



أركان الإيمان

THE PILLARS OF FAITH

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THE PILLARS OF FAITH

In Islam, faith (*īmān*) is based on six essential beliefs.¹ They were specified by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when the angel Gabriel questioned him in order to clarify the matter to his companions. The Prophet ﷺ responded, "*Faith means to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day, and the divine Decree, both the good and bad thereof.*"² These six pillars are the basis of the Islamic creed (*'aqeedah*), and one cannot be a Muslim without belief in all of them. It is not, however, a matter of blind acceptance. Basic textual evidences and brief explanations are presented in this booklet.

1. BELIEF IN ALLAH

Belief in Allah³ frees one from servitude to anyone else or to any aspect of His creation. It implants dignity and freedom in the soul by preventing the lordship of some human beings over others. In addition, Allah grants His guidance and favor to those who believe in Him.

Belief in the Existence of Allah

Mankind in general has maintained a belief in the existence of the Creator since time immemorial. The duty of prophets was not so much to inform their peoples of Allah's existence as to warn them against associating others with Him and to teach them how to worship Him. In the words of the Qur'ān: "**Their messengers said, 'Is there doubt concerning Allah, Originator of the heavens and the earth?'**"⁴ Their primary message was "**Worship Allah and avoid false gods**"⁵ and "**Worship Allah; you have no other deity but Him.**"⁶

Denial of His existence altogether is a more recent phenomenon, fashionable among materialists yet lacking in evidence. Materialists recognize only what man has experienced or what can be perceived through the senses, so they expect nothing beyond that. Those who deny or doubt the existence of

¹Belief is considered by some to be no more than opinion, which is defined as a conclusion or judgement based on probabilities but not positive knowledge. Islamic belief, however, is conviction based on textual and rational evidences.

²Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

³"Allāh" is an Arabic word indicating the only entity in existence that possesses the qualities of divinity and lordship: the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and earth. It is the proper name of the one and only true God.

⁴Sūrah Ibrāheem, 14:10.

⁵Sūrah al-Isrā', 17:67.

⁶Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:36.

Allah live their lives without true direction or meaning. Unlike other living creatures, the non-believer exists in a state of internal conflict, confusion and anxiety, troubled by subconscious questions and uncertainties. This unnatural state is in itself a clear sign of dysfunctional perception and erroneous assessment.

The existence of Allah is established by various evidences, among which is scriptural evidence. The major religions of the world have scriptures which teach the existence of the Creator. The Qur'ān, the only revealed book which has remained totally intact and preserved to this day, establishes the existence of Allah through compelling rational arguments while at the same time serving as an enduring miracle testifying to His reality. Within it the Lord of the universe has stated: **"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth."**⁷

Allah's existence was not preceded by nonexistence, nor will it ever come to an end. He is the First; nothing preceded Him. And He is the Last; nothing will succeed Him. The Qur'ān decisively establishes His uniqueness, the fact that He has no resemblance to creation and that worship is due to Him alone.

Fitrah (the inborn awareness of Allah)

All human beings have an inherent and inborn knowledge of their Creator. This is the consequence of a pledge which He took from every soul before it came into the physical world. The Qur'ān says: **"And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam – from their loins – their descendants, and made them testify as to themselves, [saying to them], 'Am I not your Lord?' they said, 'Yes, we have testified.'"**⁸ Every human being is born with this natural inclination, which is called "*fitrah*." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated, "*Every child is born with fitrah; then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.*"⁹

This *fitrah* sometimes becomes dormant or suppressed, especially when one is situated in a corrupt and spiritually degenerate environment where he is seldom reminded of his Lord. The *fitrah* surfaces, however, in times of calamity and distress. How many avowed atheists find themselves turning to God in supplication when terrified, and how many stubborn unbelievers beg for deliverance when faced with death.

The Qur'ān describes this condition: **"It is He [Allah] who enables you to travel over the land and sea; until, when you are in ships and they sail with**

⁷Sūrah Fuṣṣilat, 41:53. §

⁸Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:172.

⁹Narrated by al-Bukhārī.

[their passengers] by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from every direction and they think they are engulfed, they invoke Allah, sincere to Him in religion, 'If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.'¹⁰

This type of sincerity, however, is often short-lived. "Then when He saves them, at once they commit injustice on earth without right."¹¹ During the course of his daily life, while in comfort and enjoyment, man is all too apt to forget his Lord. The Qur'ān says: "And when adversity touches man, he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him [alone]. Then, when He grants him a favor from Himself, he forgets Him whom he had called upon before and attributes equals to Allah."¹²

It was to awaken and revive the human *fiṭrah* that Allah, in His mercy and wisdom, sent messengers to remind people of their true inborn religion and direct them to fulfill the purpose of their creation: to worship and serve their Lord as He instructed. Allah ordered His final Prophet ﷺ: "Say, 'O mankind, if you are in doubt as to my religion, then [know that] I do not worship those you worship besides Allah; but I worship Allah who causes your death.'¹³

Islam is essentially the response by man to his nature, the acceptance of that which is logically good and instinctively right. Allah has said: "So direct your face [i.e., self] toward the religion inclining to truth. That is the *fiṭrah* of Allah upon which He created mankind. No change should there be in the creation of Allah."¹⁴

There are some who stubbornly reject Allah's message when it is presented to them, although they are well aware of its truth. Such was the attitude of Pharaoh and his establishment: "They rejected [Our signs], although their souls were convinced of them, out of injustice and arrogance."¹⁵

Yet, even cynical atheists who oppose the truth and obstinately resist it may grasp it at the last moment. A disbeliever facing death may suddenly embrace Islam at a point when his long suppressed *fiṭrah* finally surfaces. The Qur'ān reminds man that it was Allah who created him and assigned to him a soul, and that he had no control over that occurrence; similarly, he will have no ability to escape the return to his Creator after death.

¹⁰Sūrah Yūnus, 10:22.

¹¹Sūrah Yūnus, 10:23.

¹²Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:8.

¹³Sūrah Yūnus,10:104.

¹⁴Sūrah ar-Rūm, 30:30.

¹⁵Sūrah an-Naml, 27:14.

Rational Proof

Human reason refuses to accept that such a complex system as our universe could come into existence and run on its own. **"Indeed, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers."**¹⁶

Everything requires a cause, so the existence of creation inevitably indicates the existence of its originator. Allah appeals to human rationality in the Qur'ān, saying: **"Were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]?"**¹⁷ Unquestionably, we were created and brought into existence after having been non-existent. It is also obvious that we did not create ourselves. The text continues: **"Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain."**¹⁸

Moreover, this unique and exalted Creator cannot possibly resemble anything of His creation. **"Then, is He who creates like he who does not create? Do you not reflect?"**¹⁹ In reality, every component of creation, from the smallest portion of an atom to the massive galaxies, is a clear sign of the existence of Allah.

Tawḥeed

Islam is based on strict and uncompromising monotheism, which is called *tawḥeed*. This Arabic word literally means "unification" – making or considering something to be one. In terms of belief it indicates a person's positive confirmation that Allah is the one and only, single, indivisible and incomparable God of the entire universe. *Tawḥeed* has three subdivisions, all of them interrelated:

Tawḥeed ar-Rubūbiyyah – Unification with respect to Allah's lordship and His actions, such as the conviction that He is the only creator, the only sustainer, the only manager and controller of all creation.

Tawḥeed al-Ulūhiyyah – Unification with respect to Allah's divinity; in other words, He is the only true God and the only being worthy of worship, and hence, the only one that can lawfully be worshipped.

Tawḥeed al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt – Unification with respect to Allah's names and attributes; He is the only being who possesses perfect, complete and absolute attributes.

¹⁶Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:3.

¹⁷Sūrah aṭ-Ṭūr, 52:35.

¹⁸Sūrah aṭ-Ṭūr, 52:36.

