

# Good News

*And give good news to those who do good (to others) – Holy Quran 22:37*

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## ***Predestination, Fatalism*** and the Nature of ***Good*** and ***Evil***

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*(This brief rendition is based on the detailed study made by Maulana Muhammad Ali on the topic as presented by him in chapter 7, entitled ‘Taqdir or Predestination’ in his ‘The Religion of Islam’. Anyone interested in a more in-depth study of the topic, is encouraged to read the said chapter. Copies of the book are available from the editor.)*

### **Background**

There is a general misconception that Almighty God has *predestined* everything that will happen in the life of a person whether it is *good* or *bad*. There is also the belief that we should accept our fate as there is nothing we can do to change what is pre-ordained. This is known as *fatalism*. Therefore we often hear when a disaster befalls someone, like when someone dies in an unfortunate accident, it is said that it was predestined by God as if it was God’s

plan that those things should take place. It is also often argued that God, having *fore-knowledge* of things, must have predetermined the fate of things.

The ideas of *predestination*, *fatalism* and the creation of *good* and *evil* as being part of God’s law are not known to the Holy Qur’an. These are of later growth among Muslims that came in contact with Persian religious thought known as the Magian or Zoroastrians that taught the doctrine that there are two creators, a creator of good and a creator of evil. In addition to this, much of the confusion stems from a lack of knowledge of the Divine Law pertaining to *creation*, especially the creation of the human species with its *special* attributes as well as the nature of *good* and *evil* as taught in the Holy Quran.

### **The Universal Law of Creation in the Holy Quran:**

‘Glorify the name of thy Lord, the Most High!

Who creates (*khalafa*), then makes complete (or brings to maturity or perfection), (*sawa*)

And Who measures (*qadarra*), then guides (*hadaa*),’ - (87:1-3)

Four specific elements of the immutable Law of Creation are mentioned here, namely:

1. ***Khalq*** – Creation
2. ***Taswiya*** – Completion, Maturity, Perfection
3. ***Qadir or taqdir*** –The *measured* path of growth and development assigned to every created being by the Creator, referred to as the *Evolver to Perfection (Rabb)* in the Holy Quran. This is the Law of Nature that we see operating throughout the universe - a manifestation of Almighty God’s *creative power - Rabbubiyat*.

Thus we see, for example, an apple seed growing into an apple and nothing else; a date-stone growing into palm trees and dates and nothing else; the sperm of an ape giving rise to an ape and nothing else; the human sperm giving rise to a human being and nothing else. So an ape cannot give rise to a human and a human cannot give rise to an ape. This law of *taqdir*, according to the Holy Quran, applies to every created thing:

‘Surely We create everything according to a measure (*qadr*) - (54:49)

4. ***Hidaya*** – Guidance. Man, however, is the only creature that has been given *discretionary powers* which means he can make good or bad choices. The All Wise has thus made provision for his guidance (*hidaya*) as to how to make the right decisions and steer away from evil. This is the only way he can reach a stage of *maturity* of the soul. The guidance comes in the form of revelations to His chosen Messengers and captured in their Scriptures. It also comes in the form of Divine inspiration to man in general.

Of note is the fact that whereas the *taqdir* of the lower animals is limited to this world; the *taqdir* of man will continue into the next life until the soul reaches a *spiritual* fusion with the Divine. The Holy Quran makes it very clear that our final destination or goal is our *Rabb* (Lord) Who brought us into existence:

‘And that to thy Lord (*Rabb*) is the (final) goal (*mntaha*)’ – (53:42)

However, we should remember that only once the soul has attained the stage of ‘perfection’ will it reach *mntaha* - its final goal:

‘And the soul and its perfection (*sawaha*)!’ — (91:7)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him), showed what this perfection (*sawaha*) of

the human soul entails in his experience on the night of his *Mi'raj* (Ascension) as recorded in the Holy Quran:

‘So he (*Muhammad*) attained to perfection’ – (53:6)

‘The heart was not untrue in seeing what he saw.’ – (53:11)

‘And certainly *he saw Him* in another descent,’ - (53:13)

