

UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

THEMES AND STYLE

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CHAPTER 7:

LIFE AND BEYOND

In the Qur'an life in this world is an inseparable part of a continuum, a unified whole – life, death, life – which gives our life a context and relevance.

In this context, the life of the individual is made meaningful and enriched inasmuch as it is full of 'good works'. Life in this world leads to the afterlife, a belief which is fundamental in the Qur'an. The afterlife is not treated in the Qur'an in a separate chapter, or as something on its own, for its own sake, but always in relation to life in this world.

Linguistically it is not possible in the Qur'an to talk about this life without semantic reference to the next since every term used for each is comparative with the other. Thus: *al-'ula* and *al-akhira* (the First and the Last life), *al-dunya* and *al-akhira* (the nearer and the further/latter life). Neither has a name specific to itself, or independent of the other. Consequently, the frequency of the terms in the Qur'an is the same, in the case of *dunya* and *akhira* – each appears 115 times.

There is a reference, direct or indirect, to one aspect or another of the afterlife on almost every single page of the Qur'an. This follows from the fact that belief in the afterlife is an article of faith which has a bearing on every aspect of the present life and manifests itself in the discussion of the creed, the rituals, the ethics and the laws of Islam. In discussing the afterlife, moreover, the Qur'an addresses both believers and non-believers. The plan of two worlds and the relationship between them has been, from the beginning, part of the divine scheme of things:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ شَيْءٌ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

IT IS GOD who has created you, and then has provided you with sustenance, and then will cause you to die, and then will bring you to life again. Can any of those beings or powers to whom you ascribe a share in His divinity do any of these things? Limitless is He in His glory, and sublimely exalted above anything to which men may ascribe a share in His divinity!

30:40

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ وَإِلَيْنَا الْمَصِيرُ

Verily, it is We who grant life and deal death; and with Us will be all journeys' end.

50:43

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى

out of this earth have We created you, and into it shall We return you, and out of it shall We bring you forth once again. 20:55

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ

He who has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test and thus show which of you is best in conduct, and make you realize that He alone is almighty, truly forgiving.

67:2

According to the Qur'an, belief in the afterlife, which is an issue fundamental to the mission of Muhammad, was also central to the mission of all prophets before him.

Belief in the afterlife is often referred to in conjunction with belief in God, as in the expression: 'If you believe in God and the Last Day'. Believers are frequently reminded in the Qur'an, 'Be mindful of God and know that you shall meet Him' (2:233) (used in this instance to urge fitting treatment of one's wife in intimate situations). 'To Him is the homecoming/ the return' (36:83

فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

Limitless, then, in His glory is He in whose hand rests the mighty dominion over all things; and unto Him you all will be brought back!; 40:3

غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الطَّوْلِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

forgiving sins and accepting repentance, severe in retribution, limitless in His bounty. There is no deity save Him: with Him is all journeys' end, and *passim*. As a belief in the afterlife is so fundamental

to Islam, it is only right that Muslims should regularly be reminded of it not only throughout the pages of the Qur'an but also in their daily life. Practising Muslims in their five daily prayers repeat their praise of God at least seventeen times a day, '

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Lord of the Day of Judgment! (1:4).

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

they know but the outer surface of this world's life, whereas of the ultimate things they are utterly unaware. (30:7)

or to the prospect of coming to judgement (32:14) are signs of the unbeliever. All this heightens the believer's

sense of responsibility for actions in this life. In fact the principles and details of religion are meant to be seen within the framework of the interdependence of this life and the afterlife and to colour the Muslims' conception of life and the universe and have a bearing on their actions in this life.

