



# Life after Death in Islamic Tradition



# “The Hour”

They question you about the Hour, when it will set in. Say, “Knowledge of it lies only with my Lord. None but He shall manifest it at its proper time. Heavy shall it weigh upon the heavens and the earth. It shall not come upon you but suddenly.” They question thee as if thou knew it well. Say, “Knowledge thereof lies only with God, but most of humankind know not.” (7:187)



# The Trumpet

Then when the trumpet is blown with a single blast, and the earth and mountains are borne away and ground up in a single grinding, On that Day the Event shall befall, the sky shall be rent asunder; for that Day it shall be frail. (69:13-16)

And the trumpet will be blown. Then, behold, they will rush forth from their graves unto their Lord. They will say, "Oh, woe unto us! Who has raised us from our place of sleep?" "This is that which the Compassionate did promise; and the message bearers spoke true." It will be but a single cry. Then, behold, they will all be arraigned before Us! (36:51-53)



# Coming to God “alone”

And [God will say,] “Now you have come unto Us alone, just as We created you the first time, and you have left behind that which We had bestowed upon you. We see not with you your intercessors—those whom you claimed were partners [unto God]. Now the bond between you has been severed, and that which you once claimed has forsaken you.” (6:94)

So when the piercing cry does come, that Day when a man will flee from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his spouse and his children. For every man that Day his own affair shall be of sufficient concern. (80:33-37)

# The wages and profit of goodness (sin as a bad investment)

And be mindful of a day when you shall be returned to God. Then every soul shall be paid in full for what it earned, and they shall not be wronged. (2:281)

Truly men who give in charity and women who give in charity and loan to God a goodly loan, it will be multiplied for them, and theirs shall be a generous reward. (57:18)

[Regarding the unbelievers/wrongdoers]:

It is they who have purchased error at the price of guidance. Their commerce has not brought them profit, and they are not rightly guided. (2:16)

It is they who have purchased the world at the price of the Hereafter; for them the punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped. (2:86)



# The “balance”

And the weighing on that Day is true. So those whose balance is heavy, it is they who shall prosper. And as for those whose balance is light, it is they who have ruined their souls for having treated Our signs wrongfully.  
(7:8-9)

As for one whose scales are heavy, he shall enjoy a life of contentment. And as for one whose scales are light, the abyss shall be his mother. (10:6-9)



# The body as witness

On that Day We shall seal their mouths. Their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to that which they used to earn. (36:65)

And on the Day when the enemies of God are gathered unto the Fire, they will be driven forward, till, when they come upon it, their ears, their eyes, and their skins will bear witness against them for that which they used to do. And they will say to their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?" They will reply, "God, who makes all things speak, made us speak." He created you the first time, and unto Him shall you be returned. (41:19-21)



# The book of one's deeds

And the book will be set down. Then thou wilt see the guilty fearful of what is in it. And they will say, "Oh, woe unto us! *What a book this is! It leaves nothing out, neither small nor large, save that it has taken account thereof!*" And they find present [therein] whatsoever they did. And thy Lord wrongs no one. (18:49)

That Day you shall be exposed; *no secret of yours shall be hidden*. So as for one who is given his book in his right hand, he will say, "Here, read my book. Truly I knew for certain that I would meet my reckoning." ...And as for he who is given his book in his left hand, he will say, "Would that I had not been given my book. And did not know of my reckoning. Would that it were the final end. My wealth availed me not. My power has passed from me." (69:18-29)

As for one who is given his book in his right hand, he will be reckoned with an easy reckoning, and will return to his people joyful. But as for one who is given his book from behind his back, he will cry out for destruction, and will enter a blaze. Truly among his folk he was joyful. Truly he thought that he would never return. (84:7-14)



# Leniency in judgment

Whosoever brings a good deed shall have ten times the like thereof; but whosoever brings an evil deed, shall be recompensed only with the like thereof, and they shall not be wronged. (6:160)

[Hadith]

God has written down the good deeds and the bad ones... For one who has intended a good deed and has not done it, God writes it down as a full good deed, but if he has intended it and done it, God writes it down as ten good deeds, or multiplies it 700 times, or many times over.

