

Muslims' Belief about Next Life

NOVA Life-Long Learning (NOVA-LLI)

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WELCOME
to
Muslims' Belief about
Next Life Class !

Outline of Topics

Session 1:

- **Main Beliefs in Islam**
- **Significance of belief in next life**
- **This life has a purpose**
- **Plan for 2 lives**
- **Logic of next life**
- **Six Stages of next life**

- **Understanding each stage**
 - **Death**
 - **Transition stage (Barzakh)**
 - **End of this world**
 - **Creation of new world**
 - **Resurrection of all human beings**

Session 2:

- **Day of Judgment**
 - **Some basic principles**
 - **Universal criteria of judgment**
 - **Success criteria**
 - **Sequence of events**
 - **Final Judgment**

- **Two destinations of eternal life**
- **A temporary place in between**
- **Implications of belief in next life**
- **Inevitability of next life**
- **Claims for disbelief in next life**
- **Experience of sleeping and waking up: A rehearsal of death and resurrection**

- **Summary and conclusions**

Main Islamic Beliefs (*Arkaan-ul-Eiman*)

Six articles of faith are:

1. Allah/God
 2. Angels
 3. Books/Scriptures
 4. Messengers
 5. Life after death and Day of Judgment
 6. Divine decree and plan (Qadaa and Qadar)
- Main Islamic Beliefs are also called Pillars of Faith (*Arkaan-ul-Eiman*) or “Main Tenets of Islamic Faith”
 - They are summarized into 3 parts:
 1. Belief in God
 2. Belief in prophethood
 3. Belief in next life

5th Article of Faith: Belief in Life after Death and Day of Judgment

- Belief in next life: A major Islamic belief
 - After death, everyone will eventually come back to life (resurrect), go through judgment, and receive rewards or punishment in an eternal life
 - Resurrection happens after this world is overturned and a new world is created (so, no reincarnation)

Emphasis on Life after Death and its purpose

- Next life has lots of emphasis
 - One third of Qur'an covering next life
 - With lots of details and graphic descriptions

Next Life meant to:

- Confirm purpose of this life
- Fulfill God's plan for human, and
- Establish full justice

Creation of Human Beings

- Human being
 - A new creature with no prior existence in another form
 - A very unique creature
 - The climax and crown of the creation

- Creation Process
 1. First human (Adam)
 2. His mate (Eve)
 3. Human reproduction and marriage process

Components of Human Life

Three components of human life: Physical, Spiritual, and Intellectual

1. Physical: Flesh and bones made from clay (dust and water)
 - made from chemical elements present in dust and water

2. Spiritual: Soul – secret of life
 - Human is given very little knowledge about soul (See Verse 17:85)
 - Its knowledge is limited through revelation
 - Soul is created for every human being and breezed into baby's body in early period of mother's pregnancy
 - Stays in the body until time of death
 - Has no specific physical location in the body, and not to be mixed with the biological life
 - At death time, Allah sends a special angel to take the soul out of the body and it stays alive with Allah
 - Role of soul in the body somewhat like the role of electric power in an electronic equipment
 - In the time of human resurrection in the next world, it will join the same person's new body that would be recreated by Allah
 - Soul of everyone is distinct and does not transfer to another person
 - Also taken by Allah during sleep every day

Components of Human Life - 2

3. Intellectual component: Mental faculties and abilities

- to receive knowledge, study, read, write, think, make observations, analyze, make conclusions and decisions, capacity to reason and make choices, assess what goes through one's mind, develop knowledge, conscience, consciousness, etc.
- Need to integrate and harmonize all 3 components for a holistic view
 - *“O believers, enter into Islam wholeheartedly and completely (submit yourself to God in all areas of your life)” (2:208)*

This life has a purpose

Qur'an emphasizes that human's life must have a purpose with compensation and consequences

- *We did not create the heavens, the earth and what is between them just for play (fun, entertainment) (44:38)*
- *Do you then think that We have created you in vain and that you are not to be returned to Us? (23:115)*
- *Does man think that he will be left without being held accountable (eventually)? (75:36)*
- *Allah created the universe for a valid purpose and so that everyone may be recompensed for what they have earned, and they will not be wronged (45:22)*

Purpose of Human Life

To understand purpose of human life, need to learn following concepts:

1. Having purpose is a must
2. Being caliph (trustee and steward) on earth
3. Plan of two lives
4. Tests and trials
5. Submitting to God
6. Serving and worshiping God
7. Seeking pleasure of God

Plan of Two Lives

- God planned two lives for human beings
 1. A temporary life in this world
 2. An eternal life in next world
- This life is meant to be a preparing stage for judgment in next world
 - It is made full of tests in order to measure human's performance and determine results for next life
- Quality of next life depends on performance in this life
- Equation of Human Life:
[This Life] x [Performance Factor] = [Quality of next life]

Performance Factor is based on degree of living according to the purpose of life (in terms of belief and actions)

Favors Meant in Both Lives

- Human's life is not only a sign of God, but a favor of God with all kinds of blessings for everyone
 - Full of potentials and abilities despite some limitations
 - Full of opportunities despite some sufferings
 - Full of authorities, but with responsibilities
- Human's lifetime is a temporary testing period, and this world is a testing field
 - Full results of tests provided in next life
- With a proper vision and some humble efforts by human beings, favors of this life will be followed up with much more and bigger favors in next life

Belief in God Leading to Belief in Next Life

The belief in God should lead to belief in next life; otherwise, one should answer the following questions:

- How would a wise God create this sophisticated world and life without a bigger purpose?
- How can all of creation be for play and idle?
- How would God allow all injustices without a plan for justice?
- How would God make end of criminals and righteous people the same by turning both to dust?
- How would God give favors and authority to human without any responsibility and accountability?
- If God created human with ability to judge and desire for justice, wouldn't he want to judge and establish justice?
- If doubting ability of God to bring human back to life
 - God who created life for first time, isn't the second easier?
 - Isn't creation of universe much bigger than creation/recreation of human?

Qur'an explains evidence of next life in nature and history

Qur'an explains occurrence of next life with evidence in nature and history

- Repeated examples of a dry/dead land becoming alive by rain with plants and vegetation
- Bringing life from dead and its reverse in both plants and animals – a continuous event
- Bringing some dead human beings back to life has also happened in history
- Incorrect to say: YOLO (You Only Live Once), but You Live Twice

Different Stages of Next Life

1. Death of people before the end of this world
2. End of this world and death of all
3. Start of new world with new order
4. Resurrection of all human beings
5. Day of Judgment
6. Eternal life

Death

- Life of this world is meant to have a temporary nature
 - Everyone must die (past, current and future generations)
 - A preparatory stage for next and eternal life
- Death is not end of life, but end of only testing phase of life and transition to another phase
- Time of death of everyone is predetermined by Allah
- Only body is dying, but soul is not dying
- Soul is taken intact by a designated angel
 - Seeing signs of future destiny at moment of death
 - True believers receive the angel of death in a very joyful and pleasant form and manner, but disbelievers and wicked people receive them in a very harsh and angry manner

Transition Stage (Barzakh)

- After death, going through a transition period - Barzakh
- Barzakh: Period between time of death and time of resurrection in next world
- Soul having relative joy or relative suffering (punishment of grave) during this period depending on one's performance and lifestyle in this world

End of this World

This world: temporary and planned to be overturned at some point

- Disarrangement and overturn of current physical system of earth and heavens
- The whole order of universe will totally change
- Death of all creatures happen, including angels
- Time of end of this world is predetermined and only known to Allah, but prophet explained some minor and major signs of its coming

Events at End of this World

Quran has lots of vivid descriptions of cosmic changes, such as:

- Trumpet will be blown, and remaining people will die
- A great change in the cosmic order, a cosmic catalyst, something absolutely terrifying, for example:
 - Sky unveiled, and stars dispersed and crash into each other
 - Oceans burst forth and might even ignite
 - Mountains become like flakes of teased wool or vanishing from existence and becoming like a mirage (making earth balance change all together)
 - Earth would shake to the utmost convulsions
 - Earth being pounded
 - Sun and moon would combine or come to one place

New World and Day of Resurrection

- After the destruction of this world, only God will be alive
- After a certain period, God will set up another world with a new physical system and new physical laws
- Resurrection of angels
- The trumpet will be blown (second time)
- Resurrection of Human beings:
 - All dead people of former and latter generations will be recreated
 - A vivid description of people coming out of the earth as it opens
 - Resurrection in both body and soul
 - Re-creation of human bodies
 - Preserved souls joining new bodies