¹⁹Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:17.

a) The Unity of Lordship

Tawḥeed ar-Rubūbiyyah is belief that none but Allah is the creator, owner, sustainer and controller of all that exists. It is none but Him who creates and manages the affairs of His creation, who causes death, restores life, extends benefits and wards off evil. Nothing happens in creation except what He allows to happen. In recognition of this reality, Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ often used to repeat the phrase, "*Lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā billāh.*" ("There is no movement or power except through Allah.")

The aforementioned facts can be found in many Qur'ānic verses. For example, Allah has said: **"Indeed your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, following it rapidly, and [He created] the sun, the moon and the stars subjected by His command. Surely to Him belongs the creation and the command. Blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds."**²⁰ And He said: **"Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [For if so], each god would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe."**²¹

b) Exclusive Worship of Allah

Tawḥeed al-Ulūhiyyah is affirmation that Allah is the only one to whom all forms of worship should be directed, whether in the heart (reverence, gratitude, love, fear, trust, etc.) or in the form of speech and actions. There is nothing other than Allah worthy of worship – no object, person or creation of any kind. That is the essence of the testimony "*Lā ilāha ill-Allah*" ("There is no deity except Allah."), meaning that nothing deserves any kind of worship by right except Allah alone.

To confirm this principle, Allah sent to mankind a series of messengers. He said: **"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods.'"**²² And each of His messengers was ordered to say: **"O mankind, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him."**²³

The disbelievers of the Prophet's time acknowledged the existence and lordship of Allah, yet they remained in a state of disbelief on account of their refusal to devote worship to Him alone. They worshipped their idols in the belief that they were intermediaries between themselves and Allah, in the same way that others have assigned this role to priests, saints, animals or natural elements.

²⁰Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:54.

²¹Sūrah al-Mu'minūn, 23:91.

²²Or false objects of worship, expressed by the word ṭāghūt. The quotation is from Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:36.

²³As mentioned in verses 7:59, 7:65, 7:73, 7:85, 11:50, 11:61, 11:84, 23:23 and 23:32.

The Qur'ān says: "And if you ask them who created them, they will surely say, 'Allah.' How, then, are they turned away?"²⁴ And He said: "And if you asked them, 'Who sends down rain from the sky and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness?' they would surely say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Praise to Allah'; but most of them do not reason."²⁵

Worship is a comprehensive term which includes everything done willingly for the acceptance and approval of the one worshipped. Thus, it is more than religious rites such as fasting and prayer. In Islam, worship includes comprehensive obedience and all that is directed to Allah of righteous deeds, intentions, and attitudes of devotion and trust, meaning that there are both external and internal forms of worship. Allah instructed His Messenger ﷺ to tell those who associated others with Him: "And I will not be a worshipper of what you worship."²⁶ The prohibition against associating anything whatsoever with Allah regarding His right to be worshipped is directed to all mankind and is strictly observed by every knowledgeable Muslim.

c) Allah's Names and Attributes

The names and attributes of Allah (*al-Asmā' waṣ-Ṣifāt*) are based on evidence from the Qur'ān and the teachings of His Messenger ﷺ. There is no other acceptable source for ascertaining the names and attributes of Allah apart from these two.

The attributes of Allah are unlimited since He is absolute, complete and perfect. What we are informed in the Qur'ān about these attributes and names is sufficient to portray a perception of His magnificence, majesty, sublimity and perfection. Knowledge of these divine qualities motivates sincere worship of Allah and enables a Muslim to maintain a reverent fear of Him and consciousness of his or her own conduct, in privacy as well as in the company of others.

Allah has stated in the Qur'ān that He has certain characteristics such as hearing, sight, hands, face, mercy, anger, encompassing, coming and being above the Throne. However, He also disassociated Himself from the limitations of human attributes and human imagination. Correct Islamic belief requires faith in the existence of these attributes as Allah described them without applying to them any allegorical meanings or attempting to explain how a certain quality could be (for this is known only to Allah Himself) and without comparing them to creation or denying that He would have such a quality. His attributes are befitting to Him alone, and "There is nothing like unto Him."²⁷ Therefore, true

²⁴Sūrah az-Zukhruf, 43:87.

²⁵Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, 29:63.

²⁶Sūrah al-Kāfirūn, 109:4.

²⁷Sūrah ash-Shūrā, 42:11.

belief in Allah includes belief in whatever is described in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah – as the scholars phrase it: belief that is free from distortion,²⁸ suspension,²⁹ qualification³⁰ or comparison.³¹ Any similarity between Allah's attributes and those of mankind is in name only and not in essence. They should be understood in the absolute sense, free from any human deficiency or imperfection.

Additionally, Allah's existence is not bound by a location or direction, as these are aspects created by Him for the physical universe. He is "above" His creation in the sense that He is beyond and superior to it. It is also incorrect to assume that Allah is everywhere for the same reason.³² However, the Qur'ān confirms that Allah is above His servants and that He is with His servants – yet in a manner befitting His grandeur and majesty.

Allah is above His servants in essence and existence, in position and status, in power and authority, and in all that He does. He has described Himself in the Qur'ān, saying: **"And He is the subjugator over His servants. And He is the Wise, the All-Aware."**³³ And in spite of His transcendency, Allah is near to His creatures. He is with them, not in a physical sense, but in His absolute knowledge of them wherever they might be, hearing them, seeing them, directing them and responding to their supplications. **"And He is with you wherever you are; and Allah is Seeing of what you do."**³⁴

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *"Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one; whoever enumerates them will enter Paradise."*³⁵ As Ibn Taymiyyah pointed out in his *Fatāwā*, this does not mean that the descriptive names of Allah are no more than ninety-nine, for no restriction or limitation can be attributed to Him. Rather, it indicates that there are ninety-nine of His names whose enumeration will be a cause for entrance into Paradise. What is intended by "enumerating" Allah's names is not only to memorize them, but to be aware of their meanings and act in accordance with them.

Eighty-one names of Allah have been identified within the text of the Qur'ān,

²⁸Taḥreef: Applying an allegorical meaning which will inevitably be incorrect since it is not based upon knowledge.

²⁹Ta'ṭeel: Desertion of the concept altogether or denial that Allah would have such an attribute or quality.

³⁰Takyeef: Attempting to explain how a certain attribute or quality could be, while such knowledge lies only with Allah.

³¹Tamtheel: Supposing that divine attributes resemble those of creation.

³²It has been pointed out that "everywhere" would include places that are clearly unsuitable, such as those containing filth.

³³Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:18.

³⁴Sūrah al-Ḥadeed, 57:4.

³⁵Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

and He has made other of His names known through *ḥadīths* of the Prophet ﷺ. These are the only names that may be correctly attributed to Allah by mankind. It is not permissible for anyone to formulate any name for Him outside those cited in the Qur'ān or in an authentic *ḥadīth*. Although Allah has revealed information about His actions and attributes, these descriptions are broader in scope than the names by which He has called Himself. We may say, for example, that Allah causes things to happen, is known, is remembered or becomes angry; but He is not to be named in these terms.³⁶

The following examples provide an idea about the names of Allah:

- ◆ Some names convey concepts of strength, sovereignty and omnipotence, such as *Al-Khāliq* (the Creator), *Al-Malik* (the Sovereign), *Al-'Azeez* (the Exalted in Might and Honor), *Al-Jabbār* (the Compeller) and *Al-Qahhār* (the Prevailing). These impart a sense of Allah's greatness and majesty and of His right to obedience and worship.
- ◆ Others carry the meanings of knowledge and observation of all actions, thoughts and intents, such as: *Al-'Aleem* (the All-Knowing), *Al-Khabeer* (the All-Aware), *As-Samee'* (the All-Hearing), *Al-Baṣeer* (the All-Seeing), *Ar-Raqeeb* (the Observer), *Ash-Shaheed* (the Witness over all things). These names bring to mind Allah's intimate knowledge of all affairs, no matter how private or concealed. Bringing them to mind motivates self-discipline.
- ◆ There are names which convey the meanings of tolerance, pardon and forgiveness, such as: *Ar-Raḥeem* (the Merciful), *Al-Kareem* (the Noble and Generous), *Aṣ-Ṣabūr* (the Patient), *Al-Haleem* (the Forbearing), *Al-Ghafūr* (the Forgiving), and *At-Tawwāb* (the Perpetual Acceptor of Repentance). These fill the remorseful servant with hope and expectation of mercy, pardon and forgiveness from the generous Lord.
- ◆ There are names that convey meanings of accountability, judgment, justice and compensation, such as: *Al-Ḥaseeb* (the Accountant), *Al-Ḥakam* (the Judge), *Al-'Adl* (Justice), *Mālik al-Mulk* (Owner of Sovereignty) and *Al-Ḥaqq* (the True Reality). These names remind that Allah will restore life after death, make known and judge every good and evil deed, and compensate each individual accordingly with complete and perfect justice.
- ◆ And finally, there are names the knowledge of which Allah has kept to Himself and not revealed to any of His creation. This may be in view of the fact that there are an infinite number of meanings and concepts which we, as limited

³⁶i.e., by calling Him "the Cause," "the Known," "the Remembered," "the Angry," etc. Such innovation is both improper and unlawful.

beings, cannot appreciate; Allah alone is able to comprehend them. Ibn Mas'ūd reported that Allah's Messenger ﷺ supplicated his Lord, saying, "O Allah, I ask You by every name of Yours, which You have named Yourself or revealed in Your Book or taught one of Your creations or preferred to keep in the knowledge of the unseen with You..."³⁷ Another of his supplications concluded with the words: "I cannot adequately praise You; You are as You have praised Yourself."³⁸

2. BELIEF IN ANGELS

Belief in angels is the second pillar of Islamic faith. The Qur'ān states: "The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers."³⁹ Belief in angels includes:

- ◆ Affirming that they exist and that they are part of the creation of Allah, subject to His command
- ◆ Belief in whatever is mentioned in the Qur'ān and Sunnah regarding their names, attributes and actions

Only Allah knows everything about the angels as they are from the world of the unseen which humans cannot comprehend. He said: "And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except He."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, He has informed us about some of them through the Qur'ān and authentic *ḥadīths* of the Prophet ﷺ.

Angels ceaselessly obey and worship their Creator and Lord, glorifying and praising Him. Their number is unknown. When describing *al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr*,⁴¹ the Prophet ﷺ said, "Every day seventy thousand angels visit it and leave it never to return, another [host] coming after them."⁴² Allah has chosen some of the angels to be messengers, just as He chose some among men.⁴³

The Nature of Angels

Angels are beings created from light. The Prophet's wife, 'Ā'ishah, reported that he said, "Angels were created from light, jinn were created from smokeless fire, and Adam was created from that which has been described to you [in the

³⁷Aḥmad, al-Ḥākim and Ibn Ḥibbān.

³⁸Muslim.

³⁹Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:285.

⁴⁰Sūrah al-Muddaththir, 74:31.

⁴¹A place of worship for the angels in the seventh heaven, comparable to the Ka'bah on earth.

⁴²Al-Bukhārī.

⁴³Refer to Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:75.

Qur'ān]."⁴⁴ The angels are not partners of Allah, nor are they His children as the pagan Arabs claimed. They are creations of Allah; and having no gender, do not procreate.

Angels are described in the *Qur'ān* as having wings: "**Praise be to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, [who] made the angels having wings – two, three or four.**"⁴⁵ No one has seen angels in their true form except the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He saw the angel Gabriel twice in his natural form and described him as having six hundred wings which obscured the entire horizon.⁴⁶ In another narration he ﷺ said, "*I saw Gabriel descending from the sky, and his great size filled the space between heaven and earth.*"⁴⁷ However, no other person can see an angel unless Allah allows it to take the visible form of a man.

In the *ḥadīth* cited at the beginning of this book, Gabriel had come to the Prophet ﷺ in the form of a man as well, asking him certain questions in order to teach the people their religion. The companions who were present at that gathering also saw Gabriel in this form. Another example can be found in the *Qur'ān*, where Allah sent angels to give Prophet Abraham glad tidings of a son and to assist Prophet Lot.⁴⁸ Also related in the *Qur'ān* is the occasion on which the angel Gabriel came to Mary, the mother of Jesus, to inform her that she would give birth to a son.⁴⁹

Angels do not have wills of their own, nor do they eat or drink. They are servants of Allah, never disobeying Him and perpetually engaged in various forms of worship. Allah described them thus: "**And those [angels] near Him are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, nor do they tire. They exalt [Allah] night and day; they do not slacken.**"⁵⁰

It is an essential part of the faith to respect all the angels of Allah. Some Jews once said to Allah's Messenger ﷺ, "There was no prophet except that an angel was assigned to bring him revelation from Allah. So tell us, who is your companion?" The Prophet, ﷺ replied, "*It is Gabriel.*" They said, "He is our enemy – the one who sends down war, fighting and punishment. If you had said it was Michael, who brings rain, vegetation and mercy, we would have followed you." Thereupon Allah revealed: "**Say, 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel – it is he who brought down [the Qur'ān] upon your heart by permission of Allah, confirming that which was before it and as guidance and good tidings for the**

⁴⁴Related by Muslim.

⁴⁵Sūrah Fāṭir, 35:1. This Arabic expression indicates a plural quantity, not specific numbers. One should not speculate about the nature or form of these wings.

⁴⁶Narrated by al-Bukhārī.

⁴⁷Narrated by Muslim.

⁴⁸Refer to Sūrah Hūd, 11:69-83.

⁴⁹Refer to Sūrah Maryam, 19:17.

⁵⁰Sūrah al-Anbiyā', 21:19-20.

believers.' Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and His messengers and Gabriel and Michael – then indeed, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers."⁵¹

The Roles and Duties of Angels

Angels have particular roles and various duties. The Qur'an quotes some of them as saying: **"And there is not any among us except that he has a known position. And indeed, we are those who line up [for prayer]. And indeed, we are those who exalt Allah."**⁵² They act in accordance with all of Allah's commands, observing, administrating and protecting the universe and its creatures during the term Allah decreed for each of them to exist.

Only a few angels are mentioned by name in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Others are described either by their specific roles or their general nature of serving and worshipping Allah. Among them are:

- ◆ Gabriel (Jibreel), who was entrusted with conveying revelation to the prophets, including Muḥammad ﷺ – In the Qur'an he is called "the Trustworthy Spirit" and "the Pure Spirit": **"And it is surely the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down upon your heart that you might be of the warners, in a clear Arabic language."**⁵³
- ◆ Michael (Mikā'eel), who is responsible for rain, directing it wherever Allah wills – His assistants drive the winds and clouds to the specific location.
- ◆ Angels charged with affairs of the womb, as the Prophet ﷺ mentioned when describing the development of an embryo – *"Then the angel is sent to him who blows the [human] soul into him and is commanded concerning four matters: to write down his provision, his life span, his actions, and [whether he will ultimately be] unhappy or happy."*⁵⁴
- ◆ Guardian angels who protect every person from whatever dangers Allah wills to save him from during his lifetime – **"For him there are successive angels before and behind him who guard him by the decree of Allah."**⁵⁵

⁵¹ Aḥmad, at-Tirmidhī and an-Nasā'ī. The Qur'anic reference is Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:97-98.

⁵² Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37:164-166.

⁵³ Sūrah ash-Shu'arā', 26:192-195.

⁵⁴ Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

⁵⁵ Sūrah ar-Ra'd, 13:11. This is clarified in a ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim which mentions that the angels of the day and the angels of the night succeed one another, performing their duties in shifts.

