

Fast 29: Life after death — begins in this world

- According to the Holy Quran, the heavenly life for the good, and a life in hell for the wicked, is not a mystery beyond the grave but begins in this very life. It says:

“And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two Gardens.” — 55:46

The two gardens are a garden in this life and a garden in the hereafter. The garden of this life is the spiritual bliss which the righteous find here in the doing of good. In another place the Quran says:

“O soul who is at rest! Return to your Lord, well pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him). So enter among My servants and enter My Garden!” — 89:27–30

That soul is addressed here which has *already* found contentment in this world. It is directed, at the time of death, to return to its Lord, being well pleased with God during its life on earth, and having well pleased God. It is then made to enter into the garden of the next life. That garden is a reflection of the contentment the soul already found in this world by performing good deeds.

- The light of guidance that a person followed in this world becomes a visible light for him in the next world. Consider the following two verses:

“Is he who was dead, then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people, like him whose likeness is that of one in darkness from which he cannot come forth?” — 6:122

“On that day you will see the believers, men and women, their light gleaming before them and on their right hand.” — 57:12

The first verse refers to a spiritually dead person in this life who finds the *light* of right guidance and leads his life according to it (“walks among the people”). This verse also shows that when the Quran mentions prophets (for example, Jesus) as raising the “dead” to life in this world it means that they gave light to people who were previously in darkness, not that they raised anyone who was physically dead to life. The second verse says that in the next life the righteous, both men and women, will be seen with a *light* in front of them and on their right hands. This is the same light that led them during their earthly life, but which will become visible in the next life.

- Likewise, regarding the wrong-doers the Quran says:

“And whoever is blind in this (world), he will be blind in the Hereafter...” — 17:72

That is, those who remain spiritually blind in this life, blind to truth and right guidance, will find they have no sight in the next life. It is a reflection of the same blindness. Regarding hell, the Quran says: “It is the Fire kindled by Allah, which rises over the hearts.” — 104:6–7

The fire which burns within the heart of man in this life, by reason of excessive love of wealth, becomes the fire of hell in the next life.

- Thus the blessings of paradise and the torments of hell of the next life do not come from somewhere outside. These are all the unfolding of the spiritual condition that a person developed in this life, due to his/her good or bad deeds. What you will see there is what you had here, but here you could not see it in its full clarity.
- According to the Quran, within an individual in this life a spiritual body is prepared according to his deeds. The deeds are preserved or “written down”:

“No, but you call the Judgment a lie, and surely there are keepers over you, honourable recorders, they know what you do.” — 82:9–12

“He (a person) utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand.” — 50:18

- The Quran speaks of a “book” in which deeds are recorded:

“This is Our record (*kitāb*) that speaks against you with truth. Surely We wrote what you did.” — 45:29

It is not meant, of course, that there will be a physical book, a collection of pages. The word *kitāb* does not always mean a book as such; sometimes it signifies the knowledge of God. A study of the verses in which the recording of actions, or the book of deeds, is mentioned, leads to the conclusion that it is the *effect produced by those actions* that is called the “book”. For instance:

“And We have made every human being’s actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the Day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open. Read your book. Your own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.” — 17:13–14

Making the actions cling to the doer’s neck is clearly to cause the effect of the actions to appear on the person concerned; in other words, all actions, good or bad, have their impress on man. An inner self of man is being prepared in this life. That inner self is really his book of deeds, a book in which is noted down the effect of every deed done. The effect of those deeds becomes so manifest on the Day of Resurrection that no

outside reckoning is needed. It is the person himself who reads his own book, that is to say, sees all his actions in the impress left on him, and judges himself because the reckoning has already appeared in his own self.