

“Among His signs, too, is the fact that the heavens and the earth stand firm by His command. In the end, you will all emerge when He calls you from the earth. Everyone in the heavens and earth belongs to Him, and all are obedient to Him. He is the One who originates creation and will do it again – this is even easier for Him. He is above all comparison in the heavens and earth; He is the Almighty, the All Wise.”
(Quran 30:25-27)



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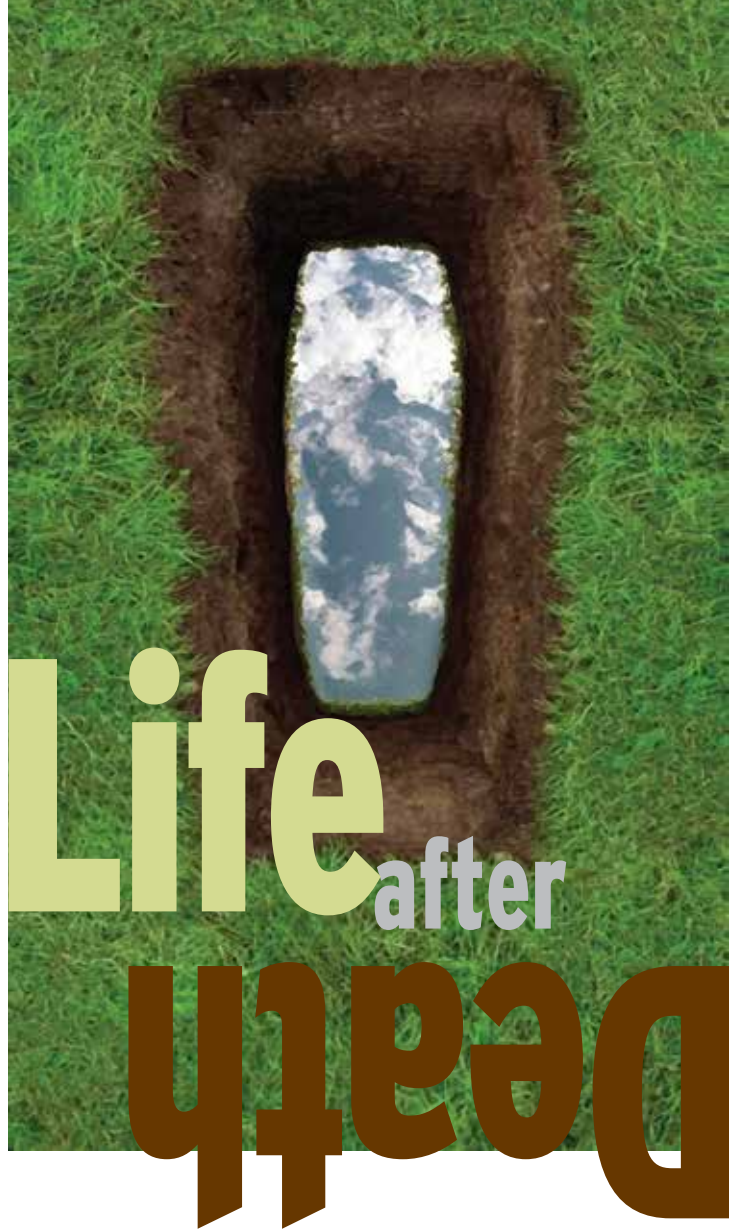
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In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Death is one of the few indisputable facts of life. Regardless of faith, race, status or age, we will all die. While the certainty of death is universally accepted, the question of what happens afterwards has been debated throughout history. Islam teaches that one's life doesn't end on earth; rather, it is followed by the eternal life of the hereafter. This pamphlet explains how this belief has a major impact on our earthly lives, while instilling hope for healing in a perfect world where God's ultimate justice will prevail.

Despite its inevitability, we get so absorbed in living that we forget about death. Our daily routines, the comfort of our homes and our relationships keep us so busy that we have little time left to ponder over the fleeting nature of this world.

Then, suddenly, we are forced to face the reality of our existence when a loved one is afflicted with a debilitating disease or we experience a shocking loss. Helpless, we are jolted by the frailty of life, leading us to question our priorities and reevaluate our lifestyles.

According to Islam, when confronted with a calamity, one should say, “*To God we belong and to Him we shall return*” (Quran 2:156). This invocation is also recited when someone dies. Reminding us of our origin and our ultimate destiny, it puts the purpose of our lives in perspective. God clearly states in the Quran, the divinely revealed message from God to all humanity, that He has created humankind to worship Him. Since worship is a comprehensive concept in Islam, consisting of specific rituals as well as general actions that promote good, it encourages people to conduct every aspect of their lives with God-consciousness.

Muslims believe they will return to God (Allah in Arabic) when they die. Therefore, instead of the end, death becomes part of a continuum which stretches into eternity.

BEYOND HERE

What happens after death? Does a world exist beyond this life? Is there such a place as heaven or hell? These are common questions we ask from time to time.

After all, the enigma of death stumps us. We've devised various ways of killing other humans. Yet, despite innumerable technological and medical advances, we still cannot prevent an individual from dying. Furthermore, unlike life which we experience daily, we really don't have firsthand knowledge of life after death. Aside from some near-death incidents, no one has come back from the dead to tell us what they encountered.

Due to their faith in the One God who created this universe and sustains it, Muslims rely on divine guidance for glimpses of a reality invisible to human eyes. Divine guidance comprises prophetic examples and scriptural revelations. God sent prophets to guide humanity, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad^p, the final prophet of God, peace be upon all of them. Moreover, He also revealed holy books, including the Torah, the Gospel and the Quran.