- ◆ The pair of angels who accompany every individual and record all his deeds – **"And indeed, there are over you scribes, noble and recording. They know what you do."**⁵⁶ The angel on his right records the good deeds, and the one on his left records the evil deeds.⁵⁷ They also record one's speech: **"He utters no word except that with him is an observer, prepared [to record]."**⁵⁸ These angels are commanded to register every word, deed and intention even though Allah knows all of that before it occurs. It is a manifestation of the Lord's complete concern with man and His precise and perfect justice. He warns the wrongdoers: **"Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes [We do], and Our messengers are with them, recording."**⁵⁹
- ◆ Angels who seek out gatherings of *dhikr* (study and mention of Allah) – The Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah has angels that travel along the roads seeking those who remember Allah. When they find a people mentioning Allah, they call to one another, 'Come to what you desire!' Then they surround them with their wings, up to the lowest heaven..."*⁶⁰
- ◆ Angels who carry the Throne of Allah, as He describes in the Qur'ān – **"Those who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], 'Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire.'"**⁶¹ Eight angels will carry the Throne on the Day of Resurrection: **"And the angels will be at its edges, and there will bear the Throne of Your Lord above them that Day, eight [of them]."**⁶²
- ◆ The angel of death and his assistants, who are responsible for taking the

⁵⁶Sūrah al-Infīṭār, 82:10-12.

⁵⁷The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Indeed, Allah has registered the good deeds and the bad ones." Then He clarified it, [saying], "Whoever intends [to do] a good deed and does not do it – Allah records it with Him as a complete good deed; while if he intends it and does it – Allah records it for him as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times or many times [over that]. And if he intends [to do] a bad deed and does not do it – Allah records it for him as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it – Allah records it as a single bad deed." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

⁵⁸Sūrah Qāf, 50:18.

⁵⁹Sūrah az-Zukhruf, 43:80.

⁶⁰Al-Bukhārī. In a narration by Muslim, he ﷺ said, "No people assemble in one of the houses of Allah reciting the Book of Allah and studying it among themselves but that tranquility descends upon them, mercy envelops them, the angels surround them, and Allah mentions them among those with Him."

⁶¹Sūrah Ghāfir, 40:7.

⁶²Sūrah al-Hāqqah, 69:17.

souls of all creatures whose term of life has ended – **"Say, 'The angel of death who is entrusted with you will take your souls. Then to your Lord you will be returned.'"**⁶³ It is said that this angel's name is 'Azrā'eel, but nothing in the Qur'ān or authentic Sunnah confirms it. Hence, it is preferable to refer to him only as Allah did in the Qur'ān: "the angel of death."

There are angels who extract the souls of the wicked violently and those who remove the souls of the righteous effortlessly.⁶⁴ There are some who torment wrongdoers at the time of death,⁶⁵ and others reassure the righteous believers.⁶⁶

- ◆ Munkar and Nakeer are the two angels appointed to question people in their graves about their beliefs. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *"When one of you is buried, there come to him two blue-black angels, one of whom is [called] Munkar and the other Nakeer. They ask him, 'What did you used to say about this man?...'"*⁶⁷ According to another narration, they will ask, *"Who is your Lord?" "What is your religion?" and "Who is your prophet?"*⁶⁸ The unbelievers and hypocrites will be unable to answer the questions correctly.
- ◆ Isrāfeel is the angel who will blow the Horn to mark the end of this world and the onset of the Hereafter.
- ◆ Ridhwān is the custodian of Paradise. There are other angels who welcome the believers into it, greeting them with salutations of peace: **"And the angels will enter upon them from every gate, [saying], 'Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured.' And excellent is the final home."**⁶⁹ Allah has also said: **"And those who feared their Lord will be led to Paradise in groups, until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened, its keepers say, 'Peace be upon you; you have become pure, so enter it to abide eternally [therein].'"**⁷⁰
- ◆ Mālik is the keeper of Hell, as mentioned in the Qur'ān: **"And they will call, 'O Mālik, let your Lord put an end to us!' He will say, 'Indeed, you will remain.'"**⁷¹ Among his assistants are nineteen angels who watch over Hell:

⁶³Sūrah as-Sajdah, 32:11.

⁶⁴Refer to Sūrah an-Nāzi'āt, 79:1-2.

⁶⁵Refer to Sūrah al-Anfāl, 8:50.

⁶⁶Refer to Sūrah Fuṣṣilat, 41:30.

⁶⁷i.e., Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Narrated by at-Tirmidhī – ṣāḥeeḥ.

⁶⁸Muslim.

⁶⁹Sūrah ar-Ra'd, 13:23-24.

⁷⁰Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:73.

⁷¹Sūrah az-Zukhruf, 43:77.

"Over it are nineteen [angels]."⁷² And Allah warns: "O you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, over which are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe; they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded."⁷³

3. BELIEF IN REVEALED SCRIPTURES

By means of divine revelations to prophets and messengers, Allah continually reminded mankind of His sovereignty over the universe and of man's position within it. Although the Qur'ān is His final revelation, Muslims must also believe in what their Lord revealed to the earlier prophets. Allah says in the Qur'ān: "O you who have believed, believe [firmly] in Allah and His Messenger and the Book that He sent down upon His Messenger and the Scripture which He sent down before. And whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day has surely gone far astray."⁷⁴

At the time they were revealed by Allah, the former scriptures (or "Books") contained pure truth. They confirmed that Allah is the Creator, Sustainer and Owner of all existence, and they called on people to worship Him alone. This revealed truth is what Muslims are required to believe in; it excludes and eliminates anything that was added or altered thereafter by human beings. The Qur'ān states: "We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice."⁷⁵ The message of each of these scriptures was essentially the same, but they also included temporary legislation compatible with the condition of the peoples of the given period. Allah has said: "To each of you We had [previously] prescribed a law and a method."⁷⁶ Later revelations abrogated some of the earlier rulings and replaced them with others. But in addition, much of the content of those scriptures was lost or altered over time. It is important to know what these revelations were and to understand the position of Islam regarding them.

Scriptures Mentioned in the Qur'ān

Five divine books are mentioned in the Qur'ān:

⁷²Sūrah al-Muddaththir, 74:30.

⁷³Sūrah at-Taḥreem, 66:6.

⁷⁴Sūrah an-Nisā', 4:136.

⁷⁵Sūrah al-Ḥadeed, 57:25.

⁷⁶Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:48.

- ◆ **The Torah**, revealed to Mūsā (Moses): "Indeed We sent down the Torah in which was guidance and light."⁷⁷
- ◆ **The Injeel (Gospel)**, revealed to 'Eesā (Jesus): "And We sent, following in their footsteps, 'Eesā, the son of Maryam, confirming that which came before him in the Torah, and We gave him the Gospel in which was guidance and light..."⁷⁸
- ◆ **The Zabūr (Psalms)**, revealed to Dāwūd (David): "And to Dāwūd we gave the Psalms."⁷⁹
- ◆ **The Ṣuḥuf (Scriptures)**, revealed to Ibrāheem (Abraham) and Mūsā (Moses): "Indeed, this is in the former scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrāheem and Mūsā."⁸⁰
- ◆ **The Qur'ān**, revealed to Muḥammad ﷺ: "Indeed, We sent down to you the Qur'ān in stages."⁸¹

The Early Scriptures

The previous Books were not preserved in their original form; they became corrupted over time due to loss, numerous translations and deliberate alterations by men. For this reason, and the fact that these scriptures were revealed for specific nations at particular times, it is no longer lawful to follow their legislation. Their rulings have now been replaced by those of the Qur'ān.

Information contained in earlier books can be divided into three categories:

1. Portions which the Qur'ān has confirmed as correct – Muslims must believe in these parts unconditionally, as Allah told His Messenger ﷺ: "And We have revealed to you the Book in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the scripture and as a criterion over it."⁸²
2. Portions which the Qur'ān has shown to be incorrect – Muslims reject those parts of religious texts that have been corrupted by human interference. Allah addressed Muslims, saying: "Do you then hope that they would believe for you while a party of them used to hear the words of Allah and then distort it knowingly after they had understood it?"⁸³

⁷⁷Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:44.

