

## Al Qadr – The Divine Destiny

Recently in a discussion with a Muslim it became quite apparent to me that I had to do a piece of work on Divine Destiny so that everyone understands it correctly. As we grew up this simple piece has been made extremely complicated by the choice of words people have used, ignorance of the topic, external influences, unqualified linking with other aspects of Islam and worst of all by poets.

Even though Iqbal was not entirely wrong in saying, “*Khudi ko ker buland itna ki har tadbeer se phele, Khuda bande se ye puche bata teri raza kya hai*” but the language he used is grossly inadequate and will confuse a lay person about destiny. Furthermore, Iqbal was also a poet, and poets do say things that are a gross deviation from the true religion.

### **Types of Decrees of Divine Destiny**

It is a common misunderstanding that there is only one type of decree. There are actually four types of decree divided into two sections according to Ibn Taimiyyah in Al Fatawaa

- 1) The first section has the decree that does not change
  - a. Divine Decree of everything recorded in Al Lauh Al Mehfooz
- 2) The second section has decrees that can and does change
  - a. Divine Decree written down before the soul is breathed into the foetus
  - b. Divine Decree sent down on Laylat-ul-Qadr (Night of Power)
  - c. Divine Decree for everyday

## SECTION 1

In this section we will try to understand the decree that is written in Al Lauh Al Mahfooz, and have a general discussion on allied topics of why do we need two types of destinies (one amendable and another unamendable), we will tackle the age old question of if destiny is written why am I responsible and we will talk about the two step process of any action that happens.

### **Ibn Taimiyyah’s Explanation of Types of Decrees in Al Fatawaa**

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had said, “*Whoever loves that he be granted more wealth and that his lease of life be prolonged then he should keep good relations with his Kith and kin.*” Sahih Bukhari (Book of Al Adab, Hadith 15)

Ibn Taimiyyah has explained this in Al Fatawaa in Volume 8. “Provisions and life terms are of two kinds:

- 1) The unchanged record written in Ummul Kitaab
- 2) That made known to the angels by Allah (these records being subject to increase or decrease). This is why Allah says, “Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills); and with Him is Ummul Kitaab (the Preserved Tablet).” (Ar Rad, Ayah 39)

In the record books held by angels, both the life span and provisions increase and decrease due to specific reasons. Thus, Allah commands the angel to write the provision and life span of one of His slaves. If the slave enjoins the tie of kinship, Allah commands the angel to increase the slave’s sustenance and life term

by specific increments. The angel does not know the actual outcome of extension in the life term, or that related to the increase in provisions. Only He (Allah) knows the outcome.”

### **Ibn Hajar’s Explanation of Ar Rad’s Ayah in Fath ul Bari**

***“Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills); and with Him is Ummul Kitaab (the Preserved Tablet).”*** (Ar Rad, Ayah 39) For example, to say to the angel that the age of such and such person is hundred years if he joins the tie of his kinship, and sixty years if he severs it. In the foreknowledge of Allah it is known whether he will join or sever the tie of kinship; and whatever is in Allah’s knowledge is not subject to extension or delay. However, the angels knowledge is the one subject to the increase or decrease. This is what is referred to in Allah’s saying: “Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills); and with Him is Ummul Kitaab (the Preserved Tablet).” Therefore, the blotting and confirming is relevant to the knowledge of the angels, but what is recorded in Ummul Kitaab is relevant to Allah’s knowledge, where there is absolutely no blotting.”

### **Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz/Kitab Al Mubeen – The Unchangeable Decree**

The first thing to understand is that everything from movement of quarks to collisions of galaxies is recorded in Al-Lauh Al Mahfuz. Qur’an states:

- ***And not absent from your Lord is any [part] of an atom's weight within the earth or within the heaven or [anything] smaller than that or greater but that it is in a clear register.*** (Yunus, Ayah 61)
- ***Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register.*** (Ya-Seen, Ayah 12)
- ***And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record.*** (Al Anam, Ayah 59)

This clearly tells us that everything down to the detail of an atom is written in Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz. It is a futile argument to say that everything is not in ‘The Book’ or that something is missing from it. The second thing to understand is that whatever is Al-Lauh Al Mahfuz will not be changed.

