

# **Belief in the Hereafter**

## **Module I**

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**Module I**

**Section I: Man's Awareness of Good and Evil**

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**Belief in the Hereafter**

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the most important tenets of Islam. It occupies the central position in the preaching mission of prophets. A *nabī* (prophet) is a *nabī* because he actually foretells this *nabā' azīm* (great news).<sup>1</sup> A *rasūl* (messenger) is a *rasūl* because he brings the message of its advent. John (sws) and Jesus (sws), Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) all have proclaimed it. The Torah tacitly refers to it and the Psalms clearly mention it. In the Gospel, Jesus (sws) has warned that on the Day of Judgement only those people will enter the Kingdom of Heaven who will please his heavenly father. The Qur'ān is a bearer of warning and glad tidings for this Day. It says that the manner in which people wake up from sleep (39:42), the manner in which rain enlivens a dead and desolate terrain (7:57; 35:9), the manner in which a whole human being comes into existence from a mere drop of water (75:3-40), in the same manner mankind will be made to rise one day from their graves. Raising up mankind on that Day would not be of any bother for the Almighty.

In the following paragraphs, the evidence on the coming of this Day is detailed out.

**Section I: Man's Awareness of Good and Evil**

The first thing is man's awareness of good and evil. It is because of this awareness that his chiding conscience rebukes him on every evil. It is a small court of justice which is found within every person which delivers its unbiased verdict at all times. Whether he accepts it or not, a person is able to clearly listen to this verdict after every blemish that emanates in his thoughts and deeds; this

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1. This is a reference to the words of a Qur'ānic verse: 78:2.

continues until he becomes so deeply involved in evil that this evil completely surrounds his faculties thereby lulling the calls of his conscience to sleep. This internal system of rebuke is a testimony of his own inner-self and is called the testimony of the rebuking-self. The Qur'ān presents it and tells man that he will not be left unaccountable for whatever he does. He should know that just as there exists a lesser abode of judgement within man, similarly a greater abode of judgement will one day be set up for the whole world; when it takes place, he will be held accountable before his Lord and rewarded and punished accordingly on the basis of his deeds. If a person denies such a day of accountability, then it is like denying himself and playing mischief before one's conscience:

[They think that the Day of Judgement will never be]; By no means! I present as evidence the Day of Judgement itself. And [they think that the Day of Judgement is a far-fetched reality]. By no means! I present as evidence this reproaching soul [within you]. Does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We can put together his very finger tips. [No this is not so]; in fact [the truth is that] man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]. He asks: "When will the Day of Judgement be?" But on the day when the sight is dazed and the moon eclipsed and the sun and the moon brought together, this very man will say: "Whither to flee?" – No! there is no refuge now! Towards your Lord that Day is the resting place. On that Day will man be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind. [No he cannot deny it]; in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses. (75:1-15)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, while explaining this argument of the Qur'ān, writes:

Now the question is that if a person has a guardian within his conscience which chides him on every evil that emanates from him, then how can it be imagined that man will not be held accountable for his deeds. Why would he go scot-free if he spends a life in whatever manner he wants to while negating the calls of his conscience? If a person will not be held accountable for his deeds, then where has this chiding conscience come into him from? If his Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him, then why and from where has He given him the feeling of being elated at a good deed and being pricked by his conscience at a bad one? Then from here another question arises: If God has set up a miniature court of justice in every person, then why will He not set up a greater court of justice which will hold the whole world accountable for good and evil which emanate from it and not reward and punish people accordingly? Any person who deliberates on these questions while disregarding his desires will reach the conclusion that the very being of a person bears witness that he has innate knowledge of good and evil; he will not be left unaccountable; there

definitely shall come one day when he will be punished for any misdeeds he may have done and be rewarded for his good deeds. To remind a person of this very Day, the Almighty has placed a miniature court of justice within a person's soul so that man does not remain indifferent to it, and if ever he becomes indifferent he can catch a glimpse of it by merely reflecting on his inner-self. It is this very reality which sages have taught us by saying that man is a miniature world and within this miniature world there is a reflection of the greater world. If a person has a true comprehension of his own self, he is able to comprehend both God and the Hereafter.<sup>2</sup>

### Section II: Man's Liking for Justice

The second thing is the nature of man by virtue of which he likes justice and dislikes injustice. No doubt, in spite of this dislike he still perpetrates injustice but this is not because he is not able to distinguish justice from injustice or that he likes the latter – it is because he loses his balance and poise by being overcome with desires and emotions. All of us know that a person may want to steal from another person's house but he would never like someone to steal from his own house; he may kill someone but would never like that anyone take his life or that of his relatives. Similarly, a person may be dishonest in weighing his merchandise for others but would never be happy if others are dishonest with him in this regard. If one asks these thieves, killers and swindlers about their actions they would confess that each of these is a crime and should be eliminated. Thus no one in his senses can regard good and evil to be equal or that both be dealt with in the same manner. The Qur'an presents these facts and asks the rejecters of the Day of Judgement:

Are We to deal with those who submit to Us as We deal with those who transgress? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you give?  
(68:35-36)

### Section III: The Element of Incompleteness

The third thing is the incompleteness found both in man and in this world. From whatever aspect these two are seen, it is clearly evident that in every single part of theirs the great power and wisdom of their maker is apparent. In everything great meaningfulness, matchless order and sequence, unrivalled mathematical perfection and symmetry, extra-ordinary thoroughness and immense beauty of creativity

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2. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., vol. 9 (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1985), 80.

astounds one's intellect. On the other hand, if one tries to understand both of them in their totality, one sees great incompleteness and lack of purpose in them.

Consequently, man observes that every thing through its very existence proclaims that it has been created for him, but nothing in this world tells him his own purpose of creation.

Also, one is not able to see any system which judges if human beings have or have not fulfilled the purpose, if ever there is one, for which they have been created.

Man is innately aware of the fact that he should be held accountable for each favour he has been blessed with; however, he has been left in this world without any such accountability. Thus when he dies, he calmly leaves this world without giving any account of these favours.

To make people adhere to truth and justice is the need of mankind, but man is not able to see any real motive for this in himself or in the world around him. Then the circumstances of this world negate what his conscience desires. It is his natural instinct that justice and oppression and good and evil must be discriminated; however, in this world this natural instinct of his is flouted in the worst possible way. Thus, there are many people who have left this world without being rewarded for their good deeds and there are many who have left this world without being punished for their evil deeds.

Contrary to all other creations like plants, animals and inorganic objects, man possesses an awareness of the future; however, this future always eludes him.

Hidden within him are great desires, but seldom are they fulfilled and more often than not his wishes are not materialized. So much so, the intense desire of observing God running the affairs of this universe once he professes faith in Him is never fulfilled in this world.

Man is not able to go to the extent his imagination can take him. He wants to pierce the skies, penetrate the earth and infiltrate into his own soul as far as he can. To satisfy his ambitions, he has tried to explore the skies and split the atom; however, all this effort has only proven to him that he cannot realize all the potentials of his imagination.

He is always searching for a world in which he can liberate himself from the sorrows and hardships of this world and from its limitations and live a life of happiness and contentment. This desire is found in him since time immemorial. However, he is never able to obtain this sought after world of his; on the contrary, he takes to his grave these cherished desires.

Every single word which a person speaks and every single deed that emanates from him are being safely recorded so that they can be recalled whenever required. All his good and evil thoughts are also permanently noted. The passage of time and change in circumstances do not affect these records. However, what is the purpose of this arrangement? Nothing in this world answers this question.

The personality of a human being has an existence of its own which is independent of his corporal being. The innumerable cells from which his body is

made keep dying and are replaced every now and then; however, his real personality always remains intact. His knowledge, memory, ambitions, habits and thoughts all remain the same, and are in no way altered by this cycle. Then where does this personality come from and where does it go? We are unable to answer this question too.

Millions of planets, much larger than the planet man inhabits, exist in the universe but there appears no trace of any life in them. Then why have they been created? Man does not know.

These facts are irrefutable. After this, there can only be two possibilities: first, to regard this world as a meaningless place and come to the conclusion that it is the workmanship of a merry-maker and nothing more; second, to understand it in combination with a Day of Judgement and that eternal kingdom of God which has been so vehemently affirmed and declared by His prophets. What is the verdict of intellect? Every person can comprehend:

Do you think that We have created you in vain and that to Us you would never be returned? So very lofty is the status of God, the true king. There is no god but Him, the Lord of the glorious throne. (23:115-116)

This the judgement passed by sense and reason. However, as soon as one gets to know that the Hereafter exists all these questions get an answer and all voids are filled and all known phenomena are explained and everything becomes set in its place; the world now seems to be complete, which in the absence of the Hereafter it did not; the real grandeur of this universe is thus revealed; man can now die with the certainty that whatever he was not able to obtain before his death, he will definitely obtain it after his death; he too will be blessed with the certitude and the calm which is found in the universe; he will be given an eternal world in which he can realize his innumerable and unending desires and where, on the one hand, there will be the eternal Paradise of pleasure, finesse and meaningfulness, and, on the other, the Fire of Hell where the evil will endure their punishments.

As a result, the relationship between this world and the next is that of what each member of a pair has with the other. Consequently, if causes have been joined with effects, potentials with their devices, natures with their intentions and souls with bodies and as a result are presenting a meaningful whole, then the Hereafter too is one member of the pair of which the other member is the Herein and both complement one another and become meaningful:

And We have made pairs of everything so that you may take heed. (51:49)

After this, the heart of every sensitive person shudders at the concept of accountability and it is as if he sees the Day of Judgement before his very eyes.

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