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QUR'ANIC ESCHATOLOGY

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Opening

In his groundbreaking study *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, Toshihiko Izutsu identifies the Qur'an's eschatological teachings as the fundamental basis for its ethical and religious worldview. From the perspective of the Qur'an, Izutsu explains, "the ethics of the present world is not simply there as a self-sufficing system; on the contrary; its structure is most profoundly determined by the ultimate (eschatological) end to which 'the present world' (*al-dunyā*) is destined."¹ Izutsu also describes the manner in which the earliest audience of the Qur'an, namely the pagan Arabs, had a moral worldview which was in many ways not antithetical to that of the Qur'an.² While the pre-Islamic Arabs and the Qur'an shared some common ethical values, they were mainly at odds with one another when it came to the meaning of death and, by extension, the meaning of life. Contrary to the general worldview of pre-Islamic Arabia, the Qur'an views all ethical categories in terms of death and the afterlife. Consequently, the Qur'anic ethical perspective is profoundly rooted in a transcendent source whose reality some may deny in this life but whom all will encounter after death.

Yet the inevitability of death is a key Qur'anic notion that would have impressed itself upon its first listeners, given the abundant references in pre-Islamic poetry to the inescapable nature of "time" (*dahr*), "fate" (*maniyya*), and their analog death. Consider these famous lines by the Jāhili poet al-Aswad ibn Ya'fur al-Nahshalī (act. circa 600 CE), more commonly known as A'shā Nashal:³

I do know, without your informing me,
that my path is that of a man upon his bier.
Both Fate and Death ascend on high,
carefully watching over me,
Never pleased with the pledge to offer
all my wealth, without my soul as well.⁴

The Qur'an seeks to remind its various audiences of the ever present fact of death. In doing so, it relates death to the sensation of "tasting," thereby conveying something of the direct and palpable nature of the experience of dying: "Every soul shall taste death. Then unto Us shall you be returned" (Q 29:57).⁵ Since every human being will taste death, there is no point in attempting to escape it, as it will have the final say, regardless of where one may happen to be: "Wheresoever you may be, death

will overtake you, though you should be in towers raised high” (Q 4:78); “Say, ‘Truly the death from which you flee will surely meet you; then you shall be brought back to the Knower of the Unseen and the seen, and He will inform you of that which you used to do’” (Q 62:8).

It will be noted that two of these Qur’anic verses cited speak of death as a kind of return or being brought back to God. In Islamic thought in general, much of what is implied by the English term “eschatology” corresponds to the Arabic noun of place *mā’ād*, which literally denotes a “place of return.” This particular term appears once in the Qur’an: “Truly the One Who ordained the Qur’an for thee shall surely bring thee back to the place of return” (Q 28:85). The great Islamic philosopher Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037) explains that *mā’ād* is a “place of return” on the logic that it is used in reference to a place where someone initially has been but thereafter leaves, only to return at a later time. Thus, by extension, the Return refers to the afterlife, since it is the place to which humans will go back after having departed from it for a short while.⁶

The Qur’anic notion of returning to God normally appears in verbal form (the *r-j-* and *-w-d* roots being most prominent). In several verses, the concept of a “return” to God is accompanied by the teaching concerning one’s origin from God: “Just as He originated you, so shall you return” (Q 7:29); “Truly we are God’s, and unto Him we return” (Q 2:156); “He it is Who originates creation then brings it back, and that is most easy for Him” (Q 30:27). Other verses that speak of the return do not pair it with one’s point of origin but rather speak of the fact of the Return in general.⁷ Yet another verse directly links the Return to one’s reckoning with God: “Truly unto Us is their return, then truly with Us lies their reckoning” (Q 88:25–26).

It is often stated that the pre-Islamic Arabs did not believe in an afterlife, which was a radically new doctrine presented to them by the Qur’an. However, there is a good amount of evidence, both textual and material, which sufficiently problematizes this understanding. For example, archaeological evidence in Southern Arabia points to some kind of belief in an afterlife amongst the ancient Arabs.⁸ We also know of ancient Arabian funerary rights which, however vaguely, imply a belief in posthumous states of existence.⁹ As for the pre-Islamic poets, a number of their verses also evince belief in life after death.¹⁰ The bard ‘Abīd ibn al-Abrāṣ (act. circa 540 CE), for example, makes explicit reference to the Resurrection (*qiyāma*) in these lines:

If Thou leave them, it is Thy grace;
and if Thou slay them, it is no wrong:
Thou are the Lord and Master, Thou,
and they Thy slaves till the Resurrection;
Submissive under Thy scourge are they
as a young dun camel under the nose-ring.¹¹