- ***No calamity befalls on Earth or in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees before we bring it into existence.*** (Surah Al Hadeed, Ayah 22)
- Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) say: *“Allah wrote down the decrees of creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth.”* (Sahih Muslim, Vol 4, 6416)
- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has said, *“The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”* (Tirmidhi 2516, similar narration in Ahmed 1/293, Bukhari Vol 7, 13B)

This concludes that whatever has been written down for everything will happen exactly as it has been written. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried. There is no changing or editing in Al Lauh Al MehfuZ. Al Lauh Al MehfuZ full, first and final version because Allah has recorded everything in it, and because Allah does not err, so there is no need for revisions. If there is change of destiny of someone even

that is recorded, for example such and such person had life of this many years, but because of this action of his, his life was increased to this many years. Al Lauh Al Mehfuз is the full, first and final version of whatever is going to happen down to the fate of the tiniest atom.

### **Knowledge of Ghaib**

Only Allah has the knowledge of Ghaib, no one else has it except for whom he chooses to disclose it to, i.e. Messengers. Quran says, ***“Allah would not leave the believers in that [state] you are in [presently] until He separates the evil from the good. Nor would Allah reveal to you the unseen (Ghaib). But [instead], Allah chooses of His messengers whom He wills, so believe in Allah and His messengers. And if you believe and fear Him, then for you is a great reward.*** (Al Imran, 179)

Coming from the previous knowledge that everything has been written in Al-Lauh Al Mahfuz, and that it is preserved for no-one to see as explicitly stated in Surah Burooj, Ayah 21-22 ***“But this is an honored Qur'an. [Inscribed] in a Preserved Slate.”***

Putting these together means that Al-Lauh Al Mahfuz contains details of everything even the slightest weight of an atom cannot be changed and none except Allah knows what is written in it. He shares this information with whom He wills. Those with whom He shares this information are a very select group amongst men and angels. Furthermore, even they know an extremely small part of the vast information in Al Lauh Al Mahfuz, the biggest example is that nobody knows when will the day of Qiyamah be. Quran says, ***“They ask you, [O Muhammad], about the Hour: when is its arrival? Say, “Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time except Him. It lays heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not come upon you except unexpectedly.” They ask you as if you are familiar with it. Say, “Its knowledge is only with Allah , but most of the people do not know.”*** (Al A'raf, 187)

### **Reason for Explaining Ghaib in Destiny**

The reason for discussing Ghaib is to allow us to understand the authority and accesses of decrees of destiny, especially the knowledge of Angels as they are the bearer of three kinds of destiny.

- Al Lauh Al Mahfuz is only accessed by Allah, it is from His Perfect Knowledge and Allah reveals whatever He wants to reveal and to whomsoever He wants to reveal.
- The other two other type of records are accessed by Angels, these records are susceptible to changes, and Angels know that whatever they have is susceptible to changes. Among the reason Angels are writing our records is because they do not know what we would do and we do not know what we would do. Only Allah knows what exactly is going to happen and how is that going to happen.

The knowledge of the Angels is limited, they do not know what is going to happen tomorrow, for tomorrow might be the day of Qiyamah, and they would have no knowledge of it. While Allah has full and complete knowledge if tomorrow is indeed the day of Qiyamah.

### **Conclusion**

- Every single thing is recorded in Al Lauh Al Mehfuз

- Nothing can be changed of what is written in Al Lauh Al Mehfuz
- No one has knowledge of what is written in Al Lauh Al Mehfuz, except what Allah has revealed to them.
- Ultimately, whatever happens is written in Al Lauh Al Mehfuz and it happens exactly as it is written in Al Lauh Al Mehfuz.

### The Age Old Question

If everything is already pre-ordained why should I work towards good deeds and restrain myself from sins, I will do whatever is written that I will do, and why should I be held accountable for it?

Dr. Zakir Naik has explains this in best possible manner. He asks us to imagine a school child who doesn't pay attention in class, is least bothered about what is being taught or what teacher is teaching, is should be writing essays and short biographies but his writing skills are not yet beyond pig and hen. Always up to mischief and generally not good. If the teacher declares that this child will fail the exam, will the child fail because of the fact that teacher announced that he is going to fail, or because the result of child's exam be dependent on child's own skills and interest and the decision that child takes in the examination. But remember teacher only knows about one part of his life and knows the nature of the child, hence can only comment on the part she is aware of. But Allah knows even the smallest insignificant detail of a person's nature, his conscious and sub conscious mind, his habits, attitudes, his reactions, his emotional quotient, his intellectual quotient, everything. Thus, it is possible for Allah to write everything about that person. He has knowledge and ability to write everything that the person will do. However, the person will not perform those actions because they have been written down. But perform them because that is what he wants to do.