The Importance of the Resurrection and Judgement in the Afterlife

Divine wisdom and justice necessitate the resurrection of the dead and judgement in an afterlife:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ ۖ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ

AND remember: We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them without an inner truth; but, behold, the Hour when this will become clear to all is indeed yet to come. Hence, forgive men's failings with fair forbearance:

15:85

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ
فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۖ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us?" KNOW, then, that God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: there is no deity save Him, the Sustainer, in bountiful almightiness enthroned!:23:115-6

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ
أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ

AND thus it is: We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between them without meaning and purpose, as is the surmise of those who are bent on denying the truth: but then, woe from the fire of hell unto all who are bent on denying the truth! For, would We treat those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds in the same manner as We shall treat those who spread corruption on earth? Would We treat the God-conscious in the same manner as the wicked?
38:27-8

In the Qur'an, as in other scriptures, people are required to labour, doing certain things and refraining from others. Justice requires that labour should be rewarded. Recompense is made, not during the period of labour in this world, but in the afterlife:

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّينِ
أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمَ الْحَاكِمِينَ

What, then, O man, could henceforth cause you to give the lie to this moral law?
is not God the most just of judges?
95:7-8

The resurrection is thus:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۖ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ ۚ بَلَىٰ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ
لَيَبْيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ الَّذِي يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ

As it is, they swear by God with their most solemn oaths, "Never will God raise from the dead anyone who has died!" Yea indeed! This very thing has God promised by a promise which He has willed upon Himself; but most people know it not. He will resurrect them to the end that He might make clear unto them all whereon they now hold divergent views, and that they who are bent on denying the truth of resurrection might come to know that they were liars.

16:38-9

In the Qur'an, judgement is so essential to human beings that God has created them with a peculiar, innate permanent judge within themselves, that is 'conscience', the 'reproachful soul'. Indeed this is marked in a chapter entitled *The Resurrection* in which God declares:

لَا أَقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
وَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ
أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ
بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ

NAY! I call to witness the Day of Resurrection! But nay! I call to witness the accusing voice of man's own conscience! Does man think that We cannot resurrect him and bring his bones together again? Yea indeed, We are able to make whole his very finger-tips!

75:1-4

The 'reproachful soul' foreshadows the judgement and is here placed side by side, in the oath, with the resurrection that precedes the judgement. In answer to the unbelievers' incredulity that the scattered bones of dead people can be resurrected into new life, God swears that it will be done. Modern interpreters see in the phrase, 'his very fingers', reference to the power of God who moulds our finger prints in a way unique to each individual: He has done it in this life and can do it again in the afterlife.

The Possibility of the Resurrection of the Dead

In addition to the necessity and desirability of the resurrection and afterlife, the Qur'an turns repeatedly to its possibility. During the Meccan period of the Prophet's mission, a great deal of the Qur'an was concerned with the three fundamental beliefs of the unity of God, the prophethood of Muhammad and other prophets before him, and the resurrection and judgement. The resurrection in particular seemed incredible to unbelievers. Indeed much of what one hears today is reminiscent of what unbelievers said at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an. They felt the resurrection to be biologically impossible, asking again and again:

Arabic and would say, "What! After we have died and become mere dust and bones, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead? -

56:47

Against this, the Qur'an employs a basic argument which is not difficult to accept rationally, equating two similar feats: the power that can accomplish something once can do it again. From the fact that human beings now exist, it is clear that divine power was not incapable of making them: why should it be assumed that such power will be incapable of doing for a second time what it achieved the first (50:15 *arabic* Could We, then, be thought of as being worn out by the first creation? Nay - but some people are still lost in doubt about the possibility of a new creation!)? Indeed a second creation is

easier than a first one (30:27)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ ۚ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

And He it is who creates all life in the first instance, and then brings it forth anew: and most easy is this for Him, since His is the essence of all that is most sublime in the heavens and on earth, and He alone is almighty, truly wise.).

The Qur'an repeatedly reminds people that they were made into human beings from something very small:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ
وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ ۖ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ
قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ
الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ

IS MAN, then, not aware that it is We who create him out of a mere drop of sperm - whereupon, lo! he shows himself endowed with the power to think and to argue? And now he argues about Us, and thinks of Us in terms of comparison, and is oblivious of how he himself was created! And so he says, "Who could give life to bones that have crumbled to dust?" Say: "He who brought them into being in the first instance will give them life once again, seeing that He has full knowledge of every act of creation: He who produces for you fire out of the green tree, so that, lo! you kindle your fires therewith." 36:77-80