Day of Judgment

- International Court Hearing for all generations of humanity
- Everyone who lived on this earth stands before God for accountability
- Performance review and evaluation of everyone (in the life of this world) will take place
- Justice for all people - Settling all disputes and all injustices to others
- God is the only Judge and Ruler
- The biggest and most important day for all human beings
- A very long Day with multiple stages

Some Basic Principles of Judgement

- Absolute justice guaranteed for everyone
- Mercy and extra forgiveness beyond what people deserve, but no extra punishment, and no injustice whatsoever
- Reward for every good deed is multiplied by 10, and sin for every bad deed is multiplied by one
- Full consideration for people's circumstances in this world
- No responsibility beyond one's individual capacity/abilities in this life
- Too late to regret and believe at that time (after lifetime opportunities in this world)
- Every single individual has to go through it
- Full accountability for all aspects of one's life, including all kinds of services and harms to others
- All actions, including the smallest amount of good deeds and bad deeds will be shown
- The sins that are already forgiven because of repentance will still be shown, but not judged again
- For all actions, accountability based on intentions and efforts

Success Criteria in Judgment

- Two main criteria: Belief and good deeds
 1. Belief in God, next life, prophets/books
 2. Good deeds: Actions and lifestyle based on requirements of beliefs
- Importance of both beliefs and actions, and their order for salvation
 - Beliefs are a must, but not enough without actions
 - If died as disbeliever, compensation for good deeds is provided in this world (Verse 11:15)
 - Consideration for degree of beliefs and degree of obedience

Judgment Criteria - II

- Beliefs and actions of people are judged based on the teachings of God through His latest prophet for any generation of humanity and any location of the world
- For those people who did not know about the latest teachings of God
 - Judgement would be based on the available and accessible knowledge of God's teachings to them, and how sincerely they tried to accept and practice that knowledge
 - Those with no such knowledge will go through some tests in there
 - But, belief in God is expected of everyone due to built-in belief in the human innate nature
- A universal judgment system

Judgment Day: Sequence of Events

1. Recreation of everyone's body
2. The same soul joining the recreated body
3. Resurrection of everyone (becoming alive) and coming out of grave and standing
4. Angels leading people to the court
5. Everyone standing and waiting for start of Judgment
6. Prophets and their respective communities stand together
7. Individual questioning and reckoning before God
 - Display of all deeds (small and big)
 - Presence of all kinds of evidences and witnesses, such as Book of deeds, angels, prophets, and organs of body speaking
 - - Note that all of these records, evidences and witnesses are presented so that human beings can witness the full justice of God, and they are not meant to help God in His Judgment since He already knows everything
8. Scale of overall good deeds and bad deeds: Judgment based on net result of overall performance
9. Decision of reward and punishment
10. Announcement of final decision and destination

Two Destinations

I. Paradise/heaven (*Al-Jannah*) - a glance to its description in Qur'an:

- Achieving ultimate level of happiness and pleasure
- Highest luxuries for housing, foods, drinks, and physical joys
- Perfect atmosphere of complete peace of mind and heart
- All kinds of socialization, but never hearing a word that is indecent, hurting, offensive or distasteful, but only what is polite, respectful, decent and pleasing
- Highest forms of entertainments and no dullness
- No sickness and no aging
- Perfect temperature – no heat and no cold
- Getting whatever one wishes, fulfilling all positive desires, but negative desires will not exist
- Highest pleasure happen in seeing God and angels glorifying Him

- Different levels - lowest level far better than the best of this world
- All who made it, would be very humble and grateful to God

Two Destinations

2. Hellfire (*Jahannum/Naar*): A glance to its description in the Qur'an

- Before entering Hellfire, they admit ...
 - Receiving the message of God and rejecting it
 - Not using their human faculties properly
 - Deserving the punishment before entering
- Once entered, very severe and humiliating punishment starts
- Mental and emotional pain as well as physical pain
- Fire all around, boiling water for drinking, and bitter food
- Screaming and crying, but no help and no ability to get out
- Continuous punishment and feeling of pain, and no more death
- Several levels, with the lowest (most painful) for hypocrites
 - Hypocrites are those kind of atheists and disbelievers who join the ranks of Muslims and stab them secretly while claiming that they are Muslims

If a person died as a believer, but had more bad deeds than good deeds, would move to paradise after the due punishment

