Life, death, and thereafter

# Outline

1. *Opening:* Life’s timeline! (From the Seeds of Reality, Letters; and 9th Word)
2. *Reading Circle:*
	1. Five levels of life (From the 1th Letter)
	2. The end of the world (From the 29th Word)
	3. Man’s spirit (From the 29th Word)
	4. Death (From the 1th Letter)
	5. Paradise (From the 28th Word)
	6. Hell (From the 28th Word and 1st Letter)

# Opening: *Life’s timeline!*

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

Brother! You ask me concerning the wisdom in the specified times of the five daily prayers. I shall point out only one of the many instances of wisdom in the times.

Yes, like each of the times of prayer marks the start of an important revolution, so also is each a mirror to Divine disposal of power and to the universal Divine bounties within that disposal. Thus, more glorification and extolling of the All-Powerful One of Glory have been ordered at those times, and more praise and thanks for all the innumerable bounties accumulated between each of the times, which is the meaning of the prescribed prayers. In order to understand a little this subtle and profound meaning, you should listen together with my own soul to the following.

The second-hand, minute-hand, hour-hand, and day-hand of a clock which tells the weeks look to one another, are examples of one another, and follow one another. Similarly, the alternations of day and night, which are like the seconds of this world - a vast clock of Almighty God - and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages of man's life-span which tell the hours, and the epochs of the world's life-span which tell the days look to one another, are examples of one another, resemble one another, and recall one another. For example:

The time of**Fajr,** the early morning: This time until sunrise resembles and calls to mind the early spring, the moment of conception in the mother's womb, and the first of the six days of the creation of the heavens and earth; it recalls the Divine acts present in them.

The time of **Zuhr,** past midday: This resembles and points to midsummer, and the prime of youth, and the period of man's creation in the lifetime of the world, and calls to mind the manifestations of mercy and the abundant bounties they contain.

The time of**'Asr,** afternoon: This is like autumn, and old age, and the time of the Final Prophet (PBUH), known as the Era of Bliss, and recalls the Divine acts and favors of the All-Merciful One present in them.

The time of**Maghrib,** sunset: Through recalling the departure of many creatures at the end of autumn, and man's death, and the destruction of the world at the commencement of the resurrection, this time puts in mind the manifestations of Divine glory and sublimity, and rouses man from his slumbers of heedlessness.

The time of**'Isha,** nightfall. As for this time, by calling to mind the world of darkness veiling all the objects of the daytime world with a black shroud, and winter hiding the face of the dead earth with its white cerement, and even the remaining works of departed men dying and passing beneath the veil of oblivion, and this world, the arena of examination, being shut up and closed down for ever, it proclaims the awesome and mighty disposals of the All-Glorious and Compelling Subduer.

As for the nighttime, through putting in mind both the winter, and the grave, and the Intermediate Realm, it reminds man how needy is the human spirit for the Most Merciful One's mercy. And the**tahajjud** prayer informs him what a necessary light it is for the night of the grave and darkness of the Intermediate Realm; it warns him of this, and through recalling the infinite bounties of the True Bestower, proclaims how deserving He is of praise and thanks.

And the second morning calls to mind the Morning of the Resurrection. For sure, however reasonable and necessary and certain the morning of this night is, the Morning of the Resurrection and the spring following the Intermediate Realm are certain to the same degree.

* TAKE AWAY POINTS:
	+ A long journey of examination which passes from the world of spirits through the womb and childhood to old age; through the **world** and the **grave** and **the intermediate realm**, to the **resurrection** and the **Bridge of Sirat**.
	+ Like each of the times of prayer marks the start of an important revolution, so also is each a mirror to Divine disposal of power and to the universal Divine bounties within that disposal.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Prayer | Daytime  | Season | Lifetime | Manifestation |
| **Fajr** | Early morning | Early spring | Mother’s womb | Divine acts |
| **Zuhr** | Midday | Midsummer | Youth | Mercy, bounties |
| **'Asr** | Afternoon | Autumn | Old age | Divine favors |
| **Maghrib** | Sunset | End of autumn | Man’s death | Divine glory |
| **'Isha** | Nightfall | Winter | Passing the veil of oblivion | Compelling subduer |
| **Tahajjud** | Nightfall | Winter | The Intermediate Realm | True bestower |