⁷⁸Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:46.

⁷⁹Sūrah al-Isrā', 17:55.

⁸⁰Sūrah al-A'lā, 87:18-19.

⁸¹Sūrah al-Insān, 76:27. Many verses throughout the Qur'ān mention this fact, among them: 3:3, 3:7, 4:105, 5:48, 14:1, 16:44, 16:89 and 38:29.

⁸²Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:48.

⁸³Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:75.

3. Portions which the Qur'ān has not mentioned – About these, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Do not believe the People of the Scriptures and do not disbelieve them, but say, 'We believe in what was revealed to us and revealed to you; our God and your God is one, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.'"⁸⁴

In any system the most recently revised legislation always supersedes and invalidates that which came before it. Hence, the laws of the Qur'ān nullify those of all previous scriptures, making Islam the final religion and complete legal code for mankind. The Qur'ān describes believers as "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written [i.e., described] in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and prohibits them from what is wrong and makes lawful for them what is good and forbids them what is evil and relieves them of their burden⁸⁵ and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him – it is those who will be the successful."⁸⁶

Required Belief in the Qur'ān

A Muslim must believe the following:

- ◆ That the Qur'ān is the words of Allah conveyed by Gabriel to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in clear Arabic language⁸⁷
- ◆ That the Qur'ān was revealed for mankind in general and not, like the previously revealed scriptures, for a specific nation – Allah told His Messenger ﷺ: "And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a warner."⁸⁸
- ◆ That the Qur'ān is the last of the divine scriptures, and that it confirms previous revelations pertaining to *tawḥeed* and the obligation to worship and obey Allah – As He stated to the Prophet ﷺ: "He has sent down upon you the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Torah and the Gospel before, as guidance for the people. And He revealed the Criterion."⁸⁹
- ◆ That the Qur'ān, as Allah's final revelation, replaces all the previous

⁸⁴ Narrated by al-Bukhārī. The Prophet ﷺ quoted from Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, 29:46.

⁸⁵ i.e., difficulties in religious practice.

⁸⁶ Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:156.

⁸⁷ Refer to Sūrah ash-Shu'arā', 26:193-195.

⁸⁸ Sūrah Saba', 34:28.

⁸⁹ Sūrah Aali 'Imrān, 3:3-4. "The Criterion" (al-Furqān) is another name for the Qur'ān.

scriptures – It serves as the final criterion for distinguishing truth from falsehood and is the basis by which the former scriptures are evaluated. Only the Qur'ān has been preserved to the present day without any alteration. From the time of its revelation to the Prophet ﷺ, Allah promised: **"Indeed, it is We who have sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We shall preserve it."**⁹⁰ And He also confirmed: **"This day, I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you, and have approved for you Islam as religion."**⁹¹

And most important, belief in the Qur'ān includes belief in all that it contains and compliance with its legislation. This includes obedience to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ, as Allah said therein: **"And obey Allah and the Messenger that you may obtain mercy."**⁹² He also said: **"And whatever the Messenger has given you, take; and whatever he has forbidden you, desist [from it]."**⁹³ **"Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah."**⁹⁴

4. BELIEF IN ALLAH'S MESSENGERS

A Muslim must believe in all the prophets and messengers⁹⁵ sent by Allah to convey His guidance to mankind. **"And We sent not before you, [O Muḥammad], but men to whom We revealed [the message]."**⁹⁶ They were human beings who were supported by signs and miracles from Allah. The essence of belief in the messengers is to have firm conviction that they were appointed by Allah and that each of them fulfilled his duty completely and truthfully.

Their exact number is uncertain, and Allah stated that there were some whose stories He related in the Qur'ān and others who were not mentioned.⁹⁷ There are twenty-five prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'ān: Adam, Idrees, Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Shu'ayb, Moses, Aaron, Dhul-Kifl, David, Solomon, Elisha, Elias, Jonah, Zachariah, John, Jesus and Muḥammad (peace be upon them all).

⁹⁰15:9. "The Reminder" is also another name for the Qur'ān.

⁹¹Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:3.

⁹²Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:132. Refer also to 3:32, 4:59, 4:64, 8:1, 8:20, 8:46, 24:54, 24:56, 33:36, 47:33, 58:13 and 64:12.

⁹³Sūrah al-Ḥashr, 59:7.

⁹⁴Sūrah an-Nisā', 4:80.

⁹⁵A prophet is one who received revelation from Allah, while a messenger is a prophet to whom legislation was revealed and was charged by Allah to reform society. Hence, every messenger was a prophet but not every prophet was a messenger.

⁹⁶Sūrah al-Anbiyā', 21:7.

⁹⁷Refer to Sūrah an-Nisaa', 4:164.

It is a requirement of faith to believe in all of them and to believe that they taught the truth as revealed to them by Allah. **"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods.'"**⁹⁸ Rejection of any one of the prophets is considered disbelief, even when one claims to believe in the others: **"Indeed, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to discriminate between Allah and His messengers and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in others,' and wish to adopt a way in between – those are the disbelievers, truly."**⁹⁹

Not all prophets and messengers were equal in status, however. Allah stated in the Qur'ān: **"Those messengers – some of them We caused to surpass others. Among them were those to whom Allah spoke, and He raised some of them in degree. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs, and We supported him with the Pure Spirit [i.e., Gabriel]."**¹⁰⁰

The most distinguished of the messengers are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad. These five are referred to in the Qur'ān as *ulul-'azm* or "those of strong determination." In general, all of the prophets were role models for their peoples, but obedience is due to the final Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, to whom Allah said: **"He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus – to establish the religion and not be divided therein."**¹⁰¹

Attributes of the Prophets

All of Allah's prophets had the following in common:

◆ They were entrusted to convey a divine message

All prophets conveyed the message of Allah to their peoples as they were commanded. The great deviation that afflicted humanity throughout its long history was not the denial of Allah's existence but in the direction of worship to other than Him, considering some of His creations to be partners in divinity. Therefore, the task of all prophets and messengers in every age was to turn people back from the worship of creation to the worship of the Creator. The slight differences in their teachings pertained to secondary aspects of legislation and procedures of worship, but all of them taught the worship of God alone and obedience to Him.

⁹⁸Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:36.

⁹⁹Sūrah an-Nisaa', 4:150-151.

¹⁰⁰Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:253. See also Sūrah al-Israa', 17:54.

¹⁰¹Sūrah ash-Shūrā, 42:13.

They did not withhold any part of the divine message; otherwise, people could rightfully claim injustice at the time of Judgement. This instruction to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is clear in the Qur'ān: **"O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message."**¹⁰² In his farewell pilgrimage address near the end of his life, the Prophet called upon Allah to witness that he had conveyed the message entrusted to him.

◆ They were intellectually refined

All the prophets had a high degree of intelligence and intellectual capacity since they were required to debate with disbelievers in order to convince them of the truth. Some examples of this are given in the Qur'ān. Among them is the confrontation between Abraham and the tyrannical king¹⁰³ and the dialogues between Moses and Pharaoh.¹⁰⁴

◆ They were infallible

Allah made all of His prophets infallible, meaning that they never committed inaccuracies when communicating the message revealed to them by Allah. Additionally, they did not commit sins like those of ordinary people, although one of them might occasionally have done something which was not the best option in a particular situation. In case of such an error, that prophet would be redirected through divine inspiration.

Because the prophets were the best of humanity, Allah ordered believers to follow their pattern of *tawḥeed* and upright conduct: **"They are the ones whom Allah had guided, so from their guidance take an example."**¹⁰⁵

The Final Prophet

The last prophet and messenger sent by Allah was Muḥammad bin 'Abdullāh bin 'Abdul-Muṭṭalib from the Arab tribe of Quraysh. He was among the descendants of Prophet Ishmael, the son of Prophet Abraham. While the message of former prophets was restricted to their particular nations, the message conveyed by Muḥammad ﷺ is for all humanity. Allah declared: **"O mankind, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord, so believe; it is better for you."**¹⁰⁶ And He said: **"And We have not sent you, [O Muḥammad], except as a mercy to the worlds."**¹⁰⁷

¹⁰²Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5:67.