Be that as it may, the general ethos of the pre-Islamic Arabs was not other-worldly, and for the most part they did not believe in life after death. This mistaken notion is cited and then refuted in the Qur’an on a number of occasions. For example, “They say, ‘There is naught but our life in this world. We die and we live and none destroys us save time’” (Q 45:24). Another verse demonstrates that the rejection of an afterlife by the pagan Arabs was part of their ancestral heritage and that what they were particularly against was the notion of being brought back to life after death: “They say, ‘What, when we have died and are dust and bones, are we to be resurrected? We and our fathers were certainly warned of this before. These are naught but fables of those of old’” (Q 23:82–83).¹² For the pagan Arabs, this world was life, period. To this the Qur’an responds, “the Abode of the Hereafter is life indeed, if they but knew” (Q 29:64).¹³ Another strategy employed in the Qur’an in order to bring its first opponents, and potentially any other denier, to a position of belief in the afterlife, is to turn their attention to the end of time and the destruction of the cosmic order itself.

Apocalypse

Contrasted with the pre-Islamic Arabs' notion of the permanence of this world is the Qur'anic assurance of the destruction of all things this side of death. Propounded in a number of verses that have to do with what is known as "the Hour" (*al-sā'ā*), this Qur'anic teaching is technically concerned with what can be called the "beginning" of the end, or, more loosely, "doomsday." This is because the Hour signals the first phase of a longer process that entails the resurrection, judgment, and final residence of all human beings in the afterlife.

This first dimension of Qur'anic eschatology comes in the form of a series of catastrophic global events that ultimately entail all life and even the cosmic order itself being brought to an abrupt halt.¹⁴ Although the Hour will come upon people "suddenly" (Q 6:31), its "portents" (*ashrāf*) have already appeared (Q 47:18), one of which is the coming of the Prophet Muhammad.¹⁵ However, the exact occurrence of the Hour is only known to God: "People question thee concerning the Hour. Say, 'Knowledge thereof lies only with God. And what will apprise thee? Perhaps the Hour is nigh'" (Q 33:63).¹⁶ When the Hour does arrive, it will be marked by a blast from "the trumpet" (*al-ṣūr*) blown by the angel Seraphiel (Isrāfīl). This trumpet blast will usher in nothing short of the apocalypse.¹⁷

One of the functions of the Qur'an's apocalyptic verses is to complement other Qur'anic verses that emphasize the fleeting nature of this worldly life (i.e., Q 18:45–46). In other words, the apocalypse envisioned by the Qur'an is the logical conclusion of a world whose fleeting nature can be experienced by its own inhabitants, provided they can see through the veil of this worldly life, which is mere "play and diversion" (Q 6:32).¹⁸ At the onset of the Hour, the fleeting nature of this life will become a concrete reality for all to witness, as the trumpet's blast will set everything in the heavens and on the earth in motion: "Then when a single blast is blown in the trumpet and the earth and mountains are borne away and ground up in a single grinding, on that Day the Event shall befall; the sky shall be rent asunder, for that Day it shall be frail" (Q 69:13–16).¹⁹

When the Hour arrives, people will be in a state of great shock and panic, running to and fro, "like scattered moths" (Q 101:4). Fleeing for their own deliverance amid the chaos, people will even abandon their most beloved family members: "that Day when a man will flee from his brother, his mother, and his father, his spouse and his children. For every man that Day his affair shall suffice him" (Q 80:34–37).²⁰ The various forms of stability that people enjoyed while on earth will be snatched away from them, and even the mountains, themselves symbols of firmness and fixity, will now become "like carded wool" (Q 101:5) and will be "pulverized to powder, such that they become scattered dust" (Q 56:6).²¹ Despite the disastrous happenings that will occur in the sea, on land, and in the sky, the earth will act as a kind of terrestrial witness to man's actions during his time on earth: "When the earth is shaken with her shaking, and the earth yields up her burdens, and man says, 'What ails her?' That Day she shall convey her chronicles" (Q 99:1–4).²²

It is perhaps better to think of the Hour's individual instances, recounted as so many nonlinear "minutes" or components, as part of a greater cosmic occurrence that itself implicates and therefore transcends serial time. Nevertheless, because the world participates in the order of time and change, the Hour marks that "moment" when time itself will vanish. This is graphically depicted in the Qur'an as an enfolding of the cosmic order, just as scrolls are rolled up after having been extended. This folding up, which has certain parallels with the Bible,²³ will dissolve any and all bifurcated experiences of space and time, thereby bringing all things back to their point of timeless origin and hence their final place of return: "That Day We shall roll up the sky like the rolling of scrolls for writings. As We originated the first creation, so shall We bring it back – a promise binding upon Us. Surely We shall do it" (Q 21:104).²⁴