This last point affirms the ability of a power that generates things from seemingly opposite or different things – a fire from green trees and bodies from bones and dust; just as a full grown man is different from the little germ that was his beginning. If they ask:

وَقَالُوا إِذَا ضَلَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَإِنَّا لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ كَافِرُونَ

For, many are they who say, "What! After we have been dead and lost in the earth, shall we indeed be restored to life in a new act of creation?" Nay, but by saying this they deny the truth that they are destined to meet their Sustainer! 32:10

The answer comes:

قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا تَنْقُصُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَعِنْدَنَا كِتَابٌ حَفِيظٌ

Well do We know how the earth consumes their bodies, for with Us is a record unfailing.
50:4

Another rational argument the Qur'an uses to convince disbelievers of the truth of the resurrection is the comparison between the greater act of creation and the lesser act of resurrection:

أَوَلَيْسَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ ۚ بَلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ

Is, then, He who has created the heavens and the earth not able to create anew the like of those who have died? Yea, indeed - for He alone is the all-knowing Creator:.

36:81

The Qur'an asserts for those who may not know it:

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth: yet most men do not understand what this implies.

40:57

Perhaps when the unbelievers say it is not possible to turn dust into a new creation, what they really think is that it is not possible for human power like their own; but, after all, they have not created themselves or the heavens and the earth (52:35-6

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمْ الْخَالِقُونَ
أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ

Or do they deny the existence of God? Have they themselves been created without anything that might have caused their creation? or were they, perchance, their own creators? And have they created the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no certainty of anything!). A greater power than their own has created

them once and can do so again, and has also created what is greater than them. As the Qur'an argues with the unbelievers, sometimes it even omits the name of the Creator, in order to focus their minds more clearly on the argument itself, saying simply, 'He who did it first', 'who created the Heavens', etc. When the Prophet recites Qur'anic verses that confirm the resurrection in the afterlife, the unbelievers of his time challenge him personally:

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتُّبُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

And so, whenever Our messages are conveyed to them in all their clarity, their only argument is this: "Bring forth our forefathers as witnesses, if what you claim is true!" 45:25

The Qur'an directs the Prophet:

Say: "It is God who gives you life, and then causes you to die; and in the end He will gather you together on Resurrection Day, the coming of which is beyond all doubt - but most human beings understand it not."

45:46

In discussing the resurrection, moreover, the Qur'an cites phenomena very familiar to human beings to show the power that takes creation through different stages, particularly in the life of people and plants.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ثَرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لِّبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ۚ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لَتَبَلَّغُوا أَشَدَّكُمْ ۚ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُّتَوَفَّىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُّرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمَرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا ۚ وَتَرَىٰ الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

O MEN! If you are in doubt as to the truth of resurrection, remember that, verily, We have created every one of you out of dust, then out of a drop of sperm, then out of a germ-cell, then out of an embryonic lump complete in itself and yet incomplete so that We might make your origin clear unto you. And whatever We will to be born We cause to rest in the mothers' wombs for a term set by Us, and then We bring you forth as infants and allow you to live so that some of you might attain to maturity: for among you are such as are caused to die in childhood, just as many a one of you is reduced in old age to a most abject state, ceasing to know anything of what he once knew so well. And if, O man, you art still in doubt as to resurrection, consider this: you canst see the earth dry and lifeless - and suddenly, when We send down waters upon it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of lovely plant! All this happens because God alone is the Ultimate Truth, and because He alone brings the dead to life, and because He has the power to will anything.

22:5-6

Indeed the Qur'an uses the very same Arabic verb for 'bringing forth' people from their mothers' wombs (16:78 arabic And God has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs knowing nothing-but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful.), 'bringing forth' plants from the earth (6:99 arabic And He it is who has caused waters to come down from the sky; and by this means have We brought forth all living growth, and out of this have We brought forth verdure. Out of this do We bring forth close-growing grain; and out of the spathe of the palm tree, dates in thick clusters; and gardens of vines, and the olive tree, and the pomegranate: all so alike, and yet so different! Behold their fruit when it comes to fruition and ripens! Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who will believe!) and 'bringing forth' people from the earth at the resurrection (30:19 arabic He it is who brings forth the living out of that which is dead, and brings forth the dead out of that which is alive, and gives life to the earth after it had been lifeless: and even thus will you be brought forth from death to life).