¹⁰³See Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:258.

¹⁰⁴See, for example, Sūrah ṬāHā, 20:49-53 and Sūrah ash-Shu'araa', 26:23-31.

¹⁰⁵Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:90.

¹⁰⁶Sūrah an-Nisaa', 4:170.

¹⁰⁷Sūrah al-Anbiyaa', 21:107.

The message he brought remains valid and legally binding until the Day of Resurrection. For this reason, no additional prophets will be sent to mankind. The Qur'an confirmed: **"Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets."**¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, there can be no legitimate claim to prophethood after Muḥammad because his message is final and complete.

The Qur'an orders obedience to the final Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم as a manifestation of obedience to Allah. There is a consensus among Muslim scholars that obedience to the Prophet after his death is by adherence to his Sunnah,¹⁰⁹ for Allah made him the most excellent role model for all people. He said: **"There has surely been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and who remembers Allah often."**¹¹⁰ All the Prophet's sayings, actions and reactions were carefully related and recorded by those who witnessed and heard them, and they illustrate how he exemplified the principles laid down in the Qur'an and provided guidelines for their correct interpretation and application.

5. BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY

The Last Day is another name for *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (the Day of Resurrection).¹¹¹ It refers to the events of the Hereafter. It is called the "Last Day" because it is eternal and there will be no other day following it. It is the time when Allah will cause this world to perish and replace it with another world wherein all people will be given full compensation for their deeds of the present life.

Although the present universe will come to an end, it was created for a purpose. Allah said: **"And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve, so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire. Or should We treat those who believe and do good deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should We treat the righteous like the wicked?"**¹¹²

In this worldly life human beings are well aware of a lack of justice, often finding consequences for themselves and for others that were not deserved.

¹⁰⁸Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:40.

¹⁰⁹In Islamic terminology "Sunnah" means the divinely ordained way or method that was followed by Prophet Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. The Sunnah is second only to the Qur'an as a source of Islamic legislation.

¹¹⁰Sūrah al-Aḥzāb, 33:21.

¹¹¹It is also referred to as the Day of Gathering, the Day of Account, the Day of Judgement, and the Hour.

¹¹²Sūrah Ṣād, 38:27-28.

Righteous individuals may suffer greatly, while countless dishonest, corrupt and evil ones escape the hand of the law, living in luxury off of wealth amassed by illicit and immoral means. The balance can only be restored in another life, an eternal one in which all beings will receive their just compensation.

This temporary life resembles a field where seeds are sown for harvest in the next life. It is there that every soul will obtain precisely what it has earned. Muslim believers know that they were created for the eternal life and that their death is merely a transition from one kind of existence to another. They also know that they were not brought into this world pointlessly or left to chance, for Allah has sent messengers with clear evidences to guide people to the truth and inform them that there is another life to come, better and more lasting than the present one.

So this world was not meant to be a place of comfort and pleasure, but one of work and effort in order to reap the eternal benefits of the Hereafter. Our transitory existence on earth is but a trial in order to make evident who is deserving of reward and who is deserving of punishment. Allah confirms: **"He is the one who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deeds."**¹¹³

While Allah is fully aware of what each person will do during his lifetime and what his ultimate destination will be, those destined for the Hellfire would never believe that they justly deserved it unless confronted with each of their evil deeds as proof. And righteous believers can rest reassured that whatever they miss out on in this life will be fully compensated and the reward for their patience greatly multiplied in the next.

Belief in the Last Day includes belief in everything Allah and His Messenger ﷺ informed us about; in particular:

- ◆ **The Resurrection** – The Qur'ān affirms that on the Last Day everyone will be restored to life. **"Those who disbelieve claim that they will never be resurrected. Say, 'Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected, then you will surely be informed of what you did, and that is easy for Allah.'**"¹¹⁴
- ◆ **The Account** – The Qur'ān affirms that on the Last Day everyone will be brought to account. Allah states: **"And We place the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be treated unjustly at all. And if there is [so much as] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And sufficient are We as Taker of Account."**¹¹⁵ And He says: **"That Day,**

¹¹³Sūrah al-Mulk, 67:1-2.

¹¹⁴Sūrah at-Taghābun, 64:7.

¹¹⁵Sūrah al-Anbiyaa', 21:47.

the people will come forth separately to be shown [the result of] their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it."¹¹⁶

- ◆ The Final Destination – People will be compensated for their deeds in an eternal, everlasting life with either Paradise or Hell. Those destined to enter Paradise will enter it, and those who had earned punishment in the Hellfire will enter it. "And warn of the Day of Assembly, about which there is no doubt. A party will be in Paradise and a party in the Blaze."¹¹⁷

And Allah addresses those who doubt the existence of life after death, saying: "Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth and did not fail in their creation, is able to give life to the dead?"¹¹⁸ "Does man not remember that We created him before, while he was nothing?"¹¹⁹ "And you have already known the first creation, so will you not remember?"¹²⁰

The Events of the Last Day

The time decreed for the end of the universe and the new creation is known only to Allah. When the Prophet ﷺ was asked about it, Allah revealed: "Say, 'Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time except Him. It lies heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not come upon you except unexpectedly.' They ask you as if you were familiar with it. Say, 'Its knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know.'"¹²¹

When Allah wills the end of the present creation, He will order the angel Isrāfeel to blow into the Horn. Thereupon, everything will perish. He will then order the angel to blow into it again, and at that all people who ever existed will rise from their graves. "And the Horn will be blown, and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall dead except whom Allah wills. Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on."¹²²

The description continues: "And the earth will shine with the light of its Lord, and the record [of deeds] will be placed, and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought, and it will be judged between them in truth, and they will not be wronged. And every soul will be fully compensated for what it did; and He is most knowing of what they do."¹²³

¹¹⁶Sūrah az-Zalzalah, 99:6-8.

¹¹⁷Sūrah ash-Shūrā, 42:7.

¹¹⁸Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, 46:33.

¹¹⁹Sūrah Maryam, 19:67.

¹²⁰Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah, 56:62.

¹²¹Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7:187.

¹²²Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:68.

¹²³Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:69-70.

As Allah's knowledge of each individual is complete and absolute, He is not in need of records or witnesses. These are brought, however, as means of establishing proof to each individual of the fate he had earned and justly deserves.

Signs Before the Last Day

Although the exact time of the Last Day is known only to Allah, there are certain signs which will appear prior to it. They are categorized as minor and major signs.

◆ Minor signs

The minor signs are those which are seen well before the final Hour. For example, the Prophet ﷺ mentioned that among its signs are "...that the slave-woman will give birth to her mistress¹²⁴ and that you will see barefooted, naked, destitute shepherds competing in the construction of tall buildings."¹²⁵ And he said, "The Hour will not come until [after] knowledge has decreased, ignorance abounds, fornication becomes widespread, intoxicants are [widely] consumed, and women are numerous and men are scarce to the extent that there will be a single provider for fifty women."¹²⁶ He also mentioned that people would compete with one another in building and decorating mosques¹²⁷ and that earthquakes would increase, time would pass quickly, and killing would be abundant.¹²⁸ In another *ḥadīth* he said, "The Hour will not come until [after] a man will pass the grave of another and say, 'I wish I was in his place.'¹²⁹ And when someone asked, "When is the Hour?" the Prophet ﷺ replied, "When trust is lost, then await the Hour; and when affairs are entrusted to those unworthy of them, then await the Hour."¹³⁰

◆ Major signs

The major signs are those which will occur close to the Last Day or immediately before it, and their appearance will indicate that it is imminent. No authentic text states the order in which these signs will appear. Among them is the coming of the Mahdi. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "During the last days of my ummah, the Mahdi will appear. Allah will send rain for him, and the earth will bring forth its produce. He will distribute wealth equally among the people, and livestock will increase. He will live for seven or eight [years]."¹³¹

¹²⁴Scholars have pointed out that the male gender (i.e., master) is understood to be included as well.

