

Fate And Destiny (Al-Qadha'a wal-Qadar)

The subject of fate and destiny has occupied a vital role in Islamic thought and has given rise to many erroneous concepts, not least that of fatalism.

The subject of fate and destiny was first raised by the Greek philosophers. They had put forward philosophical questions such as: Does man have *free-will* or Is he forced to carry out his actions? These philosophers fell into two camps: those that held the view that man had *free-will*, and those who argued that man has no *free-will* and no choice in his behaviour.

When the Muslims came into contact with these ideas they attempted to answer the same questions from the view point of Islam. However, Islam is based on the concept that Allah is just and equitable, and according to this justice we have reward and punishment. Accordingly, the muslim thinkers attempted to reconcile this premise with the philosophical questions posed by the Greeks.

The Mu'tazila

The Mu'tazila were the first to take up the challenge. They responded by first establishing the central role of Allah's justice in order to prevent anyone accusing Allah of oppression. They concluded that Allah's justice has no meaning unless man has free-will. Thus, they said man creates his actions and he is free to do what he likes, because if he does something from his own will, by choice without coercion, then his reward and punishment are both rational and just.

They maintained that if Allah creates human beings and also forces them into a certain path, such as making people sinners or believers, then to punish the sinners for being and rewarding the obedient believers for believing would be unjust.

In other words, if man has no free-will and choice, it means Allah is asking man to do that which he cannot

which is rejected by Allah's statement '*Allah does not burden a soul more than it can bear.*' (al-Bakarah 2..286)

Central to their thought was the appearance of Allah's justice, thus the basis of their research in this question was Allah's reward and punishment pursuant to man's action.

The Mu'tazila opinion, that man creates his actions with no influence from Allah, caused a tremendous disturbance in the muslim nation.

In their methodology they followed the Greeks. Assuming Allah follows laws and codes like man, they made analogy between Allah ta'ala and man. Commenting on the will, they said that the person who wants good is good in himself, and the person who wants bad is both bad and evil. Likewise, he who orders justice is just, and he who orders oppression is an oppressor. Accordingly, they maintained, if we assume the will of Allah embraces every aspect of life, both good and bad, we must conclude Allah wants good and bad. Allah would then be described as good and bad, just and oppressor; which is clearly impossible.

They also said that if Allah wants the disbeliever to be a disbeliever (kafir) and the sinner to be sinful then He should not warn and admonish them from sin and disbelief. How could it be possible that Allah wanted Abu Lahab to be a disbeliever and yet commanded him to believe and warned him from disbelief? If any man had done such a thing he would be called a fool and ignorant. Praise be to Allah who could never be accused of such things. If the disbelief of the disbeliever and the sin of the sinner were wanted by Allah then they should not be punished, because their actions were obedient to the will of Allah. The Mutazila repeated such arguments, with proof derived from their mind.

The Mutazila supported their opinions based on

logic with verses from the Glorious Quran, such as:

'Allah never wants oppression for His people.'

They concluded from an of this that man has the free will to undertake an action or not; and that man initiates his actions with no influence from Allah. For them man had the ability to carry out or abstain from an action without any divine intervention from Allah ta'ala.

To prove that this understanding was correct they explained how everyone easily notices when they do or do not do an action without any coercion. For example, the difference between forced and voluntary movements of the body, like, for instance, the difference between moving one's hands and shaking from a nervous disorder. Similarly, one notices a difference between intentionally climbing to the top of the roof and unintentionally falling off the roof. Thus, man initiates and chooses the voluntary action, but has no power over the obliged actions.

The Mu'tazila supported their view with the following verses of Quran:

"Allah does not change the circumstances of any people until they have changed what is within themselves."

(al-Ra'ad 13..111

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"Every soul is a pledge for its deeds."

[al-Muddather 74.381

They made their own interpretation for verses that contradicted their view, such as the verse:

"But Allah has created you and your handiwork."

[as-Saffat 37..91)

answer to the question, who is responsible for the effects and attributes of actions and things, such as the pain one experiences when bitten, the taste of food, and the knives ability to cut; they answered, man. All attributes, emotions, organic needs and instincts, they maintained, are from man.