Not only does the Qur'an present proof of the resurrection, but it turns the argument against those who deny it, pointing out that they themselves have no proof for their own position:

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ ۚ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ۚ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ

And yet they say: "There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time destroys us." But of this they have no knowledge whatever: they do nothing but guess.

45:24

لَيَبَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ الَّذِي يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ

He will resurrect them to the end that He might make clear unto them all whereon they now hold divergent views, and that they who are bent on denying the truth of resurrection might come to know that they were liars.

16:39;

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوا يَا حَسْرَتَنَا عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِمْ ۚ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ

Lost indeed are they who consider it a lie that they will have to meet God -till the Last Hour suddenly comes upon them, and they cry, "Alas for us, that we disregarded it!" - for they shall bear on their backs the burden of their sins: oh, how evil the load with which they shall be burdened!

6:31

Beyond this Life

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۚ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ ۚ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

Every human being is bound to taste death: but only on the Day of Resurrection will you be requited in full for whatever you have done - whereupon he that shall be drawn away from the fire and brought into paradise will indeed have gained a triumph: for the life of this world is nothing but an enjoyment of self-delusion. (3:185)

Death is the gateway to the return to God (6:61–2

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّقَنَّهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُونَ
ثُمَّ رُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۚ أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ

And He alone holds sway over His servants. And He sends forth heavenly forces to watch over you until, when death approaches any of you, Our messengers cause him to die: and they do not overlook anyone. And they who have died are thereupon brought before God, their true Lord Supreme. Oh, verily, His alone is all judgment: and He is the swiftest of all reckoners!). Man's body may disintegrate after death but his soul is not the object of annihilation. By death man enters the stage of *barzakh*, an intermediate state between this life and the resurrection (23:100)

لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ۚ كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ۚ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed aforetime!" Nay, it is indeed but a meaningless word that he utters: for behind those who leave the world there is a barrier of death until the Day when all will be raised from the dead!). The Qur'an says little about this stage: it indicates only that the soul will receive reward or punishment (3:169–71)

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

But do not think of those that have been slain in God's cause as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer have they their sustenance, exulting in that martyrdom which God has bestowed upon them out of His bounty. And they rejoice in the glad tiding given to those of their brethren who have been left behind and have not yet joined them, that no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve: they rejoice in the glad tiding of God's blessings and bounty, and in the promise that God will not fail to requite the believers; 16:32

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ ۚ يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

those whom the angels gather in death while they are in a state of inner purity, greeting them thus: "Peace be upon you! Enter paradise by virtue of what you were doing in life!"; 40:45–6

فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِ مَا مَكَرُوا ۖ وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ
النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا ۖ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ

And God preserved him from the evil of their scheming, whereas suffering vile was to encompass Pharaoh's folk: the fire of the hereafter - that fire which they had been made to contemplate in vain, morning and evening: for on the Day when the Last Hour dawns God will say, "Make Pharaoh's folk enter upon suffering most severe!"; 71:25

مِمَّا حَطَبَتِ لَهُمْ أَنْصَارًا

And so, because of their sins, they were drowned in the great flood, and were doomed to suffer the fire of the hereafter; and they found none who could succour them against God.). Much more is to be found in the traditions of the Prophet.⁴ On visiting or passing by a grave or a cemetery, a Muslim greets the dead with the same greeting as for the living: 'Peace be to you!' and adds, 'You are our forerunners and we are following after you, may God forgive us and you!'