When Allah gave freedom to Iblees to drive men away from His path, at the same time, He gave freedom to men to choose between the path of Allah and the path of Iblees. Indeed Allah wants all of us to worship Him alone, which is why He sent messengers to guide us. However, it is not His will to make us follow what He wants us to follow as Quran says:

- ***And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely.*** (Yunus, Ayah 99)
- ***And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring to one another decorative speech in delusion. But if your Lord had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and that which they invent.*** (Al Anam , Ayah 112)
- ***To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.*** (Al Maidah, 48)

What these Ayahs state is that if Allah had Willed no one would have done anything evil, but then the whole test of life would have been insensible. Hence, Allah has allowed a lot of things to happen which He does not like.

## The Will of Allah

Many people get confused because of Quranic statements like this in Surah Takwir, "For whoever wills among you to take a right course. And you do not will except that Allah wills - Lord of the worlds." (Surah Takwir, Ayah 28-29). I find this verse explained by Abdullah Yusuf Ali among the best, he says, "Allah is The Cherisher of the worlds, Lord of Grace and Mercy, and his guidance is open to all who have the will to profit by it. But that must be exercised in conformity with Allah's Will (Ayah 29). Such conformity is Islam. Ayah 28 points to human free will and responsibility, Ayah 29 to its limitation. Both extremes, viz. : cast-iron and Determination and an idea of chaotic free will, are condemned."

Hence, what this verse really means is that there are two things that would make anything happen. The first is our own free will, the second is approval of Allah to perform that action. To understand it with an example, a couple intends to go on Hajj in a certain year (Ayah 28) but Allah has already put a seal on husband's life a day before they start journey (Ayah 29), hence neither husband nor wife can make to hajj that year. Another example could be that every treasure hunter puts in tremendous will, effort and investment in finding treasure, but Allah has not approved it to be found by him. Hence the treasure hunter fails to locate the treasure, later Allah may give it to someone who may not be even aware of it. Finally our own will is actually optional because there are so many things in which we do not have a will, I call this environmental limitations. By Environment I mean the circumstances that are before us, which were not created by us but we are trapped in them anyway, for example birth is an Environmental Limitation, to whom we would be born, whether our parents would be nice or cocaine addicts is not really our choice, hence our will is only limited to our where we have options to choose from and not all actions.

This two-step process for anything to happen,

1. Our own will (optional)
2. Approval/Will of Allah.

And that is why we say "In Sha Allah" meaning "If Allah Wills" or as Christians say, "God Willing".

Throughout the ages people with limited understanding of destiny have said that their evil deeds are due to Will of Allah, if Allah wanted he could have create different circumstances that would not require them committing their evil deeds. This is a completely false accusation, as explained previously that a man is not forced by Allah to do anything, everything happens because a man willed for it happen and Allah approved it to happen. But Allah's approval of something happening should not mean that He endorses that action. For example Allah allowed Nazis to exterminate Jews, a truly evil action, here Allah's approval of Nazis committing atrocities does not mean that Allah has endorsed and approved that action, it merely means that He has allowed it to happen. One can argue that why does he allow it happen, and the answer is Free Will.

Allah has denied that evils of men should be blamed on Him. It is mentioned in Sahih Muslim, in the Book of Prayer, Hadith 1695, "All good is in Your Hands and evil is not attributable to You." Furthermore Quran vehemently denies it in several places

- And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much. (As Shurah, Ayah 30)
- And We did not wrong them, but it was they who were the wrongdoers. (Az Zukhruf, Ayah 76)

- Indeed, Allah does not wrong the people at all, but it is the people who are wronging themselves. (Yunus, Ayah 44)

## **SECTION 2**

Having understood the two basic type of destinies and the need for two types of destinies, in this section we will discuss about the amendable destiny.