Note the Prophet did not see God with his physical eyes. The declaration ‘*he saw Him*’ with his *heart* signifies the highest degree of spirituality the soul of a mortal is capable of reaching. This is the path (*taqdir*) and end goal (*sawa*) that the human soul is destined for. For the ordinary man its fulfilment will most likely *not* be achieved here on this earth, but will progress further in the next life. In this regard the Holy Quran makes it clear that death is not the end of this journey (*taqdir*) to *perfection* of the human soul:

‘We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome,

That We may change your state and *make you grow into what you know not*’ – (56:60, 61)

**Good deeds facilitate the progress of the soul to perfection (*taqdir*); evil deeds retard it**

As mentioned above, Almighty God has endowed man with a *free will* to choose what or what not to do. He can follow God’s laws or choose to go against it and face the consequences. Thus the Holy Quran says:

‘The truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve.’ – (18:29)

It is the exercise of his discretionary power to pursue a path of either *good* or *evil* either of which will give rise to specific consequences according to the Divine Law of *taqdir*. Man is thus the author of his own destiny.

Ignorance of the nature of good and evil also led to the misconception that Almighty God is the *Creator* of *good* and *evil*. As we already indicated, good or evil comes into being as a consequence of man’s own actions. Any actions that are conducted within the laws of God are conducive to good consequences but actions that violate the laws of God produce disastrous consequences.

For instance, God has gifted man with the power of speech, which he can use either to tell a truth, or lie, slander or defame and face the consequences of such actions. He has also been given intelligence to harness natural energy which he can use to his advantage or to

destroy himself. We have already witnessed examples of these, respectively, in the prevailing advanced technology and the destructive weaponry of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus we find that the use of the same Divine resources may be a virtue on one occasion or an evil on another, depending on the circumstances and intent.

For example a blow struck in self-defence or in defence of a helpless person will be looked upon as a virtuous deed; whereas an unprovoked blow struck aggressively is frowned upon as downright evil. Hence *evil* is also called *zulm*, in Arabic, which, according to Raghīb, respected Arabic lexicologist, means *the placing of a thing in a place other than that for what it is meant; either by falling short or by excess or by deviation from its time or its place.*

Thus exercising power in the right manner, at the right moment, for the right reason is a *virtue* or an act of *morality*, and its use in a wrong manner, at the wrong moment, for the wrong reasons is a *vice* or *evil*. This is in accordance with the Divine law of *cause* and *effect* prevailing in the universe.

Nowhere does the Holy Quran say God *created* good and evil.

However, the persistent acts of evil in disobedience to the laws of Almighty God,

may lead to a guilty person's fate being ordained for punishment. Thus speaking of the wife of Lot, the Holy Qur'an says:

‘We ordained (*qaddarna*) that she shall surely be of those who remain behind.’ - (15:60; 27:57).

But even here it does not mean that God had ordained that she should *be a doer of evil* and that she had no choice in the matter. Nay! This verse points to an ordinance which holds good for all *evil-doers* that they should suffer the *evil consequences* of what they have done. She was not one of the faithful, but a disbeliever, so that when Divine punishment overtook the evil-doers, she was ordained together with them to suffer the *well-known* dire consequences of their evil deeds.

As already indicated above, it is important to understand that the Divine Will does *not* compel man to take a certain course as clearly stated in the Holy Quran:

‘There is no compulsion in Religion – the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error’ – (2:256)

Thus there may be a hundred and one causes that lead man to decide on a certain course in a particular case and his responsibility may vary according to those circumstances; but still the choice is his

and so is the responsibility and the consequences that will follow according to Divine law.

So there is no inevitable ‘cast in stone’ *predestined good or evil fate* awaiting us, but there are definite consequences that we will face and these might be *good or evil* depending on the nature of our actions at any given time as described above.

In the end, it is man who determines his own destiny. Even if most of his life he pursued a path of wrongdoing that brought about stressful consequences, he may proactively change course for the better by doing good and avoiding evil and never give up on God’s Forgiveness and Mercy.

**We strongly condemn all forms of human rights and environmental abuse. We especially condemn the ruthless killings of all innocent parties in the name of Religion or State!**

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