At the resurrection the time spent in the grave will appear to men

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ كَأَن لَّمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِّنَ النَّهَارِ يَتَعَارَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

And on the Day when He shall gather them unto Himself, it will seem to them as if they had not tarried on earth longer than an hour of a day, knowing one another; and lost indeed will be they who in their lifetime considered it a lie that they were destined to meet God, and thus failed to find the right' way. (10:45). The state of *barzakh* will end at 'the hour', the end of the world, and then the resurrection will take place. The time of this 'hour' is known only to God (7:187

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي ۖ لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ ثَقُلَتْ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۖ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ۖ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

THEY WILL ASK you O Prophet about the Last Hour: "When will it come to pass?" Say: "Verily, knowledge thereof rests with my Sustainer alone. None but He will reveal it in its time. Heavily will it weigh on the heavens and the earth; and it will not fall upon you otherwise than of a sudden." They will ask you - as if you couldst gain insight into this mystery by dint of persistent inquiry! Say: "Knowledge thereof rests with my Sustainer alone; but of this most people are unaware."). Thus, when asked by one of his followers when it would come, the Prophet directs him to what is more fruitful, answering, 'What have you prepared for it?' Compared to the little that is said about the state of *barzakh*, there is

much in the Qur'an about the end of the world, the resurrection, the Judgement, and the recompense in the final abode.

The Nature of the Resurrection

Will the resurrection and afterlife be only spiritual, or will it be bodily as well? Although some, especially Sufis, hold that it will be only spiritual,⁵ and that Qur'anic statements which suggest it is bodily are no more than figures of speech to assist the general reader's comprehension, the general character of Qur'anic statements indicates that it will be bodily and spiritual. As the Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroes) explains:

Some Muslims consider that existence in the afterlife is of the same nature as in this life, only there it will be permanent. Others believe that bodily existence there is different from bodily existence here.

As Ibn 'Abbas, the companion of the Prophet, said, this world shares nothing with the afterlife except the names of things. The Qur'an itself indicates that bodily existence in the afterlife will be a 'new' creation, so that our bodies there will not be those we have here (e.g. 56:35

إِنَّا أَنشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنِشَاءً

for, behold, We shall have brought them into being in a life renewed,, 56:61

from changing the nature of your existence and bringing you into being anew in a manner as yet unknown to you.). It

speaks of the descriptions of Paradise as being likenesses – *mathal* – (e.g. 13:35

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۖ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظِلُّهَا ۚ تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۖ وَعُقْبَى الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ

THE PARABLE of the paradise promised to those who are conscious of God is that of a garden through which running waters flow: but, unlike an earthly garden, its fruits will be everlasting, and so will be its shade. Such will be the destiny of those who remain conscious of God-just as the destiny of those who deny the truth will be the fire.; 47:15

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۖ فِيهَا أَنْهَارٌ مِنْ مَاءٍ غَيْرِ آسِنٍ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ لَبَنٍ لَمْ يَتَغَيَّرَ طَعْمُهُ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ خَمْرٍ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ وَأَنْهَارٌ مِنْ عَسَلٍ مُصَفًّى ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ كَمَنْ هُوَ خَالِدٌ فِي النَّارِ وَسُقُوا مَاءً حَمِيمًا فَقَطَّعَ أَمْعَاءُهُمْ

And can the parable of the paradise which the God-conscious are promised a paradise wherein there are rivers of water which time does not corrupt, and rivers of milk the taste whereof never alters, and rivers of wine delightful to those who drink it, and rivers of honey of all impurity cleansed, and the enjoyment of all the fruits of their good deeds and of forgiveness from their Sustainer -: can this parable of paradise be likened unto the parable of the recompense of such as are to abide in the fire and be given waters of burning despair to drink, so that it will tear their bowels asunder?) and the food there ‘appears similar’ – *mutashabih* – to what it is here (2:25

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا ۖ قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ ۖ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

But unto those who have attained to faith and do good works give the glad tiding that theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow. Whenever they are granted fruits there from as their appointed sustenance, they will say, "It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance!"-for they shall be given something that will recall that past. And there shall they have spouses pure, and there shall they abide.). The Prophet says about paradise: ‘There are in it things that no eye has seen, no ear has heard and what has never occurred to the mind of man.’