Resurrection

Whether a person dies before the apocalypse or not, his or her first mode of existence after bodily death will be in the grave. This time in the grave, which forms a kind of interstitial space between this world and the afterlife, is referred to in the Islamic tradition as the *barzakh* (“barrier” or “isthmus”).²⁵ Although this term figures three times in the Qur’an, in only one instance is it identified as a barrier between this world and life in the grave (Q 23:100). However long one remains in the grave, at the time of the Resurrection, those in the *barzakh* will feel as though they were in their graves for “but an hour” (Q 30:55) or “but a short while” (Q 17:52).

The angel’s second blow on the trumpet will signal the commencement of “the Day of Resurrection” (*yawm al-qiyāma*, Q 36:51–52).²⁶ This phrase, which literally translates as “the Day of Rising” or “the Day of Standing,” appears 70 times in the Qur’an. It also has many other names in the Qur’an, among which are “the Day of Judgment” (*yawm al-dīn*, Q 1:4) and “the Last Day” (*al-yawm al-ākhir*, Q 2:8).²⁷

The Qur’an’s first line of argumentation to demonstrate the ineluctable logic of a resurrection of human beings after their deaths is, once again, to appeal to their immediate experience of life on earth. In their earthly lives, people witness various cycles of birth, death, and regeneration in the plant and animal kingdoms. The following verses are typical in this regard:

And God is He Who sends the winds; then they cause clouds to rise. Then We drive them to a land that is dead, and thereby revive the earth after its death. Thus shall be the Resurrection!

(Q 35:9)

He sent down water from the sky, wherewith We brought forth diverse kinds of vegetation [saying], “Eat and pasture your cattle.” Truly in that are signs for those possessed of intelligence. From it We created you, and unto it We shall bring you back, and from it We shall bring you forth another time.

(Q 20:53–55)²⁸

The power that lies behind these various cycles of birth, death, and rebirth is the same power that brought human beings themselves into existence. Human beings are therefore also subject to this same life cycle and to the power that governs it.

The Qur’an further attempts to demonstrate the inevitability of a resurrection along implied lines: “Man says, ‘When I am dead, shall I be brought forth alive?’ Does man not remember that We created him before, when he was naught?” (Q 19:66–67);²⁹ “He it is Who originates creation then brings it back, and that is most easy for Him” (Q 30:27);³⁰ “And he has set forth for Us a parable and forgotten his own creation, saying, ‘Who revives these bones, decayed as they are?’ Say, ‘He will revive them Who brought them forth the first time, and He knows every creation’” (Q 36:78–79).³¹ From one perspective, the point being made in such verses is that it would be all-the-more easy for God to recreate human beings at the time of the Resurrection because He had already created them at an earlier time.³² By extension, if God originated human beings *ex nihilo*, then there should be no difficulty in conceiving of a resurrection of these created beings because, *a fortiori*, it is more difficult for people to conceive of the origination of something from nothing than for that thing to be refashioned from an already existing substance, be it bone, dust, or the like.³³

Another name for the Day of Judgment is “the Day of Reckoning” (*yawm al-ḥisāb*, Q 38:16). This is because it is a “time” when man’s deeds, accrued over a lifetime, will be taken into account. Hence the verse, “O you who believe! Reverence God and let every soul consider what it has sent forth for the morrow; and reverence God. Truly God is Aware of whatsoever you do” (Q 59:18). While

man will be questioned by God (Q 15:92–93)³⁴ and informed by Him concerning what he used to do (Q 75:13), he himself will become keenly aware of his actions on the Day of Judgment by virtue of being given the “Book” in which his deeds are recorded:

And the Book will be set down. Then thou wilt see the guilty fearful of what is in it. And they will say, “Oh, woe unto us! What a book this is! It leaves out nothing, small or great, save that it has taken account thereof.” And they will find present [therein] whatsoever they did. And thy Lord wrongs no one.

(Q 18:49)³⁵

Most other relevant Qur'anic verses do not speak of a Book that functions as a kind of grand register of human actions. Rather, each person is given his own highly personalized book. This book is conferred upon man so that he may read its content (Q 17:14), thereby allowing him to testify to his own actions. The man who will attain felicity is given his book in “his right hand” (Q 69:19),³⁶ while the one who will be damned receives it in his “left hand” (Q 69:20) and “from behind his back” (Q 84:10).