* PRAYER (FOR TAHAJJUD PRAYER):
	+ *[10] Allâhuekber*
	+ *[10] Elhamdulillah*
	+ *[10] Subhânallah*
	+ *[10] La ilahe illallah*
	+ *[10] Estagfirullah elaziym*
	+ *[10] Allâhümmağfirlî vehdinî verzuknî ve âfinî*
	+ *[10] Allâhümme inni eûzu bike min dîkı’l-makami yevmel kıyâmeh*

# Reading Circle A: *Five levels of life*

**The First Level of Life** is that of our life, which is very restricted.

**The Second Level of Life** is that of Khidr and Ilyas (May God grant them peace), which is free to an extent. That is to say, they can be present in numerous places at the same time. They are not permanently restricted by the requirements of humanity like we are. They can eat and drink like us when they want to, but are not compelled to like we are. Saints who attain to direct vision and knowledge of reality have reported virtually unanimously their adventures with Khidr and these elucidate and prove this level of life.

**The Third Level of Life** is that of Idris and Jesus (May God grant them peace), which is removed from the requirements of humanity, and is an angelic level of life and acquires a luminous fineness. Quite simply, Idris and Jesus are present in the heavens with their earthly bodies, which have the subtlety of bodies from the World of Similitudes and the luminosit y of astral bodies. There is a Hadith that states that at the end of time, Jesus (Upon whom be peace) will come and will act in accordance with the Shari‘a of Muhammad (uwbp).

**The Fourth Level of Life** is that of the martyrs. According to the Qur’an, the martyrs are at a level of life higher than that of the other dead in their graves. Since they sacrificed their worldly lives in the way of truth, in His perfect munificence Almighty God bestows on them in the Intermediate Realm a life resembling earthly life, but without its sorrows and hardships. They do not know themselves to be dead and suppose only that they have gone to a better world. Enjoying themselves in perfect happiness, they do not suffer the pains of separation that accompany death.

**The Fifth Level of Life** is that of the spirits of the dead in their graves. Yes, death is a change of residence, the liberation of the spirit, a discharge from duties; it is not annihilation, non-existence, and a going to nothingness. Many evidences illuminate and prove this level of life, such as the innumerable occasions the spirits of saints have assumed forms and appeared to those who unveil the realities, and the other dead have communicated with us while awake or sleeping and have told us of things that are conformable with reality.

# Reading Circle B: *The end of the world*

If someone was to claim about a palace or a city: *“This palace or city will be destroyed, and will then be repaired and reconstructed so that it is intact,”* six questions would surely arise in the face of his claim.

1. *“Why should they be destroyed? Is there a reason or something to necessitate it?”*
2. *“Does the builder who would destroy and then reconstruct them possess the power to do so? Would he be capable of it?”*
3. *“Are their destruction possible?”*
4. *“And, are they going to be destroyed in the future?”*
5. *“Is it possible for this strange palace or city to be reconstructed from scratch, I wonder?*
6. *“If it is possible, will they be reconstructed?”*

Thus, like in the comparison, there are facts necessitating the **destruction** and **reconstruction** of the palace of the earth and city of the universe.

1. Its author and builder is powerful enough.
2. Its destruction is possible, and will occur.
3. Its reconstruction is possible, and will occur.

# Reading Circle C: *Man’s spirit*

Man's spirit is definitely immortal. The indications which point to the existence of the angels and spirit beings also point to the immortality of man's spirit. Indeed, the distance between us and the caravans of innumerable immortal spirits who are waiting to go to the hereafter in the Intermediate and Spirit Worlds is so fine and slight that there is no need to demonstrate it with proofs. Numberless saints and people of illumination getting in touch with them, and those who discern the secrets of the grave seeing them, and even a number of ordinary people communicating with them, and the mass of people forming relations with them in true dreams, have formed a mass of unanimous reports, and quite simply become part of the commonly accepted knowledge of mankind. However, because materialist thought has stupefied everyone in this age, it has been able to implant doubts in their minds concerning even the most evident matters.