As Ibn Rushd points out, this view of the resurrected body as a different, spiritual one, is more appropriate for the educated, who can understand it, since the spiritual existence is permanent and the concept that the soul returns in a new body avoids such complicated arguments as the objection that the worldly body turns into dust, and nourishes plants, which are then eaten by other people, from whose bodies come the bodies of their descendants, and so on.⁶ Conversely, Ibn Rushd explains, the representation of existence in the afterlife as being bodily and not merely spiritual, is more suitable for the majority of people, as it is easier to understand and more moving.⁷ Figurative representation of spiritual realities may be appropriate only for speculative thinkers, whereas the simpler religious explanations are aimed primarily at the great majority.

Judgement

There are graphic descriptions in the Qur’an of the end of the world, resurrection and judgement.⁸ A most important element is the judgement, when ‘people will come to be shown their deeds’, each facing judgement

‘alone’. ‘No soul will carry the burden of another’. Each will be confronted with a book of their deeds:

مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَى مِنْ مَاءٍ صَدِيدٍ

and he will be told: "Read this thy record,! Sufficient is thine own self today to make out thine account!"

14:16

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ
وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

And the earth will shine bright with her Sustainer's light. And the record of everyone's deeds will be laid bare, and all the prophets will be brought forward, and all other witnesses; and judgment will be passed on them all in justice. And they will not be wronged, for every human being will be repaid in full for whatever good or evil he has done: and He is fully aware of all that they do.

39:69–70

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

And so, he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it.

99:7–8

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا ۖ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whosoever shall come before God with a good deed will gain further good there from; but as for any who shall come with an evil deed - know that they who do evil deeds will not be requited with more than the like of what they have done.

28:84

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَتَتْ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ
حَبَّةٌ ۖ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Good deeds can be multiplied as much as seven hundred times (6:160 Whoever shall come before God with a good deed will gain ten times the like thereof; but whoever shall come with an evil deed will be requited with no more than the like thereof; and none shall be wronged.;

2:261

THE PARABLE of those who spend their possessions for the sake of God is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains: for God grants manifold increase unto whom He wills; and God is infinite, all-knowing.). Thus the judgement is vital, for although God is the most merciful (12:64 Jacob replied: "Shall I trust you with him in the same way as I trusted you with his brother (Joseph aforesaid? Nay, but God's guardianship is better than yours, for He is the most merciful of the merciful!") and His mercy encompasses all things (7:156 And ordain you for us what is good in this world as well as in the life to come: behold, unto you have we turned in repentance!" God answered: "With My chastisement do I afflict whom I will - but My grace overspreads everything: and so I shall confer it on those who are conscious of Me and spend in charity, and who believe in Our messages-), without the judgement, divine commandments would make no sense: observation and violation, good and evil deeds would all be the same.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ
أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ

AND thus it is: We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between them without meaning and purpose, as is the surmise of those who are bent on denying the truth: but then, woe from the fire of hell unto all who are bent on denying the truth! For, would We treat those who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds in the same manner as We shall treat those who spread corruption on earth? Would We treat the God-conscious in the same manner as the wicked?

38:27-8

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

KNOW, then, that God is sublimely exalted, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: there is no deity save Him, the Sustainer, in bountiful almightiness enthroned!.

23:116

Recompense

There is much description in the Qur'an of rewards and punishment. As human beings have bodies, minds and spirits, all of which are gifts from God and as, out of His grace He provided mankind with the means of gratifying all these components in this life, so in the afterlife He will provide means of gratifying them all to 'those who believed and did good works'

(7:32 Say: "Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?" Say: "They are lawful in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith - to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day." Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of innate knowledge!). Bodies, as we have noted, will be 'a new creation' and in paradise

will not suffer the shortcomings of worldly bodies. As will be seen in the following chapter, in paradise, 'And as for all such believers, no human being can imagine what blissful delights, as yet hidden, await them in the life to come as a reward for all that they did.