Commenting on Qur'an 100:10, “And [when] what lies within breasts is made known,” the great Persian Sufi philosopher 'Ayn al-Quḍāt (d. 525/1131) explains that this verse refers to the removal of the “veil from the face of actions.”³⁷ In other words, on the Day of Resurrection those actions of ours that were unseen and covered from others will now be put on full display. This is why the Day of Resurrection is also referred to in the Qur'an as a day in which “you shall be exposed; no secret of yours shall be hidden” (Q 69:18). At the same time, “man shall be a testimony against himself, though he proffers his excuses” (Q 75:14–15). The excuses that he will attempt to put forth in his defense will be defied by the testimony of his own faculties, including his skin and his limbs: “On the day their tongues, their hands, and their feet bear witness against them as to that which they used to do” (Q 24:24).³⁸ Needless to say, there is an interesting parallel between the Qur'anic teaching concerning man's own limbs bearing witness against him on the Final day and the aforementioned earth's bearing witness to his actions at the onset of the Hour.

For the damned in particular, the testimony of their limbs against them takes on an even greater significance. This is because their mouths shall be sealed up on the Final Day (Q 36:65),³⁹ and they will be unable to make a case so as to exonerate themselves. Although all human beings on that Day will “be humbled before the Compassionate,” and not so much as “a murmur” will be heard (Q 20:108), the one who is to be condemned will be rendered so mute as to be made a passive witness to the active effects of his own actions. This will be symbolized by the closing of his mouth and the transference of speech to his limbs – the very instruments with which he performed his wrong actions while alive on earth. God, too, will not speak to him (Q 2:174). For the damned, therefore, there will be nothing but silent treatment and regret.

A complement to the mute state of the damned in the afterlife is their state of blindness, which itself mirrors their blindness during their earthly lives: “And whosoever was blind in this [life] will be blind in the Hereafter, and further astray from the way” (Q 17:72). From another perspective, the person consigned to damnation will now be able to see the reality of things with crystal clarity (Q 50:22). This type of existential witnessing is a natural corollary to a general type of sensation that will be made available to everyone on the Day of Resurrection. They will all see and sense the eschatological weight of their own deeds, which will be measured out before them on the “scales” (*mawāzīn*): “Whosoever does a mote's weight of good shall see it. And whosoever does a mote's weight of evil shall see it” (Q 99:7–8); “Those whose scales are heavy, it is they who shall prosper. And as for those whose scales are light, it is they who have ruined their souls for having treated Our signs wrongfully” (Q 7:8–9).⁴⁰

Residence

The Qur'an has a great deal to say about the posthumous states of felicity and damnation, which are depicted as objective realities and the ultimate places of residence for all human beings. The place of felicity is commonly referred to as "the Garden" (*al-janna*), that is paradise, or more idiomatically, "Heaven." Conversely, the place of damnation is "the Fire" (*al-nār*), or "Hell."⁴¹ The inhabitants of Heaven "hear no idle talk therein, nor incitement to sin, save that of 'Peace! Peace!'" (Q 56:25–26). They will abide in the Garden forever and shall never experience sadness, grief, or loss. Indeed, they inherit "the Abode of Peace with their Lord, and He shall be their Protector, because of that which they used to do" (Q 6:127). The inhabitants of Hell, on the other hand, experience death continually, though they do not actually die (Q 14:17). Each time their skins are burned away, they are given new ones (Q 4:56). It will be impossible for them to leave Hell (Q 22:22), which is described as "the Blaze" (*al-sa'ūr*, Q 22:4 et passim) which is fueled by "men and stones" (Q 66:6).

One manner in which the Qur'an depicts the delightful state of residence in the Garden and the horrible state of residence in the Fire is by way of employing diptychs. This is a literary technique used to juxtapose one entity with another, thereby throwing their stark contrasts with each other into greater relief.⁴² These contrasts in the Qur'an begin at the gates of Paradise and Hell. The people who are driven to Hell will be met with blame, ignominy, and despair, whereas those entering the Garden will be greeted by the angels, warm salutations, and congratulatory words (Q 39:71–73).⁴³ Once in their respective abodes, those in Hell will wear "garments of fire," whereas those in Paradise will be adorned with "bracelets of gold and pearl," as well as silk clothing (Q 22:19–23). The latter will be nourished with all manner of delightful food, but those in Hell will have their exact antipode (Q 47:15).⁴⁴ Concerning the eschatological topography of both abodes, Paradise is laden with lush gardens that have rivers coursing below them (Q 3:15 et passim), whereas Hell will contain "scorching wind, boiling liquid, and the shadow of black smoke" (Q 56:42–43). Finally, those in Paradise will have companions in the form of "wide-eyed maidens" who are like "concealed pearls" (Q 56:22–23), and they will also be in the company of the prophets and the righteous (Q 4:69). Those in Hell will be in "communities of jinn and men" who will cast blame upon one another for being the catalysts for their descent into Hell's infernal states (Q 7:38–39).