*Consider this:* Should a fig-tree die and be dispersed, the law of its formation, which is like its spirit, will continue in its tiny seeds; it will not die. And so, since even the most commonplace and weak commanding laws are thus connected to permanence and continuance, the human spirit must be connected not only with permanence and immortality, but with all eternity. For according to the Qur'an's glorious decree of:

*Say: The Spirit (comes) by command of my Sustainer (17:85)*

spirit too is a conscious and living law which has come from the World of the Divine Command, and which Pre-Eternal power has clothed with external existence. That is to say, just as the unconscious laws which proceed from the Divine attribute of will and the World of the Divine Command are always, or mostly, enduring, so is it even more definite that the spirit, which is a sort of brother to them, and like them is a manifestation of the attribute of will and comes from the World of the Command, manifests immortality. It is also more worthy of it, because it is existent, it has an external reality. And it is more potent, more elevated, because it possesses consciousness. It is also more enduring than them, and more valuable, because it is living.

*Say, “He will give them life Who created them in the first instance,” (36:79)*

*Seeing that He has created you in successive stages, (71:14)*

*Nor is your Sustainer ever unjust to His servants, (41:46)*

*Seeing that He has created you in successive stages, (71:14)*

*Say, 'He will give them life Who created them in the first instance', (36:79)*

# Reading Circle D: *Death as a bounty*

*Who creates death and life that He may try you, which of you is the best in conduct*. (67:2)

 Verses like this in the All-Wise Qur’an, the Criterion of Truth and Falsehood, make it understood that death is created like life; it too is **a bounty**. But on the face of it, death is dissolution, non-existence, decay, the extinction of life, the annihilator of pleasures; so how can it be created and a bounty?

**The Answer:** As was stated at the end of the answer to the first question, death is a discharge from the duties of life; it is a rest, a change of residence, a transformation of existence; it is an invitation to eternal life, a beginning, the introduction to an immortal life. Just as **life** comes into the world through an act of creation and is **appointed and determined**, so **departure** from the world is **created and determined**, and is planned wisely and purposively. The ways plants die, plant life being the simplest level of life, show their death to be a more orderly work of art than life. For although the death of fruits, seeds, and grains appears to occur through their decay and dissolution, it is in fact a sort of kneading that comprises exceedingly well- ordered chemical reactions and a balanced combining of elements and wise formation of particles; their unseen, orderly and wise deaths appear through the life of the new shoots. That is to say, the death of the seed is the onset of the shoot’s life. Indeed, since its death is like life itself, it is created and regular the same as life is.

Moreover, the death of living fruits or animals in the human stomach is the beginning of their rising to the level of human life; it may therefore be said that being thus, their death is more orderly and created than is their life.

If the death of plant life, the lowest level of life, is created, wise, and ordered in that way, the death that befalls human life, the highest level of life, must be the same. Similarly, as a seed sown in the ground becomes a tree in the world of the air, so a man who is laid in the earth will surely produce the shoots of an everlasting life in the Intermediate Realm.

Now for the aspects of death that are **bounties**; we shall point out four of them.

**The First:** Death is a great bounty because it means one is freed from the duties and obligations of life, which become burdensome. It is also a door through which one passes in order to join and be united with one’s friends, ninety-nine out of a hundred of whom are already in the Intermediate Realm.

**The Second:** It is to be released from the narrow, irksome, turbulent prison of this world, and to receive an **expansive, joyful, trouble-free immortal life**, and to enter the sphere of the Eternally Beloved One’s mercy.