To conclude, they held the opinion that man has free will to initiate and to undertake his actions, and he creates their effects (such as cutting and burning) and the attributes of things.

AL JABRIYAH

In the atmosphere created by the Mu'tazila a new group emerged, known by the name AI Jabriyah; the most famous of whom was known as Jahm ibn Safwan. They held the opinion that man was compelled to carry out actions, man had no free will and no power to initiate his actions. In other words, man was like a feather in the wind or a log floating on the sea.

They argued, if man creates his own actions then

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Allah's power does not extend to cover everything, i.e., man is a partner with Allah in creating things in this world.

if it is held that Allah's power creates things, then, by definition, man has nothing to do with creating the actions; neither in part or in full.

AI-Jabriyah maintained that Allah

is the creator of man's deeds and

according to Allah's will the individual carries out the action.

AI-Jabriyah believed that man was nothing more than a receiver compelled by Allah, like any object, to carry out actions without any will or influence.

They brought verses of Quran to support their opinions, such as:

"You donor guide whom you like, rather Allah guides whom He likes." [al-Qasas 2&,56]

'Allah has created you and your handy work'
[as-Saffat 37.96]

'Allah is the creator of everything. " *[as-Zumur 39.62]*

As for man's organic needs and instincts, and the effects and attributes of the actions, such as: taste, joy, hunger, courage, the knives ability to cut, or the fires ability to burn, they said all these things are from Allah.

THE PEOPLE OF SUNNAH

The people of Sunnah (ahlis-Sunnah) responded to the ideas of AI-Mu'tazila and AI-Jabriyah. They said all man's actions occur by the will of Allah. If Allah wants something He merely says *"Be and it is."* They contented that Allah has bestowed on every creature certain qualities, like good and bad, and these qualities contain reward and punishment. Man's deeds, therefore, are the result of destiny. As for the sinful and disbelievers, they argued that Allah wants the sinners to be sinful and the disbelievers to be disbelievers, not by obligation but by their choice. Allah knew that they, by choice, would become sinners and disbelievers.

The people of Sunnah also said that man's actions are the result of free will and choice. Thus, if man obeys Allah he is rewarded and if he is disobedient he is punished.

Actually, in this last point Ahlis-Sunnah's explanation contradicts their earlier point, namely, that Allah is the creator of man's deeds. Their opinion was that man had choice in certain limited matters, for example, like the action of striking it is Allah who creates everything and man is just like a receiver. Unfortunately they did not explain what being a receiver meant.

Ahlis-Sunnah's understanding was very similar to that of AI-Jabriyah. They attempted to bring together the views of AI-Mu'tazila and AI-Jabriyah in a synthesis-

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AL-QADHA'A W@ WAL-QADAR

AI-Qadha'a has many meanings in the Arabic language, for example it can be used to say he made it perfectly, he judged with certainty, or he ordered. Allah in Quran has used the word qadha'a in a number of ways, such as:

'If He WANTS something He just says be and it is.' *[al-Imran 3.47]* Sometimes the word is just to signify that Allah measures the life-term of every human being; it is also used to convey the meaning of to judge, order, create, complete, finish etc. The word qadha'a has no definitive religious meaning there is no single verse or hadith which explains it. Its meaning comes from the Arabic language and it has nothing to do with the terms Qadha'a wal Qadar which were the subject of the debate between the Mu'tazila, Jabriyah and Ahlus-Sunnah. These two terms were only used together after the Muslims translated the philosophical works of the Greeks.

At the time of the Sahaba (May Allah be pleased with them), there was no confusion in the understanding of these two words. They understood the words Qadha'a wal Qadar to mean the divine destiny, i.e., what Allah has written for man which only Allah knows.

When the Muslims responded to the challenge of the disbelievers they used these two words Qadha'a wal Qadar in an entirely different way, because they were influenced by the Greeks.

Accordingly, it is wrong to consider Qadha'a wal Qadar as a secret of Allah which is forbidden to be discussed. We have to examine this subject because it concerns the mind and is connected with the belief and creed.