According to an important Muslim eschatological doctrine believed to be alluded to in Q 1:6, 19:71, and 36:66 and discussed in greater detail in the hadith literature, there will be a "bridge" (*ṣirāṭ*) which people must cross on the Day of Judgment before they are differentiated into Paradise and Hell.⁴⁵ This bridge, which is remarkably similar to the descriptions given of "the Bridge of the Collector" (*čimvad puhl*) in Zoroastrian eschatology,⁴⁶ is described as being "as fine as a hair and as sharp as a sword." Only the righteous will be able to traverse the bridge and enter Paradise, while the wicked will be unable to do so and will thereby land in Hell. It is also important to note the contrast between the aforementioned scales and the bridge: heaviness on the scales symbolizes an abundance of good deeds and hence deliverance, whereas heaviness on the bridge or an abundance of evil deeds weigh down the individual, causing him to slip off the bridge and be cast into Hell. Despite these contrasting, though by no means contradictory functions of the scales and the bridge, what is clear is that the Islamic tradition views the trial upon the bridge as representing a culmination of the kind of personhood that each individual has cultivated during her or his stay on earth.

Like other eschatological data in the Qur'an,⁴⁷ many Muslim scholars have interpreted the bridge in various ways. For the Islamic sages in particular, it is seen as being nothing other than a sensory manifestation of the real state of the individual human soul in the afterlife. As the influential philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) explains it, on the Day of Resurrection, the bridge will be:

spread out for you as a sensory bridge (*ḡisr maḡsūs*) extended over the surface of Hell, its start being in [this] place, and its end being at the door of Paradise. Whoever witnesses

it will know that it is of his design and building, and that it is an extended bridge in this world over the surface of his Hell in the fire of his nature within which is the shadow of his reality.⁴⁸

A natural corollary to this kind of approach to eschatological matters is that all of what will take place in the afterlife is already configured in the human soul. The Day of Judgment is thus an unfolding of the states of one's innermost self. Those souls that were negative, dark, and hence "fiery" belong in Hell, while those souls that were positive, luminous, and hence fragrant like a garden belong in the Garden. The celebrated poet Sanā'ī (d. 525/1131) effectively explains this perspective so common in premodern Islamic intellectual culture:

When they lift the veil of sensory perception from your eyes,
if an unbeliever you will find scorching Hell, if a man of faith the Garden.
Your Heaven and Hell are within yourself: look inside!
See furnaces in your liver, Gardens in your heart.⁴⁹

A step further would be to not only see the states of Paradise and Hell within oneself but to witness the states of Paradise and Hell by virtue of one's proximity to or distance from God. This explains why many authors within the Islamic tradition identified the supreme gift of witnessing God with the joy of Paradise as such. While the Qur'an refers to this Beatific Vision, which is generally believed by Muslims to be a real possibility in the afterlife,⁵⁰ many authors sought to cultivate this vision in the here and now. This is why some authors identify the vision of God in both worlds with Heaven itself, and distance from God in both worlds with Hell itself. As 'Ayn al-Quḍāt puts it, "When His friends see Him, they are in the Garden. But when they are without Him, they are in Hell."⁵¹

Closing

Let us shift our focus to that one aspect of the Qur'an's eschatological infrastructure which has thus far received little scholarly attention, namely "the heights" (*al-a'raf*).⁵² Reference to the heights occurs twice in the Qur'an's seventh sura (Q 7:46–49), which takes its name after them. The heights are believed to refer to an intermediary space located on an elevated barrier between the Garden and Hell, which some associate with the aforementioned bridge.⁵³ A number of Sufi Qur'an commentators have viewed "the Companions of the Heights" (*aṣḥāb al-a'raf*, Q 7:48) as occupying a high spiritual rank by virtue of their knowledge of God, righteous deeds, and profound understanding of the nature of things.⁵⁴ However, according to the majority of classical Qur'anic exegetes, the Companions of the Heights are those whose scales are not heavy enough with good deeds so as to merit entry into Paradise, nor are they heavy enough with evil deeds so as to merit descent into Hell. Rather, their scales are, pan-for-pan, equal with the same amount of good deeds as that of bad deeds.⁵⁵