If he has intended a bad deed and has not done it, God writes it down as a full good deed, but if he intended it and has done it, God writes it down as one bad deed. (Bukhari and Muslim)

# The Garden and its delights

...We neglect not the reward of he who is virtuous in deed. ... theirs shall be the Gardens of Eden, watered by flowing streams. Therein they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold, and shall wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade, reclining upon couches. Blessed indeed is the reward, and how beautiful a resting place! (18:30-31)

So God has shielded them from the evil of that Day, bestowed upon them radiance and joy. And rewarded them for their patience with a Garden and with silk. Therein they recline upon couches, seeing neither sun nor bitter cold. Its shade shall be close above them and its clusters shall be made to hang low. And vessels of silver and goblets of crystal are brought round for them — silver crystal that they have measured out with due measure. Therein they are given to drink of a cup mixed with ginger, a spring therein named Salsabīl. And immortal youths wait upon them; when you see them you would suppose them to be scattered pearls. And when you see there, you will see bliss and a great kingdom. Upon them are garments of fine green silk and rich brocade. They are adorned with silver bracelets and their Lord shall give them to drink of a drink most pure. (76:11-21)

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Is the likeness of the Garden which has been promised to the reverent—therein lie rivers of water incorruptible, rivers of milk whose flavor does not change, rivers of wine that is delicious for those who imbibe, and rivers of purified honey; therein they partake of every fruit and of forgiveness from their Lord—as one who abides in the Fire and is made to drink a boiling liquid, which then tears apart his bowels? (47:15)

# Companions in the Garden

Truly the reverent shall be in Gardens and bliss...“Eat and drink in enjoyment for that which you used to do,” reclining upon couches arrayed, and We shall wed them to wide-eyed maidens.

And those who believe and whose progeny followed them in faith, We shall cause their progeny to join them and will not stint aught of their deeds. Each man shall be held in pledge for that which he has earned...

Therein they shall pass a cup to one another wherein is no idle talk , nor incitement to sin.

And there wait upon them youths, for them, as if they were hidden pearls. And they will turn to one another, questioning each other, saying, “Truly aforetime, when amongst our families, we were anxious, but God was gracious unto us and shielded us from the punishment of the scorching wind.” (52:17-27)

Gardens of Eden that they shall enter along with those who were righteous from among their fathers, their spouses, and their progeny; and angels shall enter upon them from every gate. (13:23)

Therein are maidens of modest gaze, as yet untouched by man or jinn. So which of your Lord's favors do you two deny? Even as the ruby and as the coral stone are they...(55:56-58)

Truly the reverent shall be amidst gardens and springs: “Enter them in peace, secure”—We shall remove whatever rancor lies within their breasts—“as brothers, upon couches, facing one another.” No weariness shall befall them therein, nor shall they be expelled therefrom. (15:45-48)



# Hellfire

Those who disbelieve in Our signs, We shall surely cause them to burn in a Fire. As often as their skins are consumed, We shall replace them with other skins, that they may taste the punishment. Truly God is Mighty, Wise. (4:56)

Is this a better welcome or the tree of Zaqqūm? Truly We have made it a trial for the wrongdoers. Truly it is a tree that emerges in the depths of Hell-fire. Its spathes are as the heads of satans. They will eat thereof and fill their bellies therewith. Then on top of it they will have a brew of a boiling liquid. Then their return shall be unto Hell-fire. Truly they found their fathers astray, yet they hasten in their footsteps. (37:62-69)



# Companions in Hell

He will say, "Enter the Fire among communities of jinn and men that have passed away before you!" Every time a community enters, it curses its sister, till when they have all successively arrived there, the last of them will say of the first of them, "Our Lord, it was they who led us astray, so give them a double punishment in the Fire." He will say, "For each of you it shall be doubled, but you know not." And the first of them will say to the last of them, "You are no better than us, so taste the punishment for that which you have earned." (7:38-39)

# Questions raised by Qur'anic descriptions of afterlife

- ▶ What happens between individual death and universal resurrection?
  - ▶ Testing in the grave
- ▶ Will human beings see God in the hereafter?
- ▶ Are the delights of Paradise the only reason to do good?
  - ▶ Sufi notion of transcending desire for paradise/fear of hell
- ▶ Is God a strict accountant, bound by His own promises and threats in the Qur'an?
- ▶ What is the purpose of the record or book of one's deeds for a God who knows all?
- ▶ Are the Garden and Hellfire eternal?
- ▶ Are the descriptions of the Garden and Hellfire to be understood literally or metaphorically?