**The Third:** There are numerous factors like **old age** which make life arduous and show death to be a far superior bounty. For example, if together with your very elderly parents who cause you much distress you beheld before you your grandfather’s grandfathers in all their pitiful state, you would understand what a calamity life is, and what a bounty, death.

**The Fourth:** Just as sleep is a comfort, a mercy, a rest, particularly for those afflicted by disaster and the wounded and the sick, so too is death, the elder brother of sleep, a pure bounty and mercy for the disaster-struck and those who suffer tribulations that drive them to suicide. However, for the people of misguidance, death is pure torment the same as life, and pure affliction, but that is outside the discussion here.

# Reading Circle E: *On Paradise*

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

*And give glad tidings to those who believe and act righteously that theirs shall be gardens beneath which flow rivers. Everytime they are fed with fruits therefrom, they will say: “Why, this is what we were fed with before.” For they will be given things in similitude. And they shall have therein spouses pure, and shall abide therefor ever (2:25)*

The descriptions of the Qur'an's verses about Paradise, which are more beautiful than Paradise, more lovely than the houris, and sweeter than the water of Salsabil, leave nothing to be said about it so that anyone should say it. However, in order to bring closer to the understanding those shining, pre-eternal, post-eternal, elevated and exquisite verses, we shall mention a number of steps, and, as samples of that Qur'anic Paradise, a number of fine points which are like samples of its flowers. We shall point to these through allusive questions and answers. Indeed, Paradise is the means both to all spiritual and non-physical pleasures, and to all physical pleasures.

1. **Spiritual pleasures are sufficient? Why bodily resurrection and pleasures?**

It is understood clearly from the disposition of the universe and man's comprehensiveness that the universe's Maker wants to make known all the treasuries of His mercy, and all the manifestations of His Names, and to make experienced all the varieties of His bounties. The abode of bliss, therefore, which is a vast pool formed from the flood of the universe and a great exhibition of the textiles woven on the loom of the universe and an everlasting store of the crops produced in the arable field of this world, will resemble the universe to a degree. And it will preserve all its fundamental matters, both corporeal and spiritual. Its All-Wise Maker, the Most Compassionate One, will also give as recompense for the duties of the physical tools and instruments, pleasures worthy of them; and to His servants, as a wage and reward for the particular worship of each. Otherwise a situation would occur that was contrary to His wisdom, justice, and mercy, which is in no way fitting for the beauty of His mercy and perfection of His justice, and in no way compatible with them.

1. **How can a simple nomad who loves the Prophet be with him who receives limitless effulgence?**

*Everyone will be together with those he loves.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

We shall allude to this elevated truth with a comparison. For example, a magnificent personage set up a vast banquet and finely-adorned spectacle in a splendid garden. He prepared it in such a way that it included all the delicious foods that the sense of taste can experience, and all the fine things that please the sense of sight, and all the wonders that amuse the faculty of imagination, and so on; he included in it everything that would gratify and give pleasure to the external and inner senses. Now, there were two friends and they went together to the banquet and sat down at a table in a pavilion. But the sense of taste of one of them was very limited, so he received only minor pleasure. His eyes could see only a little, he had no sense of smell, and he could not understand the wondrous arts nor comprehend the marvels. He could only benefit from and take pleasure in a thousandth or even a millionth of that beautiful place, to the extent of his capacity. The other man however had developed his outer and inner senses, his mind, heart, emotions, and subtle faculties so perfectly and to such a degree that although he was next to his friend, he could perceive and experience all the subtleties and beauties and marvels and fine things in the exhibition, and receive their different pleasures.

Since this confused, sorrowful, and narrow world is thus, and although the greatest and the least are together, the difference between them is as great as from the ground to the Pleiades, surely in Paradise, the realm of bliss and eternity, while friend is together with friend, each will receive his share from the table of the Most Merciful and Compassionate One in accordance with his capacity and to the extent of his abilities. Even if the Paradises in which they are found are different, it will not be an obstacle to their being together. For although the eight levels of Paradise are one above the other, the roof of all of them is the Sublime Throne. If there are walled circles round a conical mountain, one within the other and one above the other from its foot to the summit, the circles are one over the other and look to one another, but do not prevent each other seeing the sun. There are also various narrations of Hadiths indicating that the Paradises are in a manner close to this.