Since in Islamic eschatology only the Garden and Hell are described as everlasting, the Heights are not believed to be eternal. One of the implications of this view is that those in the Heights will only remain there for a finite duration and after some time will eventually enter Paradise.⁵⁶ It is tempting to liken the heights to the Purgatory of Catholic theology,⁵⁷ but the heights are generally not seen as a place in which people are cleansed of their sins until they become pure enough to enter the Garden. Yet the Catholic notion of the Purgatory as containing a "purifying fire" (*purgatorius ignis*)⁵⁸ does find a certain analog in Islamic texts, which see the fire of Hell as itself possessing purifying properties, thereby allowing those confined to Hell to enter Paradise once their souls have become sufficiently cleansed.⁵⁹

The notion that Hell is a place to which one must go in order to be purged of one's evil states is informed by a wider theological perspective in texts of Islamic thought that maintains that Hell in itself and/or suffering in Hell are noneternal. Various arguments have been brought forth by some of Islam's foremost intellectual figures in order to argue in favor of this point.⁶⁰ After all, the Qur'an does not speak of suffering in Hell as unequivocally eternal, although it does speak of residing in Hell eternally, which is not the same thing.⁶¹

The main consideration that led a good number of Muslim philosophers, theologians, and mystics to the view that suffering in Hell cannot be eternal was the basic Islamic belief in the all-pervading and essential nature of God's compassion or mercy (*rahma*). That is, if God is all-merciful as repeatedly stated in the Qur'an and hadith, then would there not come a time when people's negative actions, being as they are finite in scope and consequence, are adequately accounted for in terms of punishment and retribution?⁶² It is with this point in mind that Ibn Sīnā states rather emphatically, "Do not incline to those who maintain that deliverance is restricted to a limited number of people, turning it away from the ignorant and the sinful forever. God's mercy is far too expansive!"⁶³

The famous Andalusian Sufi metaphysician Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) goes to even greater lengths to explain why God's all-encompassing mercy demands the ultimate deliverance of all human beings. From the perspective of reason, Ibn 'Arabī argues, God is not affected by the wrong actions of His servants, nor does He benefit from their good actions. Thus there is nothing "personal" between God and His creatures such that they would have to suffer in Hell for all of eternity if they failed to obey Him. From the perspective of scripture, God's mercy is said to embrace "all things" (Q 7:156),⁶⁴ which must also pertain to Hell and to those who are in it.⁶⁵ These points allow Ibn 'Arabī to draw a rather natural conclusion: "God has said about Himself that He is 'the Most Merciful of the merciful' (Q 12:56). . . . So how can chastisement be everlasting for those in Hell when He has this all-inclusive attribute of mercy? God is more generous than that."⁶⁶

Notes

- 1 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 108. It should be noted that, in addition to the present article, several other excellent surveys of eschatology in the Qur'an have appeared over the past few years. See, in particular, Sebastian Günther, "Eschatology and the Qur'an," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. M.A.S. Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), chapter 30; Christian Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 37–70; Hamza Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner Dagli, Maria Dakake, Joseph Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 1819–1855. Among older studies, one may profitably consult Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989), 106–120.
- 2 See the penetrating analysis in Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, 74–104.
- 3 That is, "the blind poet of the Nashal clan." See Alan Jones's superb two-volume work, *Early Arabic Poetry* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1992–1996), 2:138. For a wide-ranging discussion concerning the semiotic congruence between the Qur'an and pre-Islamic Arabic poetry (with specific reference to a poem by al-Nashalī), see Ghassan El Masri, "The Qur'an and the Character of Pre-Islamic Poetry: The *Dāliyya* of al-Aswad b. Ya'fur al-Nashalī (d. 600 CE)," in *The Qur'an and Adab: The Shaping of Literary Traditions in Classical Islam*, ed. Nuha Alshaar (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017), 93–135. See also Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, "Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry," in *Roads to Paradise: Eschatology and Concepts of the Hereafter in Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther and Todd Lawson, with the assistance of Christian Mauder (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1:136–161.
- 4 In rendering these lines, I have taken much help from the translation and commentary in Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 2:140–142.
- 5 See also Q 3:185 and 21:35. Translations from the Qur'an are taken, with occasional modifications, from Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*.
- 6 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Risālat al-Aḥawīyya fī amr al-mā'ād*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1949), 2.
- 7 See, for example, Q 2:148, 32:11, 36:83, 84:6, and 96:8.

