

Belief in Divine Decree (part 1 of 2)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The sixth and last article of Islaamic faith is belief in divine decree (Qadr in Arabic). The divine decree (Qadr) is an extremely important article of faith, and people of various faiths have differed among themselves concerning this issue for a long time.

The divine decree is Allaah's 'hidden mystery' whose depths are inaccessible for human beings to fathom. A Muslim should learn the correct belief regarding the divine decree and stick to the advice of the Prophet:

“When the divine decree (Qadr) is mentioned, take to silence.”¹

At the same time, we have been given enough information about this subject in order for us to be at peace with it, even if we may not know its intricacies. For this reason, it is a compulsory aspect of faith, and emphasizing the importance of this belief, Ibn Umar, the famous Companion of Prophet Muhammad, once swore and said of those who rejected it, 'If one of them were to spend gold equal to Mount Uhad in the way of Allaah, it will never be accepted by Allaah from them, unless they believe in the divine decree.'

Ubada bin Samit, a Companion of the Prophet, was on his death bed when his son visited him and asked, 'O Father, give me advice so I may hold to it.' Ubada said, 'Sit down. O my son, you shall never taste faith, and shall not reach the reality of the knowledge of Allaah until you have faith in the divine decree, the good of it and the evil of it.' So I said, 'O my father, how do I know what is the good of the divine decree and the evil of it?' He said, 'Know that what afflicted you, could never have missed you; and what missed you, could never have afflicted you. O my son, I heard the Prophet of Allaah say that the first thing Allaah created was the Pen. He said to it, 'Write'. So it wrote everything that would take place till the Day of Judgment. O my son, if you die while not believing in this, then you will enter the Fire.'

Ad-Daylami says:

“I went to Ubayy bin Ka'b and told him that I had some doubts regarding the divine decree, so tell me something so that perchance Allaah makes it leave my heart. He said, 'If Allaah were to punish the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, He would punish them and He

¹ Saheeh Muslim

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would not be unjust to them; and if He were to show Mercy to them, it would be better for them than their deeds. And if you were to spend gold the like of Mount Uhud, it will not be accepted by Allaah until you had faith in the divine decree. And know that what afflicted you could never have missed you, and what missed you could never have afflicted you.’

So he went to Abdullah Ibn Mas’ood who told him the same thing. So he went to Hudthaifah bin al-Yamaan² who told him the same thing. He went to Zayd bin Thabit who also told him the same thing.³

What is this faith in the divine decree (Qadr) that these great Companions considered as salvation from the Fire? What exactly does one have to believe in?

- (1) Allaah’s Foreknowledge is all inclusive and complete.
- (2) Allaah has recorded everything in the Preserved Tablet.
- (3) Allaah’s Will always comes to pass, and His Ability is perfect.
- (4) Allaah created everything.

(1) Allaah’s Foreknowledge is All Inclusive and Complete

The first necessary component is to believe in Allaah’s infallible foreknowledge. Allaah knows what the creatures will do, encompassing everything by His knowledge. He knows all that exists, in entirety and totality, by virtue of His ancient and eternal foreknowledge. It is the same to Him whether it is related to His Actions or the acts of His slaves. He knows their state, obedience and disobedience, sustenance, life span, successes and failures, and all their movements. Before He created them, and even before He created the heavens and the earth, Allaah knew exactly who will enter Paradise and who will abide in Hell.

[“Truly, nothing is hidden from Allaah, in the earth or in the heavens.”]⁴

[“Do you not know that Allaah knows all that occurs in heaven and on earth?”]⁵

Whoever refuses it denies Allaah’s perfection, because the opposite of knowledge is either ignorance or forgetfulness. It would mean Allaah would have been mistaken in His foreknowledge of future events; He would no longer be Omniscient. Both are deficiencies which Allaah is free of. When Pharaoh asked Moses:

² These are all companions of the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him*)

³ Imaam Ahmad in his Musnad and Aboo Daawood.

⁴ Qur’aan [3:5]

⁵ Qur’aan [22:70]

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["(Pharaoh said:) 'What about the generations of old?' (Moses) said: 'The knowledge thereof is with my Lord, in a Record. My Lord is neither unaware nor He forgets'"]⁶

Allaah is not unaware of the future, nor does He forget anything from the past.

(2) Allaah Has Recorded Everything in the Preserved Tablet

The second necessary component is that Allaah has recorded everything that will occur until the Day of Judgment in the Preserved Tablet (al-Lauh al-Mahfudh in Arabic). The life spans of all human beings are written and the amount of their sustenance apportioned. Eternal selection and condemnation were written for all humanity before they were created. Of their own will they went out; of their own will they fell, and because their fall was foreknown, so it was written.

Everything that is created or occurs in the universe is according to what is recorded there. Allaah has said:

["Do you not know that Allaah knows what is in the heaven and earth? Indeed, that is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allaah, is easy."]⁷

Sometimes the sinful attempt to justify sin by saying, "I committed this sin because it was written." The mistake is in his thinking that the mere writing takes away his free will and implies he had no choice in his actions! The answer to such a person is, "No. Since you did it, therefore it was written." Meaning he was free to choose. What was written was simply the choice that he would take, made known to Allaah by His foreknowledge without denying his free will.

⁶ Qur'aan [20:51, 52]

⁷ Qur'aan [22:70]