The basis of the subject of Qadha'a wal Qadar is the question of whether man is forced to do good and bad actions or is he free to choose.

The meaning of Qadha'a wal Qadar is the action of people and the characteristics of things. The basis of the subject is not whether the actions of man are created by man or Allah; nor is it the will of Allah related to man's actions, i.e., man's actions must materialise because of this will. Neither is the basis connected with the knowledge of Allah i.e., Allah knows that man will do so and so and His knowledge encompasses this. Finally, the basis of Qadha'a wal Qadar has nothing to do with the question of whether man's actions are recorded in the Protected Decree thus having to carry out an action in accordance with what is recorded. All these questions have no relationship to the subject of

reward and punishment which is the actual basis of the subject of Qadha'a wal Qadar.

Any person who scrutinises man's actions will observe that man lives within two spheres.

The first sphere man dominates; in other words, in this sphere of his life he undertakes all his actions with free Will and by choice.

It is the sphere within which he proceeds freely according to the particular life style he chooses, whether it be according to the sharia or not. In this sphere actions which are carried out by man, or involving him, happen by his will. For example, he walks, drinks, eats and travels whenever he chooses, likewise he refrains from these things whenever he chooses, he also satisfies his instincts and organic needs when he likes, thus he satisfies the instincts of procreation and ownership, and the needs of hunger and thirst as and when he chooses. At this he performs or abstains from freely. Therefore man is reckoned on the actions which occur within this sphere. Accordingly, these actions are concluded from Qadha'a.

In the second sphere man is dominated, i.e., man has no choice in the actions that materialise or in their existence. In this respect man is no different from any other creature, because all are obliged to conform to the universal laws, thus surrender to it. Hence, man cannot walk on water, fly, choose the colour of his skin and so forth. Furthermore, there are other actions, within this sphere, that happen beyond man's control which are not related to the laws of the universe and which he cannot reject. Examples of this type of action, where man is an unwitting partner, abound. For example, if someone shoots at a bird and, without intention, misses the bird and hits a man thus killing him; or if a car, train or plane should crash without any ability to avoid the accident, and as a result the passengers die.

All such actions which fall within this latter sphere are known as qadha'a (fate) because Allah alone decreed them. Therefore, man is not reckoned on the, actions, whether they are good or bad - although @ Allah knows if they are good or bad - because man has no influence on them. Man does not know how they are brought into existence and he is unable to reject them.

Man must believe in this fate and that this fate is from Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala.

QADAR (DESTINY).

It is evident that the actions which occur, either in the sphere that dominates man or the sphere which he dominates, are from or involve objects of the universe. Allah created certain attributes for these objects, for example, He created in fire the attribute in fire of burning, in wood the attribute of catching fire and in the knife the attribute of cutting. Allah made the attributes an integral and perpetual part of the objects according to the laws of the universe. When it appears that the attributes are no longer present, it means Allah has removed them and such a thing would be unnatural; it only happens to the prophets as a miracle for

them like when Allah removed the fire's ability to burn, Ibrahim (A.S.).

The keen observer will note that these attributes are not produced by man or the objects themselves. Allah alone created the objects, instincts and organic needs. Thus when the desires occur in man, or when he opens his eyes to see, or when he throws a stone in the air and it comes down all this is from Allah not man. Allah has already ordained these effects. In the procreation instinct Allah created the sexual inclination, likewise in the eye the ability to see. Man does not create his vision or the desire, what man chooses to see and how he satisfies his desire is, of course, another matter.

Although the attributes in objects, instincts and organic needs are ordained and made an integral part of ,them by Allah, and they have an influence on the out-

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come of an action, nevertheless, these attributes do not m themselves initiate action; it is man himself who initiates the actions through and when using them. Hence, the sexual inclination in the instinct of procreation has the propensity for good and bad. It is men

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who makes the good and bad not the instinct or organic need.

Conclusion

The subject of Qadha'a wal Qadar is connected with the actions of man that occur within the sphere of fife that dominates him. The actions which man undertakes by his complete free-will and by choice have no connection with the subject. Therefore, no one can use al Qadha'a wal Qadar as an excuse for committing sin -

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