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- 8 Carl Ernst, *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 85–89.
- 9 Jane Smith and Yvonne Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), 147–155.
- 10 Hafiz Ghulam Mustafa, *Religious Trends in Pre-Islamic Poetry* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968), 69 ff. I am grateful to the late Th. Emil Homerin for bringing this source and the one cited in the next note to my attention.
- 11 Translation taken, with minor modifications, from Charles Lyall, *The Dīwāns of 'Abīd ibn al-Abras, of Asad, and 'Āmir ibn At-Ṭīfayl, of 'Āmir ibn Ṣa'sa'ah* (Leiden: Brill, 1913), 61. Along with Theodore Nöldeke, Lyall sees this reference to the Resurrection as a later Muslim insertion. Yet there is no good reason to assume this, especially since many of the great classical Muslim *belle-lettrists* were of the view that such references were authentic. See Mustafa, *Religious Trends in Pre-Islamic Poetry*, 69 ff.
- 12 Cf. Q 17:51 and 36:78–79.
- 13 See also Q 28:60.
- 14 A sensitive and nuanced reading of some of the Qur'an's main apocalyptic chapters can be found in Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations* (Ashland: White Cloud Press, 2006), 41 ff. A cogent case for reading the Qur'an as an apocalyptic text is made in Todd Lawson, *The Quran: Epic and Apocalypse* (London: Oneworld, 2017).
- 15 The general Muslim belief in the coming of the Prophet as marking the onset of the end of time is informed by several famous hadiths and incidences in the Prophet's life. For some relevant discussion, see the commentaries by Mohammed Rustom on Q 15:85–86, Maria Dakake on Q 16:77 and 17:51, and Joseph Lumbard on Q 53:57 and 54:1 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*. See also Günther, "Eschatology and the Qur'an" and Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," 1829.
- 16 See also Q 7:187.
- 17 It is interesting to note that, while this is the first of two trumpet blasts announced in the Qur'an (for the second of which, see the following section of this chapter), the Bible speaks of seven eschatological trumpets that will be blown by seven angels respectively. See Revelation 8:6–13 and 9.
- 18 Also at Q 47:36. Cf. Q 29:64 and 57:20.
- 19 See also Q 39:68, 74:8–10, 81:1–3, and 84:1–5.
- 20 See also Q 22:1–2. It will be noted that this article does not speak of "salvation" in a Qur'anic context but rather "deliverance." For an argument in favor of this point, see Rustom, "Notes on the Semantic Range of 'Deliverance' in the Quran," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 138, no. 2 (2018): 361–367.
- 21 See also Q 20:105–107.
- 22 The Prophet is reported to have said that "her chronicles" refers to the earth's testifying against human beings concerning each and every thing that they did on each and every day that they were alive on earth. See Lumbard's commentary on Q 99:4 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*.
- 23 See Isaiah 34:4 and Revelation 6:14.
- 24 Cf. Q 39:67.
- 25 See William Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, eds. Mohammed Rustom, Atif Khalil, and Kazuyo Murata (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 243 ff.; Günther, "Eschatology and the Qur'an"; Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 122–128; Tommaso Tesei, "The *barzakh* and the Intermediate State of the Dead in the Quran," in *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, ed. Christian Lange (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 31–55. Cf. George Archer, *A Place Between Two Places: The Qur'anic Barzakh* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017).
- 26 This again parallels the Bible where Paul speaks of the blowing of a trumpet in order to mark the Resurrection. See Corinthians 15:51–52. Further details on the second trumpet blast can be found in Lumbard's commentaries on Q 39:68, 50:41, and 78:18 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*. See also Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," 1830–1831.
- 27 For a full listing of these names and their occurrences in the Qur'an, see Günther, "Eschatology and the Qur'an" and Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," 1834–1835.
- 28 See also Q 30:40.
- 29 See also, inter alia, Q 17:51 and 75:1–6.
- 30 Cf. Q 75:36–40.
- 31 See also Q 22:5–7.
- 32 See the discussion in Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," 1832.
- 33 Cf., inter alia, Q 17:49–51, 18:37, and 22:5–7.
- 34 In Islamic belief, the process of posthumous interrogation begins with questioning by Munkar and Nakīr, two angels who come to the deceased during their first night in the grave, asking them some questions pertaining to their faith. See Yusuf, "Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran," 1828–1829.

