

AL QADAR (DESTINY)

The belief in Destiny is one of the fundamentals of faith. It means to believe that Allah alone is the sole authority in all affairs. It is He who has planned everything with perfect measure according to His Divine Will. Every occurrence in the universe is the execution of the Divine Will. Nothing can avert what His Will dictates, for He alone is the Lord and Master of the Universe. His Will encompasses all things. The belief in Al Qadar means that we accept that Allah has full and perfect knowledge of every thing that has happened, is happening or is to happen ever_ great or small, since the very beginning of Time_ that is, before the very creation of the Universe and all it contains. That is why one of the Beautiful Names of Allah (Asmaa ul Husna) is Al-Aleem: 'The All-Knowing.' This Divine knowledge of Allah is recorded in the Lauh al Mahfooz (The Preserved Tablet), which is a Clear Record of Allah's foreknowledge, and belongs to the realm of the 'ghaib' (Unknown/ Unseen by creation).

"From Whom (Allah) is not hidden the least little atom in the heavens or the earth, nor is there anything less than that, or greater, but it is in a Clear Record." (34:3)

This belief which a Muslim must have, colours his understanding of every aspect of human life and existence. He knows and believes that all that is there, all that happens, is by the Will of Allah, and serves some Divine purpose in His plan. Man cannot question this Will, nor can he, or any other creation, influence that will for his own benefit, except if Allah wishes. The Will of man and all other creatures is subservient to His Will.

All said, the above-given carries a number of implications which must be understood in order to fully comprehend and live by this belief. To understand how Divine Will works, and to what extent man has been given the freedom to choose, one must see Destiny or Qadr to be working on three different levels:

- i) Fixed universal Laws
- ii) The sphere that dominates Man
- iii) The sphere Man dominates

i) FIXED UNIVERSAL LAWS:

As far as the actions which are part of the law of the universe are concerned, man is in complete and involuntary submission to them. He is obliged to act in accordance with a specific and unchangeable system in the universe around him. Subsequently, he has to live by these laws, as he is powerless to change them. An example of this is the fact that man comes into the world without his will and leaves it without his will. These are determined entirely by His Creator, according to His Plan (taqdeer), over which man has no control. He cannot fly in the air, since he wasn't made to do so. He cannot choose the colour of his skin, hair or eyes.

"Nor shall a soul die except by Allah's leave, the term being fixed by writing." (3:145). And again,

"To every people is a term appointed. When their term is reached, not an hour can they delay it, nor can they advance it." (7:34)

The world around man too is subject to fixed, natural laws_ the cycle of day and night, the changing seasons, weather and geographical conditions. Similarly, he has given unchanging characteristics to everything_ for instance, fire burns, and plants grow because they are endowed with this characteristic by their Creator. All this is laid out by Allah and man has no control in this sphere at all. Indeed, it is Allah who created all of

this without any input from man. Allah created the laws of the universe, regulated the universe by His law, and had the Universe run according to these laws without the possibility of change, except by His Will. When, by Allah's will, a change or aberration occurs in this set, planned pattern of things, it is called a 'miracle', and happens purely out of Divine will. It is a direct manifestation of Allah's power over all things.

ii) THE SPHERE THAT DOMINATES MAN:

Actions which are beyond man's control and cannot be avoided, and yet are not part of the universal law defined above, are determined by Allah's Will. Therefore, they belong to the sphere _not part of universal law_ which dominates man. Examples of such actions and events are accidents in life which do not have a cause in any action of the person who is victim of them. Such actions or events involve man, but are materialized without his will and are beyond his control. They occur from him or to him without his will or planning. All such actions which occur within this sphere that dominates man are called 'Qazaa', meaning, 'will of God', because Allah has predetermined them.

"No misfortune can happen on earth nor in your own souls but it is recorded in a decree before We bring it into existence. That is truly easy for Allah." (57:22)

However, since Allah is Al-Adl (The Just) and does not burden a human being beyond his ability, a man is not held responsible for such actions.

"And Allah does not place a burden on anyone greater than what he can bear." (Al Baqarah). He does not take man to account for doing what is not in his power to do. He is Forgiving, Fair and Compassionate. Man is not reckoned or questioned for these actions beyond his control, whether they are classified as beneficial, harmful, liked or disliked. For example, if a man throws a stone in the air to hunt down a bird, which accidentally hits a person and hurts him, the man will not be punished for his act, as he had no control over it. Similarly, if a student studies hard and does his best, but gets sick on the day of the exam, he will have no blame on him in Allah's sight. Man is unable to initiate or avoid such actions. They are Allah's Will, and man must accept them as 'Qazaa'.

The purpose of such occurrences is known to Allah alone, and they are part of His perfect plan (taqdeer). Man can never reach or understand the Divine 'hikmah' (wisdom) behind such events. However, as Allah discloses to us in the Quran, He does test man's faith by such 'accidental' events. Therefore, to succeed the test appointed by Allah, the best attitude is to accept Allah's will without complaint, to bear it with patience, understanding that this world and this present life is but a small part of the whole, and that justice will be established in the Hereafter.