A'raaf: A temporary place in between

- A place called A'raaf (the Heights) is between Paradise and Hell
- The people of A'raaf are those who are neither righteous enough to enter paradise nor wicked enough to be cast into Hell
- They will dwell between the two destinations for a temporary period, but they will end up to paradise eventually (See Verses 7:46-49)

Some Implications of Belief in Next Life and Accountability

1. Belief in next life makes life more meaningful
 - By making the purpose, vision, and direction of this life clear
2. It leads people to a responsible and dutiful life in this world by focusing on implications of every decision, choice, saying, and action
 - It motivates people to strive for success
 - It makes them to control their greed and lusts, and resist their temptations
3. It helps to manage favors and difficulties of life
4. It takes away fear of death
5. It leads to peace and hope in life

This Life and Next Life

Considering this world in isolation of next world, life of this world does not make sense due to the problems, difficulties, imperfections, injustices, cruelty, sickness, famines, disasters, and human sufferings. The inequality and unfairness in the world is substantial. There is discrimination, economic inequality, tyranny, and abuse. Criminals often evade the justice system and get away with crimes. Death itself seems to be unfair and cruel without this belief.

But by keeping the temporary nature of this world in view and seeing it from the perspective of the eternal next world where perfect justice will be carried out for everyone, a clear and sensible picture emerges that shows the profundity of the plan and demonstrates God's kindness and mercy for human beings.

This temporary world complements next world by providing practical grounds and evidence to segregate people into those to be rewarded and those to be punished, so that no one can challenge the judgment awarded and so that justice is not only done, but also seen to be done.

Claims of Disbelief

Qur'an provides some typical claims for disbelief in next life*:

- “This is an old news and ancient mentality” (Verses 23:83 and 27:67-68)
- “If true, make our forefathers alive” (45:25)
- “If true, when is it?” (67:25)
- “How could our crumbled bones come back to life?” (50:3)
- “After we have vanished into the earth, how can we then be recreated?” (32:10)
- “It is only passage of time taking our life and dying” (45:24)
- “Hard to believe - we can only conjecture” (45:32)

Qur'an says the root cause of the above claims are:

- Haughtiness and arrogance (16:22, 25:21, 39:59, 45:31)
- Loving to gratify immediate desires and ignoring long term (75:20-21, 76:27)
- Wanting to keep door of sins open (75:5)
- Following desires (28:50)
- Staying away from responsibilities (107:1-3, 89:17-18)
- Lack of willingness, not lack of knowledge and enough reasoning (6:111, 15:14-15)

Sleeping and Waking up vs Next Life

- Sleep is similar to death
 - During sleep: body becomes inactive, but soul is active
- Separation of soul during sleep
 - *“It is Allah Who takes away the souls of people at the moment of their death, and takes away at the time of sleep the souls of those that have not died. Then He retains the souls of those against whom He had decreed death and returns the souls of others till an appointed time. Surely there are Signs in this for a people who reflect.” (39:42)*
- Taking the souls during sleep implies suspension of the powers of feeling, consciousness, understanding, and will
 - Seeing dreams is a sign of separation of soul
- Resurrection is similar to waking up
- Supplications (Du’a) of Prophet Muhammad before and after sleep
- Experience of sleeping and waking up a rehearsal of death and resurrection on a daily basis

Summary of Foundations of Islamic Beliefs (Articles of Faith)

- The first and main part of belief system in Islam is belief in God
- Proper knowledge and reflection about God lead to believe in the remaining articles of faith
 - God's guidance: God has definitely sent guidance to humanity introducing Himself and answering some basic questions of life
 - Leading to belief in angels, books, and prophets
 - God's wisdom and justice:
 - There must be a higher purpose behind the creation of this world and human life
 - God will definitely establish full justice among human beings someday
 - Both reasons leading to belief in next life
 - God's active role: Having infinite powers and eternal knowledge about the life of everyone and everything that happens in the world - Leading to belief in Qada and Qadar

Summary of Foundations of Islamic Beliefs (Articles of Faith)

- Basis of all beliefs in Islam: Confirming some important attributes of God and recognizing His mercy and favors
- Significance of order of the 6 articles and their sequence
- Significance of completeness of faith and its strength
- Consequences of belief and disbelief in any of these articles in people's lifestyle and actions