¹²⁵Narrated by Muslim.

¹²⁶Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

¹²⁷Aḥmad and Ibn Ḥibbān - ṣaḥeeḥ.

¹²⁸Aḥmad and al-Bukhārī.

¹²⁹Muslim.

¹³⁰Narrated by al-Bukhārī.

¹³¹Aḥmad and al-Hākim – ṣaḥeeḥ.

Ten more signs are mentioned in the following *ḥadīth*: Ḥudhayfah bin Usayd reported, "The Prophet ﷺ approached us while we were conversing and asked, 'What are you discussing?' We said, 'We were talking about the [final] Hour.' He said, 'It will not be established until you have seen before it ten signs.' And then he mentioned smoke,¹³² the *dajjāl* (antichrist),¹³³ the beast,¹³⁴ the rising of the sun from the west,¹³⁵ the descent of Jesus, son of Mary, [the release of] Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj,¹³⁶ three cave-ins of the earth – one in the East, one in the West and one in the Arabian peninsula;¹³⁷ and the last of them will be fire emerging from Yemen which will pursue the people to their place of assembly."¹³⁸

6. BELIEF IN DIVINE PREDESTINATION

Belief in predestination (*qadar*) is the sixth pillar of faith. Muslims are required to believe that Allah knew and predetermined everything that happened and will happen from the beginning of creation until its end. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ informed us, "The first thing Allah created was the pen, and He said to it, 'Write.' It said, 'O Lord, what shall I write?' He said, 'Write the destiny – what has been and whatever will be forever.'"¹³⁹ And Allah stated in the Qur'ān: **"Indeed, all things We created with qadar."**¹⁴⁰ This means that all occurrences are in precise measure – at the time, to the degree, and in the specific manner that Allah has willed.

Every Muslim must accept and believe in what Allah has made known through the Qur'ān and authentic Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ. This includes belief in the following:

◆ That Allah's knowledge and decree have always existed, having had no beginning. He knew everything about His creation even before He created it, and

¹³²Which will envelop the earth.

¹³³Or "the false messiah." He will mislead the people, as Allah will permit him to work miracles that will amaze and confuse them. He will cause bloodshed, devastation and corruption in every part of the earth.

¹³⁴A huge creature that will come out of the earth and testify that the people did not believe in Allah's revelation. (Refer to Sūrah an-Naml, 27:82.)

¹³⁵After which no repentance will be accepted. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Indeed, Allah extends His hand by night so the sinners of the day may repent and extends His hand by day so the sinners of the night may repent – until the sun rises from the west." (Muslim)

¹³⁶Gog and Magog, the savage tribes imprisoned behind the barrier built by Dhul-Qarnayn (mentioned in Sūrah al-Kahf) will be released into the world.

¹³⁷The ground will give way, swallowing those on the earth's surface.

¹³⁸Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah.

¹³⁹Narrated by at-Tirmidhī – ṣaḥeeḥ.

¹⁴⁰Sūrah al-Qamar, 54:49.

His knowledge encompasses every force and every particle within the heavens and earth. The Qur'ān states: **"And Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge."**¹⁴¹

◆ That Allah registered His decrees relating to all aspects of creation in an eternally preserved record (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūth*). This is evidenced in His words: **"Do you not know that Allah knows what is in the heavens and earth? Indeed, that is in a record. Indeed, that is easy for Allah."**¹⁴² The Messenger ﷺ added, *"Allah wrote the measures of creation 50,000 years before the creation of the heavens and earth."*¹⁴³

◆ That everything occurring in this universe, good or evil, occurs by the will of Allah; whatever was decreed by Allah must happen and what was not decreed by Him can never happen. That is why He instructed: **"And never say of anything, 'Indeed, I will do that tomorrow,' except [when adding], 'If Allah wills.'"**¹⁴⁴ The will of Allah is overwhelming and His decree is comprehensive, so nothing can happen to anyone except by His will. The Prophet ﷺ explained, *"For everything there is a reality; and a servant does not attain the reality of faith until he knows that whatever struck him could not have missed him and whatever missed him could not have struck him."*¹⁴⁵

◆ That Allah may alter a decree due to some cause, although both the alteration and its cause have also been always known to Him and decreed.¹⁴⁶ There is textual evidence of this. The Qur'ān says: **"Allah eliminates what He wills or affirms."**¹⁴⁷ And the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Nothing repels decree except supplication."*¹⁴⁸ Thus, supplication, along with physical effort, is a valid means of obtaining something good or changing an undesirable situation.

◆ That Allah is not only the Creator of all beings but also the Creator of all their characteristics and actions. The Qur'ān quotes the words of Prophet Abraham: **"And Allah has created you and that which you do."**¹⁴⁹ Moreover, Allah creates the means by which people act, that is, their motivations and abilities; but at the same time, He has decreed that each individual should have a free will with which decisions are made and action is taken.

¹⁴¹Sūrah aṭ-Ṭalāq, 65:12.

¹⁴²Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:70.

¹⁴³Narrated by Muslim.

¹⁴⁴Sūrah al-Kahf, 18:23-24.

¹⁴⁵Narrated by Aḥmad - ṣaḥeeḥ.

¹⁴⁶For example, one eats to avoid the fate of starvation, works to avoid the fate of poverty, and treats disease to avoid the fate of death. But Allah has decreed that He will do so and has decreed the outcome, which is known to Him before it occurs.

¹⁴⁷Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:39.

¹⁴⁸Narrated by at-Tirmidhī and al-Ḥākim - ḥasan. The decree repelled is that which would have taken place had the person not supplicated to Allah.

¹⁴⁹Sūrah aṣ-Ṣāffāt, 37:96.

This means Allah has willed and decreed that everyone must make certain choices in life about particular matters. He knows beforehand what a person will choose, and He also wills whatever choice is made by that person, whether it is right or wrong. But it cannot be said that divine knowledge of what will be in the future has any effect upon one's decisions and deeds or that he has been deprived of freedom and hence exempted from responsibility. For although Allah has sent guidance, the choice to accept or reject it is made freely without compulsion or interference from Him.¹⁵⁰

To explain further: there are two aspects to Allah's decree. One is what He wills to exist and to occur; this is His existential will. The other is what He orders and is pleased with; this is His legislative will. In other words, His existential will is what actually exists or takes place, while His legislative will is what He wants and expects from intelligent beings and commands them to do, while allowing them the choice of whether or not to obey.

Allah has directed mankind to believe in His existential will by accepting it, and to believe in His legislative will by opting to obey His commands. And since He has not commanded anything that is impossible to do and has not prohibited anything that cannot be avoided, each person is held accountable for as much as is within his capability.

Allah decreed for mankind the freedom to choose in matters of belief and in many decisions concerning various courses of action open to an individual. Those who use *qadar* as an excuse for the negative result of their laziness, negligence or carelessness claim that they should not be blamed because Allah decreed it. This attitude has been denounced as unbelief in the Qur'an: **"And when it is said to them, 'Spend from that with which Allah has provided you,' the unbelievers say to the believers, 'Should we feed those whom if Allah had willed He would have fed?'"**¹⁵¹ Arguments such as this are baseless attempts to shift blame for unacceptable behavior onto Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, who is far exalted above any injustice.

There is in fact a marked difference between the existential decrees having no relation to human will and what the Lord has instructed His servants to do (His legislative decrees). Although He wills and allows a range of things to occur, Allah is pleased by some of them and displeased by others; and that is why He sent guidance and issued warnings.¹⁵² Allah willed for human beings the ability

¹⁵⁰ In fact, Allah does not hold anyone accountable for what is done under compulsion or out of ignorance.