In keeping with the universal message of God, every prophet warned of the certainty of the afterlife and each of the divine books speaks of the existence of the soul. In the Quran, God promises, “*Every soul will taste death. Then to Us will you be returned*” (Quran 29:57).

“The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew”

(Quran 29:64).

On the Day of Judgment, every individual will be resurrected to account for their lives. God describes this event in the Quran, “*On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom’s weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom’s weight of evil will see that*” (Quran 99:6-8).

God will weigh everyone’s good and bad actions according to His Mercy and His Justice, forgiving many sins and multiplying the reward for many noble deeds. One who excels in goodness will be rewarded generously, but one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his virtues will be punished.

Those who fulfilled their purpose in life and lived righteously will enter an eternal paradise of pure bliss. The people of heaven will reside in beautiful mansions, no longer suffering from fatigue, disease and old age. God will remove animosity and pain from people’s hearts, providing supreme healing in a world of abundance and luxury, of lush gardens and flowing rivers.

In contrast, those who die in a state of transgression against God or oppress others will be led to Hellfire. Despite all of God’s blessings, they neglected their ultimate purpose of leading their lives in accordance with His Will and Guidance. The Quran describes Hell as a place filled with immense suffering, with extreme temperatures, unquenchable thirst and blazing flames.

Truly, God wants each one of us to be salvaged in the afterlife. He has sent guidance and left signs for those

who seek Him and reflect. At the same time, He has given us the choice to freely indulge in the world around us or to abide by His laws. In the Quran, God declares, “*Why should God make you suffer torment if you are thankful and believe in Him? God always rewar gratitude and He knows everything*” (Quran 4:147).

THE GREATER PLAN

Belief in the soul and the afterlife gives a context to our current existence. Those who focus only on this immediate life miss out on the bigger picture. Indeed, they become heedless of their purpose in life. God reminds humanity, “*The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew*” (Quran 29:64).

Islam teaches that this life is simply a test to determine our place in the eternal life after death. Those who understand the reality ahead of them are aware that their ultimate fate after death is based on their actions in this life. Such individuals are thankful for all the blessings that God has given them and humbly worship Him while promoting goodness in all aspects of their lives. When a person embraces such a God-conscious way of life, their purpose extends beyond merely enjoying worldly pleasures.

Their life is one of submission to God and they seek to positively contribute to the world around them. All of their transactions with people, even animals and the environment, are rooted in this motivation. They are guided by the certainty that they will one day return to their Creator and be held accountable for their deeds. Although they have the freedom to live according to their whims, they limit their attachment to this brief and imperfect life, seeking an eternal paradise in the hereafter.

WHY BELIEVE?

Believing in the soul and the afterlife is foremost about having faith in the unseen. Just as our souls are intangible beings giving life to our physical bodies, the world we see around us is functioning based on an invisible system created by God who is Ever-Watchful and All-Aware. Muslims believe that God is also Just and He maintains a meticulous record of our deeds. We will be recompensed for our earthly lives in the hereafter where ultimate justice prevails.

Humans naturally seek justice in all aspects of their lives. When a person works, they expect to receive an appropriate salary. When an individual is harmed, they seek compensation. When someone helps another, they anticipate appreciation for their effort. Even though humans strive hard to establish justice, the reality is that this world will never be perfectly just. Many criminals go unpunished while the oppressed are denied basic rights. Do their lives simply dissolve without any accountability or fair dealing?

God proclaims in the Quran, “*Do those who commit evil deeds really think that We will deal with them in the same way as those who believe and do righteous deeds, that they will be alike in their living and their dying? How badly they judge!*” (Quran 45:21).

In the afterlife, the evil doers will not be able to escape the grip of justice and victims of worldly suffering will be recompensed for their pain. People who spent their lives responsibly, avoiding temptations to commit sins, will also be rewarded. As mentioned in the Quran, “*God created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose: to reward each soul according to its deeds. They will not be wronged*” (Quran 45:22).

According to Islam, one of the greatest injustices humans can commit is to deny God’s existence, add partners to Him or worship worldly ideals or materialistic goals. Islam teaches that God is the Creator, Sustainer and Nourisher of every being in the heavens and the earth. As His creation, it is His right that we worship and obey Him. He showers us with His blessings every day out of His love and mercy. Worshiping Him is an expression of gratitude to God, and

ignoring Him or worshiping others is ungratefulness and a denial of His blessings.

If our man-made judicial systems punish people for committing injustices against other people, it is even more understandable that God would punish those who deny Him His rights and commit injustices against His creation. God says in the Quran, “*We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least, and if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account): and enough are We to take account*” (Quran 21:47).

GOD’S MERCY

As imperfect beings, we often make mistakes and commit wrong actions. While God does not expect perfection from us, He calls on us to strive to the utmost to worship Him and to live righteously. Out of His Mercy, God pardons whom He wills in the hereafter. God promises us in the Quran: “*And those who believe and do righteous deeds - We will surely remove from them their misdeeds and will surely reward them according to the best of what they used to do*” (Quran 29:7).

Muslims seek salvation in the hereafter by living a God-conscious and virtuous life in this world. The fear of accountability in the hereafter, along with hope in the promise of God’s ultimate justice, motivates them to orient their present lives around the comprehensive worship of God, the true purpose of human existence. In this way, they endeavor in this temporary life for eternal joy.

[To the righteous it will be said], “O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among My [righteous] servants, and enter My Paradise.”
(Quran 89:27-30)

Note: The superscript “^p” next to Prophet Muhammad^p represents the invocation Muslims say with his name:
May God’s peace and blessings be upon him.