(32:17). The angels are ordered to protect them from all evil and preserve them from doing evil deeds: for anyone whom on that Day of Judgment you will have preserved from the taint of evil deeds, him will you have graced with Thy mercy: and that, that will be the triumph supreme!" 40:9' But God will safeguard all who were conscious of Him, and will grant them happiness by virtue of their inner triumphs; no evil shall ever touch them, and neither shall they grieve. 39:61 . the Arabic word *si'* includes whatever is undesirable. There is no tedium there, such as sceptics now invoke as an argument against eternal existence. 'Theirs shall be an abode of peace with their Sustainer; and He shall be near unto them in result of what they have been doing. (6:127). The honour God will confer on them will be their highest reward. An opposite picture is given of punishment, the essence of which is humiliation. As already pointed out, the Qur'an does not treat the afterlife as something theoretical or in a separate chapter at the end of the book. It is embedded in the text throughout and its effect on the reader is enhanced by the vivid and powerful language of the Arabic text. After a short conjunction like 'when' to indicate the afterlife, it commonly employs the past and present tense as if it had happened and was already here. There is an obvious interdependence between this life and the afterlife. We have seen how the terms occur with equal frequency in the Qur'an and how linguistically one cannot utter the name of one without semantic reference to the other. Everything in the judgement has to do with action in the world. Dwellers in paradise or hell sometimes talk about what they did in this world (52:28 Verily, we did invoke Him alone ere this: and now He has shown us that He alone is truly benign, a true dispenser of grace!"; 40:47 AND LO! They who in life were wont to deny the truth will contend with one another in the fire of the hereafter; and then the weak will say unto those who had gloried in their arrogance, "Behold, we were but your followers: can you, then, relieve us of some of our share of this fire?").

The Afterlife and the Present Life

In the Qur'an, life in this world, through its relation to the afterlife, has much more significance than it would otherwise have. A whole new dimension is given to the lives of those who believe that they will live beyond the grave, and will not be terminated in dust. They are continually reminded of this (at least seventeen times a day, as we have said, for practising Muslims). The life of the individual continues in the two worlds, but through different stages: from the womb to the world, to the grave, to the resurrection, judgement and lasting life in the final abode – the intervening period in the grave will seem 'They will answer: 'We have spent there a day, or part of a day; but ask those who are able to count time ...' (23:113).

The Qur'an does not disparage the present life; both lives are created by God and

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى

despite the fact that both the life to come and this present one belong to God alone?.

53:25

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

He it is who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens; and He alone has full knowledge of everything..

2:29

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ ۖ جَنَّاتٍ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ ۚ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۚ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

INDEED, in the luxuriant beauty of their homeland, the people of Sheba had an evidence of God's grace two vast expanses of gardens, to the right and to the left, calling out to them, as it were: "Eat of what your Sustainer has provided for you, and render thanks unto Him: a land most goodly, and a Sustainer much-forgiving!" 34:15

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

YEA, INDEED, O men, We have given you a bountiful place on earth, and appointed thereon means of livelihood for you: yet how seldom are you grateful!7:10;

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۚ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةٌ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

Say: "Who is there to forbid the beauty which God has brought forth for His creatures, and the good things from among the means of sustenance?" Say: "They are lawful in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith - to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day." Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of innate knowledge! 7:32

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ

And the earth - We have spread it wide, and set upon it mountains firm, and caused it to bring forth plants of all beautiful kinds,50:7;

In gathering wealth the faithful are 'seeking the bounty of God'. They

are directed to do this after finishing the prayer in which they praise 'the Master of the Day of Judgement' (62:10)

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

And when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain something of God's bounty; but remember God often, so that you might attain to a happy state!

73:20

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۚ عَلِمَ أَنْ لَنْ تُحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۚ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ مَرْضَىٰ ۚ وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَآخَرُونَ يَقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا ۚ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

BEHOLD, O Prophet, thy Sustainer knows that you keepest awake in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, or one-half of it, or a third of it, together with some of those who follow you. And God who determines the measure of night and day, is aware that you would never grudge it: and therefore He turns towards you in His grace. Recite, then, as much of the Qur'an as you may do with ease. He knows that in time there will be among you sick people, and others who will go about the land in search of God's bounty, and others who will fight in God's cause. Recite, then, only as much of it as you may do with ease, and be constant in prayer, and spend in charity, and thus lend unto God a goodly loan: for whatever good deed you may offer up in your own behalf, you shall truly find it with God - yea, better, and richer in reward. And always seek God's forgiveness: behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!).