*Glory be unto to You!*

*We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed, You are All-Knowing, All-Wise**.*

*O our Sustainer! Do not call us to task if we forget or fall into error*

*O God! Grant blessings to Your Beloved, who by being Your Beloved and through his prayers, flung open the doors of Paradise, and because of the benedictions for him of its members, You confirmed its opening for his community, and bless him and grant him peace.*

*O God! Appoint us to Paradise among the righteous, through the intercession of Your Beloved, the Chosen One. Amen.*

# Reading Circle F: *On Hell*

Belief bears the seed of a sort of Paradise, while unbelief conceals the seed of a sort of Hell. And just as unbelief is a seed of Hell, so Hell is one of its fruits. And just as unbelief is the reason for being sent to Hell, so it is the cause of Hell's existence and creation. For if an insignificant ruler of small dignity, small pride, and small majesty is told impudently by some unmannerly person: *“You may not punish me and you cannot,”* if there is no prison in that place, the ruler will certainly have one built for him and will throw him into it. However, by denying Hell, the unbeliever is giving the lie to One of infinite dignity, pride, and glory, Who is sublimely and infinitely powerful, and is accusing Him of impotence, lying, and powerlessness; he is insulting His dignity and offending His pride terribly. He is rebelliously causing affront to His glory. If, to suppose the impossible, there was no reason for Hell's existence, it would certainly be created for unbelief, which comprises denial and ascribing impotence to this degree, and such an unbeliever would certainly be cast into it.

According to some narrations, Hell is beneath the earth. In its annual orbit the globe traces a circle around an area that in the future will accommodate the Great Gathering and Last Judgement. It means that Hell is beneath the area of its orbit. It is invisible and imperceptible because it consists of veiled, lightless fire. Within the vast stretch of space travelled by the earth many creatures are found that are invisible because they are without light. Just as the moon loses its existence when its light recedes, so we are unable to see numerous lightless globes and creatures, although they are before our eyes.

There are two Hells, the Lesser and the Greater. In the future, the Lesser will be transformed into the Greater and is like its seed; in the future it will become one of its habitations. The Lesser Hell is under the earth, that is, at the earth’s center. It is the inside and center of the globe. The Lesser Hell performs many of the Greater Hell’s functions in this world and Intermediate Realm, and this is indicated in Hadiths. Just as in the world of the hereafter, the earth will pour its inhabitants into the arena of the resurrection within its annual orbit; so at the divine command it will hand over the Lesser Hell within it to the Greater Hell.

**In Short:** Paradise and Hell are the two fruits of a branch of the tree of creation, which stretches out towards eternity. The fruits’ place is at the branch’s tip. And they are the two results of the chain of the universe; and the places of the results are the two sides of the chain. The base and heavy are on its lower side, the luminous and elevated on its upper side. They are also the **two stores of the flood of events** and the immaterial produce of the earth. The store-places vary according to the produce, the bad beneath, the good above. They are also the **two pools of the flood of beings**, which flows in waves towards eternity. As for the pool’s place, it is where the flood stops and gathers. That is, the obscene and filthy below, the good and the pure above. They are also the two places of manifestation, the one of beneficence and mercy, the other of wrath and grandeur. Places of manifestation may be anywhere; the All- Merciful One of Beauty, the All-Compelling One of Glory, situates His places of manifestation where He wishes.

*Our Sustainer! You did not create that in vain. Glory be unto You! Save us from the penalty of the* *Fire! (3:191)*

* PRAYER:
	+ *Allâhümme ecirnâ minennâr*
	+ *Allâhümme edhilna cennete meal ebrar*

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*Congratulations! You’ve completed this unit.*

1. Bukhàri, Àdâb, 96; Muslim, Birr, 165; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 50; Da'wât, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)