- 35 See also Q 83:9.
- 36 See also Q 84:7.
- 37 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, ed. ‘Afif ‘Usayrān (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Manūchihri, 1994), 326, § 427. Translation taken from Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2022).
- 38 Cf. also Q 17:36, 36:65, and 41:20–22.
- 39 Cf. Q 27:85 and 41:21–22.
- 40 See also Q 21:47, 23:102–103, and 101:7–9.
- 41 Discussions concerning the Qur’an’s various names for the Garden and Hell can respectively be found in Muhammad Abdel Haleem, “Quranic Paradise: How to Get to Paradise and What to Expect There,” in Günther and Lawson, with the assistance of Mauder (eds.), *Roads to Paradise*, 1:55–57, and Yusuf, “Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran,” 1848.
- 42 For the Qur’an’s use of diptychs, see the discussion in Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur’an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 105–106.
- 43 This recounting here of the disbelievers’ rejection of the messages of guidance that came to them during their earthly lives, and their resultant state of damnation in the afterlife, is a fine example of what Robinson refers to as a Qur’anic eschatological “flashback” verse. See Robinson, *Discovering the Qur’an*, 106.
- 44 See also Q 44:43–46. An interesting treatment of the Qur’anic depiction of Heavenly nourishment can be found in Ailin Qian, “Delights in Paradise: A Comparative Survey of Heavenly Food and Drink in the Quran,” in Günther and Lawson, with the assistance of Mauder (eds.), *Roads to Paradise*, 1:251–270.
- 45 See Günther, “Eschatology and the Qur’an” and Yusuf, “Death, Dying, and the Afterlife in the Quran,” 1844. For the Qur’anic term *ṣirāt*, see the insightful discussion in Walid Saleh, “The Etymological Fallacy and Qur’anic Studies: Muhammad, Paradise, and Late Antiquity,” in *The Qur’ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’anic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 665–670.
- 46 See Ahmad Tafazzoli, “Činwad Puhl,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (New York: Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1982–).
- 47 Various Muslim interpretations of Qur’anic verses dealing with the afterlife can be found in Helmut Gätje, *The Qur’ān and Its Exegesis: Selected Texts with Classical and Modern Muslim Interpretations*, trans. and ed. Alford Welch (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 172–186. There are a number of fine, recent studies of eschatology in Islamic thought. See, in particular, Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 233–257; both volumes of Günther and Lawson, with the assistance of Mauder (eds.), *Roads to Paradise*; Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 165–278.
- 48 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājāwī (Qum: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1987–1990), 1:122. Translation taken from Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 102. Contrary to the suggestions recorded in *Triumph of Mercy*, 102 and 203, n. 10, this passage is reworked from Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), 3:32.
- 49 Sanā’ī, *Dīwān*, ed. Mudarris Raḍawī (Tehran: Ibn Sīnā, 1962), 708. Translation taken, with slight modifications, from Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart*, 249.
- 50 See Lumbard’s commentary on Q 75:22–23 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*.
- 51 ‘Ayn al-Quḍāt, *Tamhīdāt*, 291, § 381. Translation taken from Rustom, *Inrushes of the Heart*, chapter 6.
- 52 Some exceptions include William Brinner, “People of the Heights,” in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006); Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 59–60; Rudi Paret, *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1977), 160. The most extensive discussions of the Heights are in Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:47 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*, and her unpublished article, “Cyclical and Linear Conceptions of History in the Qur’an.”
- 53 A sampling of the various views concerning the Heights can be found in Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:47 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*. Cf. Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 59–60.
- 54 See Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:47 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*. Cf. the observations in Brinner, “People of the Heights.”
- 55 These points are discussed in Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:47 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*. See also Lange, *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions*, 59.
- 56 See Dakake’s commentary on Q 7:47 in Nasr et al. (eds.), *Study Quran*.
- 57 For the Catholic understanding of the Purgatory, one may consult Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2016), 441–442.
- 58 McGrath, *Christian Theology*, 442.
- 59 See Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation Question* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapters 1 and 3; Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, 92.

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- 60 For a very useful survey of the diverse views surrounding this question in medieval and modern Islamic thought, see Khalil, *Islam and the Fate of Others*. A discussion of the different positions concerning the finite nature of Hell in early Islamic thought can be found in Feras Hamza, "Temporary Hellfire Punishment and the Making of Sunni Orthodoxy," in Günther and Lawson, with the assistance of Mauder (eds.), *Roads to Paradise*, 1:371–406.
- 61 For an analysis of the relevant Qur'anic verses, see Rustom, *Triumph of Mercy*, 109 ff.
- 62 For a number of arguments (based on scripture and reason) against the notion of eternal suffering in Hell, see Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy*, chapters 6–7.
- 63 Ibn Sīnā in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Sharḥay al-Ishārāt* (Qum: Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-'Uẓmā al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, 1983), 2:83.
- 64 See also Q 6:12 and 54, "He has prescribed Mercy for Himself." Cf. Q 40:7. For extended translations of commentaries on Q 6:12 by a host of Qur'anic exegetes belonging to a variety of intellectual persuasions, see Feras Hamza and Sajjad Rizvi, with Farhana Mayer, eds., *An Anthology of Qur'anic Commentaries (Volume 1: On the Nature of the Divine)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2008), chapter 3.
- 65 See Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabī's Cosmology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 188–189.
- 66 Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:25. Translation taken, with slight modifications, from Chittick, *Self-Disclosure of God*, 188.