### **Decree before soul is breathed in foetus**

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had explained: “(The matter of the Creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his (i.e. the new creature's) deeds, his livelihood, his (date of) death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into him. So, a man amongst you may do (good deeds till there is only a cubit between him and Paradise and then what has been written for him decides his behaviour and he starts doing (evil) deeds characteristic of the people of the (Hell) Fire. And similarly a man amongst you may do (evil) deeds till there is only a cubit between him and the (Hell) Fire, and then what has been written for him decides his behaviour, and he starts doing deeds characteristic of the people of Paradise.” Bukhari (Book of Beginning of Creation, Hadith 430) and Muslim (Book of Destiny, Hadith 6390)

### **Decree on Laylat-ul-Qadr**

We know about the Night of Power (Laylat-ul-Qadr) that comes in Ramadhan

- Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind]. On that night is made distinct every precise matter. [Every] matter [proceeding] from Us. Indeed, We were to send [a messenger]. (Dukhan, Ayah 3-5)
- The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. (Al Qadr, 4)

It is important to understand that Angels are given details of all matters, that will come from Allah; i.e. those matters on which we do not have any control such as life, death, birth, rainfall, etc.

For the avoidance of doubt, let me clarify the importance of Laylat-ul-Qadr, it is important because those things that are sent down by Allah are those that will create circumstances for the test of life for that year, someone will lose his only son in his ripe old age, while another will be find diamonds while digging a water well. In both of these situations are tests for these two individuals.

### **The Daily Decree**

There is a Sahih Hadith is Sahih Al Haakim in the Book of Tafsir (3,519), Ibn Abbas said, “From the things that Allah, the Most High, created Al Lauk Al Mahfuz. It was created from a white pearl and its cover are red rubies. Its pen is light and its book is light. Everyday, Allah looks at it 360 times. In each of these times, He creates, provides, gives life, ordains death, gives honour, and degrades and does as He wishes. So that

is the meaning of His saying, “Everyday He is engaged in some matter” (Surah Rahman, Ayah 29)” Furthermore it is mentioned in Surah Rad and has been explained previously, “And We have already sent messengers before you and assigned to them wives and descendants. And it was not for a messenger to come with a sign except by permission of Allah. For every term is a decree. Allah eliminates what He wills or confirms, and with Him is the Mother of the Book. (Surah Ar Rad, Ayah 38-39)

### CONCLUSION

From the above discussion we can conclude:

1. There are two types of decrees one that cannot be changed, and another that can be changed.
2. Al Lauh Al Mehfuz is the full, first and final version of destiny, because Allah has recorded everything in it. And, because Allah does not err, hence there is no need to revise it.
3. Allah alone has full knowledge of Al Louh Al Mahfuz, He has revealed only some part of it to us. If anyone other than Allah knew all of it, it would break the principle of Ghaib as He would know everything as well.
4. Angels are primarily aware of that part of destiny that people are able to change, thus no one knows the fate for sure, protecting the principle of Ghaib.
5. A person is responsible for his own deeds.
6. Action or deed have a two-step process
  - a. Step 1 - Will of the Person (Optional)
  - b. Step 2 - Approval/Will of Allah
7. No evil can be attributable to Allah, because desire to do evil is of the person who intends to do it, Allah only approves or disapproves it to happen.

Since we started with Iqbal, we will go back to what wrote, and try to understand his poetry “*Khudi ko ker buland itna ki har tadbeer se phele; Khuda bande se ye puche bata teri raza kya hai*” It is quite clear that what he is referring to is the changeable taqdeer, however because he says ‘*Khuda bande se ye pooche*’, it implies that all kinds of Decrees can be changed. As we have now seen that certainly is not the case. As whatever is written in Al Lauh Al Mehfuz is the full, first and final version of whatever is to happen.

Above all, we must not start learning our Deen from poetry. One should learn Islam from the Qur’an and Sunnah. If one were to start looking into poetry for guidance, one would be completely lost as a lot of poetry includes grievous misguidance even shirk. These are a few examples:

*Jis rang mein dekho vo parda nashin hai, aur uspe yeh ki parda hi nahin hai; mujh se koe puchche tere milne ki adaayen, duniya to kehti hai ki mumkin hi nahin hai* – Jigar (implies that Allah often visits Jigar and Jigar has seen Him, while Quran says that no eye can grasp Him (Al Anam, Ayah 103)

*Zahid peene de sharab masjid mein baithkar; ya phir voh jagah bata de jahan Khuda na ho* – Daagh {this implies that Allah is Omnipresent, which is wrong as Allah has established Himself on the Throne (Sajdah, Ayah 4)}

*Vaaiz na tum peeyo, na kisi ko pila sako; kya baat hai tumhari sharab-e-tahoor ki* – Ghalib (makes fun of a blessing in Paradise)