al-Tabarani. According to al-Albani, it is Sahih. Al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami, vol.1, p. 503.[3]Nadwi, p. 24

[4]Khushu` in the prayer is where the person's heart is attuned to the prayer. This feeling in the heart is then reflected on the body. The person remains still and calm. His gaze is also lowered. Even his voice is affected by this feeling in the heart. For more details on this concept (as well as the difference between it and khudhu`), see Muhammad al-Shaayi, al-Furooq al-Laughawiyyah wa Atharahaa fi Tafseer al-Quran al-Kareem (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ubaikaan, 1993), pp. 249-254.





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