In seeking to attain paradise, they should always bear in mind the Qur'anic exhortation: Seek instead, by means of what God has granted you, the good of the life to come, without forgetting, withal, thine own rightful share in this world; and do good unto others as God has done good unto thee; and seek not to spread corruption on earth: for, verily, God does not love the spreaders of corruption!" (28:77).

The Qur'an nonetheless states (as something that earlier scriptures confirm) that the afterlife is 'better and more lasting than this life' (87:17 although the life to come is better and more enduring. -

). God objects to

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ

Verily, as for those who do not believe that they are destined to meet Us, but content themselves with the life of this world and do not look beyond it, and are heedless of Our messages -

10:7

In Islam a believer, while enjoying what is good in this life, can at the same time be working for the next one. Islam does not recognise a clearcut distinction between what is worldly and what is religious. The Prophet once mentioned that among the 'good deeds' which one can store up for the afterlife is having sexual intercourse with one's spouse. A companion exclaimed: 'Prophet, but this is something we enjoy, how can we be rewarded for it?' to which he answered: 'If you were to do it unlawfully, would you not be punished for it?' 'Yes.' 'Conversely you will be rewarded for doing it lawfully.'

The Qur'an emphasises that no-one will escape death, the resurrection or judgement, and that the way to salvation in the afterlife is through faith and good works in this life; but God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favour shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does. O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong! "O our Sustainer! Lay not upon us a burden such as you didst lay upon those who lived before us! O our Sustainer! Make us not bear burdens which we have no strength to bear! "And efface you our sins, and grant us forgiveness, and bestow Thy mercy upon us! you art our Lord Supreme: succour us, then, against people who deny the truth!" (2:286). The length of life given to any person here is limited by its 'appointed term' (*ajal* – a word that is mentioned in the Qur'an some forty times). This is the only chance to work for a good life in the next world (35:37 And in that hell they will cry aloud: "O our Sustainer! Cause us to come out of this suffering! We shall henceforth do good deeds, not such as we were wont to do aforetime!" But We shall answer: "Did We not grant you a life long enough so that whoever was willing to take thought could bethink himself? And withal, a warner had come unto you! Taste, then, the fruit of your evil deeds: for evildoers shall have none to succour them!"). The urgency is expressed by the frequent use of the expression 'before' (*min qabl an*) death or the hour comes, for example:

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ
فَأَصَّدَقَ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ
وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

And spend on others out of what We have provided for you as sustenance, ere there come a time when death approaches any of you, and he then says, "O my Sustainer! If only you wouldst grant me a delay for a short while, so that I could give in charity and be among the righteous!" But never does God grant a delay to a human being when his term has come; and God is fully aware of all that you do.

63:10–11

The Prophet said:

He whose day is no better than the day before it has done himself wrong.

He also said:

When a son of Adam dies his deeds cease, except through three things: a running

charity that he founded, useful knowledge he left behind, or a good child who prays for him.

Of the judgement he said:

No person will leave the judgement place before being asked about four things: his life span and how he spent it, his knowledge and what he did with it, his body and in which things he wore it out, and his wealth – from where he collected it and how he spent it.

Life in this world is made more significant by the fact that judgement and recompense in the afterlife are only for 'deeds' done in this one. Good deeds are good for the individual, society, humanity and all the world which God, *Rabb al-'alamin* (the Lord of all Worlds), created, appointing man 'a viceroy on earth' (2:30 AND LO! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it." They said: "Wilt you place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood -whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise you, and hallow Thy name?" God answered: "Verily, I know that which you do not know."). The Prophet of Islam said: 'If the hour comes

while one of you is holding a palm-seedling, if he can plant it before the hour overtakes him, he should plant it.' We know that the hour puts an end to the present order of things, yet the 'good deed' should be done.

The Qur'an addresses Muslims and followers of other faiths:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

And unto you O Prophet have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto you. Unto every one of you have We appointed a different law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but He willed it otherwise in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto, you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ..

Believers are taught in the Qur'an to pray:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

But there are among them such as pray, "O our Sustainer! Grant us good in this world and good in the life to come, and keep us safe from suffering through the fire":.

2:201