¹⁵¹ Sūrah YāSeen, 36:47.

¹⁵² There are some who claim that if Allah wills a thing, then He must approve of it, but they are gravely mistaken. What He wills and what He likes are not necessarily the same. For example, the Qur'an states: **"Indeed, Allah does not like aggressors."** (2:190) **"And Allah does not like corruption."** (2:205) **"And Allah does not like the**

to choose their own destiny based on the directives He provided for them and commanded them to follow. And by doing so, He willed and decreed for them responsibility and accountability for their actions and intentions.

When Allah says in the Qur'ān that He guides whom He wills and leaves astray whom He wills, it means that He guides those who seek and respond to His guidance: **"Those who strive in Our way, We shall guide them to Our paths."**¹⁵³ And He leaves astray those who intentionally and persistently reject His guidance and deny the truth: **"And when they deviated, Allah caused their hearts to deviate, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people."**¹⁵⁴ Thus, Allah allows people to act according to their own preference and deals with them accordingly. Whatever an individual chooses, does or neglects knowingly and with intent cannot be excused by blaming it on *qadar*, but whatever occurs outside of his will and control may be correctly attributed to it.

Trials from Allah

As for what occurs beyond one's control, true belief requires gracious acceptance of Allah's predestined existential decrees. The believer can take comfort in the fact that it was preordained and willed by a just and merciful Creator who has perfect knowledge of its benefit. The fact that man may not understand the wisdom behind certain decrees and issues should not undermine the basic principle of what is known about His wisdom. The Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم said, *"When Allah intends good for someone, He tries him with hardships."*¹⁵⁵ And he said: *"No fatigue, illness, anxiety, sorrow, harm or sadness afflicts any Muslim, even to the extent of a thorn pricking him, without Allah erasing his sins thereby."*¹⁵⁶

When endured patiently by a believer, hardship and calamity become a means of attaining Allah's forgiveness and reward, as He promised in the Qur'ān: **"Indeed, those who are patient will be given their reward without**

unjust." (3:57) **"Indeed, He does not like the arrogant."** (16:23) And while Allah has willed the existence of evil, He does not like it, is angered by it, has prohibited it, and punishes for it.

¹⁵³Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, 29:69.

¹⁵⁴Sūrah aṣ-Ṣaff, 61:5. A criminal cannot argue that he was destined to commit a crime, since it is carried out by his own choice and effort. Although Allah knew he would do it and allowed it to happen, He did not force the criminal to make that choice. Furthermore, no one could know that it was decreed for him to commit the crime until after it was actually committed. As Allah said in the Qur'ān: **"No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow."** (31:34)

¹⁵⁵Narrated by al-Bukhārī.

¹⁵⁶Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

enumeration."¹⁵⁷ The Prophet ﷺ confirmed, "*The greatest reward comes from the greatest trial. When Allah loves people He tests them, and whoever accepts it gains His approval, and whoever becomes angry earns His anger.*"¹⁵⁸

Afflictions are existential decrees that have now taken place. Allah said: "**No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves but that it is in a register before We bring it into being.**"¹⁵⁹ Therefore, whatever befalls a person is not something accidental; it was predetermined before the creation of the heavens and the earth. Problems and misfortunes become easier to bear with the knowledge that they are decreed as opportunities to earn great rewards. The Qur'ān instructs: "**Say, 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us.'**"¹⁶⁰ It did not use the words, "decreed upon us" or "against us." This confirms that whether it is recognized or not, Allah's decree holds benefit.

When asked which of the people are most severely tried, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ answered, "*The prophets, then the righteous, then those following them in degree. A man is tried according to his religion. So if there is firmness in his religion, his trial is increased; but if there is weakness in his religion, it is lightened. Indeed, tribulations remain with the servant until he walks upon the earth having no sin left upon him.*"¹⁶¹

Allah also tests Muslims to make clear to them whether their professed faith is strong and sincere or weak and corruptible. Protesting against divine decree, anger against Allah, turning away from Him through neglect of prayer and other duties are signs of failure, while acceptance, patience, supplication and trust in Allah are evidence of success. For when one is certain that Allah is more wise than himself, more just, more merciful towards His creation, and perfect in every way, he cannot but submit to Him and accept His will.

The Qur'ān reminds believers: "**And perhaps you dislike something while it is good for you, and perhaps you love something while it is bad for you. And Allah knows while you know not.**"¹⁶² Among the benefits of affliction in this world is a reminder to repent from sins in order to avoid the terrible punishments of the Last Day.

Accepting a misfortune does not suggest that nothing should be done. Allah has ordered action, effort and supplication to change every undesirable situation whenever possible. All lawful efforts to improve a situation will be rewarded by Allah whether they succeed or not. Everyone is judged according to

¹⁵⁷Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:10.

¹⁵⁸At-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah - ṣaḥeeḥ.

¹⁵⁹Sūrah al-Ḥadeed, 57:22.

¹⁶⁰Sūrah at-Tawbah, 9:51.

¹⁶¹At-Tirmidhī - ṣaḥeeḥ.

¹⁶²Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:216.

his effort and not the result. So stressful circumstances require self-control, balanced thinking and confrontation in ways that are sanctioned by the Shari'ah.¹⁶³ Trials and misfortunes must be dealt with throughout life by practicing patience, determination, courage, exertion, proper behavior and reliance upon Allah. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ disclosed, *"No servant is struck by affliction and then says, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return; O Allah, reward me in my affliction and follow it up with something better for me,' without Allah rewarding him in his affliction and following it with something better for him."*¹⁶⁴

A servant of Allah will long for Paradise only by tasting the bitterness of this life and hardships of the world. It is only there that Allah has decreed for believers relief from harm, pain, sorrow and discomfort in an eternal life of ease and pleasure. **"And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes."**¹⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

In summary, every Muslim must have certain belief in the following six pillars:

- ✓ **Allah** – i.e., belief in His existence, His perfect and absolute attributes, His superiority over all creation, and that there is nothing similar to Him
- ✓ **His angels** – noble creatures created from light who have no free will but execute the commands of Allah and worship Him continuously
- ✓ **His books** – that Allah revealed scriptures to certain of His messengers, and He revealed the Qur'ān as the final message to mankind
- ✓ **His messengers** – that they were truthful in what they conveyed about Allah, that they were supported by Him with miracles, and that they faithfully delivered His message to the people – The final and complete divine message was conveyed through Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.
- ✓ **The Last Day**, i.e., the Day of Resurrection, and what was revealed concerning it: destruction of the present universe, renewed creation, emergence from the graves, the Gathering, the Judgement, Paradise, Hellfire, etc.

¹⁶³ Dealing with wrongdoers is a particular challenge to be met with strength of character and good morals. Allah has said: **"And We have made some of you as trial for others – will you be patient? And your Lord is ever Seeing."** (25:20)

¹⁶⁴ Aḥmad and Muslim.

¹⁶⁵ Sūrah az-Zukhruf, 43:71.

- ✓ **Qadar (predestination)**, i.e., Allah's knowledge of all that is to be, the fact that He decreed, originated and is the primary cause of all things and occurrences, and the fact that nothing can occur unless He wills – The difference between the existential will of Allah and the legislative will should be noted.

Islamic beliefs are not subject to modification. No ruler, government, committee of scientists, or group of religious scholars is permitted to initiate any alteration in the creed. And hence, every myth, superstition and human innovation is unacceptable and cannot be correctly cited as an Islamic belief.

Islamic beliefs provide mankind with access to the secrets of existence and the knowledge that nothing was created without a function or purpose. Faith in predetermination makes trials less difficult for true believers, for they know that what befalls them is not indiscriminate but according to a wise decree and precise plan. Islamic beliefs relate to man's existence, to his conduct and character, and to his eventual condition in the greater life to come.