"We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger and the loss of labour's fruits. And give glad tidings to those who, when some misfortune befalls them, say, 'It is Allah's we are, and it is to Him alone we shall return.'" (Al Baqarah)

Having borne trial from Allah with patience, he can hope for the reward of the God Who values faith and returns it with an excellent recompense.

"Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us. He is our Protector and in Allah, let the Believers place their trust." (9:51)

iii) THE SPHERE MAN DOMINATES:

As for the sphere that man dominates, it is the sphere in which he chooses, acts and proceeds freely. In this sphere actions are carried out by man or involve his free will. For

example, we all make many choices in our lives; we walk, eat, drink, travel at anytime, wherever or in whatever way we like. Some of these actions are ‘neutral’ in the sense that they do not involve choosing between something ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ For example, choosing one workplace over another because it is nearer home than the other one is a ‘neutral’ and not a ‘moral’ act. For such actions, there is again no accountability.

However, a number of actions which man does by his free will involve choosing between a ‘good’ and a ‘bad, a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ alternative. Allah has given man certain instincts and desires_ like hunger, thirst, sex, possession etc. He has also given man a conscience which helps him see what is good and beneficial in the long run (being in accordance with Allah’s law_ Shariah) and what is not. This conscience creates a balance in the personality and helps man fulfil these desires in the correct way according to the way Allah has laid down in His Law. It helps him not to give in completely to these animal desires or get carried away by them, leading to evil and harm both to oneself and others. Apart from that, Allah has also arranged for man’s guidance in making his choices and using his free will by sending His Prophets (AS), and His Books. With the instinct of both evil (base desires, ‘fujur’) and good (conscience_ ‘Allah-consciousness’, ‘taqwa’) within man, alongwith ample guidance (religion), Allah has left man free to make his choice between good and evil, and choose his final destination_ heaven or hell, accordingly.

“And we showed him (man), the two paths (of good and evil).” (90:10)

“And inspired it (with consciousness of) what is wrong for it and what is right for it.” (91:10)

For this freedom man has, he is held accountable to His Creator in the Hereafter. For, His Creator sent him with a purpose, guiding him all the way, warning him of the consequences of evil and motivating him with His excellent reward. When, in the face of all that, man chooses evil over good, he has to face the punishment, because he was free in doing so and abused his God-given freedom.

“But Allah has created you and your handiwork!” (37:96)

It is important to add here that Allah being the All-Knowing, has full, prior knowledge of the actions man will choose to do and whether these actions will take him to Heaven or Hell since the very beginning_ even before man came into being. Every little action man chooses to do is written down in the Clear Record (Lauh al Mahfuz). However, the foreknowledge that Allah has, does not force or compel a man to do the actions that Allah knows he will do and has a record of. The meaning of the theory that Allah has planned, and has the foreknowledge of every person’s actions is that nothing can take place, and no one can do anything except by Allah’s will. No one can do anything that is against His will or contrary to His foreknowledge and planning.

To sum it up, it is man who initiates an action or makes a choice according to his free will about which Allah has perfect foreknowledge. Since man himself is limited in powers, Allah brings his choices and actions into fulfillment. Man acts according to the foreknowledge that Allah has_freely and without compulsion. That is why he is responsible for these actions.

And yes! The Prophet (SAWW) informed us of a powerful ‘weapon’ we have in the form of ‘dua’, which can help us resist the blows of Destiny. In a hadith, he (SAWW) said, *“Nothing can change Destiny except a momin (believer)’s sincere prayer.”* (Sahih)

BENEFITS OF BELIEF IN AL QADAR:

Believing everything to be a part of Allah’s perfect plan, and everything to be according to His Will has a deep affect on the individual. If some evil befalls him, he accepts it as a trial set by Allah, does not despair and remains patient. This amazing ability to accept the severest of hardships without despair or complaint is entirely due to the belief that all is Allah’s Will, who is a Just Lord, and man must accept, submit and hope for His reward promised for the Sabirun (patient).

On the other hand, if some good happens to him, the believer will again see it as a blessing from Allah, and will remain thankful to Him. He will never let that good get to his head, never turn proud, arrogant or selfish, or forgetful of Who really gave him that good.

Belief in Al Qadar gives the believer the amazing power to be able to say ‘Inna lillah I wa inna ilai’ hi rajioon’ (It is Allah’s we are, and it is to Him we are bound to return) in the face of the hardest of suffering. It makes man live through life with courage, acceptance, patience and hope. It gives one a sense of peace, as he learns to ‘turn every matter to Allah’ and understands that all is His Will, Who knows how to recompense when He tries someone. It strengthens faith, and given one a mature outlook on life. In other words, it makes one come to terms and be at peace with his lot_ be it good or bad_ as he knows it is from Allah.

The Prophet (SAWW) has said in a sahih hadith: *“Wonderful are the affairs of a believer. If anything good comes his way, he is thankful to his Lord. And if a hardship befalls him, he remains patient.”* For those who believe in Al Qadar, there are only two states they can be in: Sabr (in times of hardship) or Shukr (in times of prosperity).