

ALI 588: THE WORLD OF PRE-EXISTENCE

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ACADEMY FOR LEARNING ISLAM

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OUTLINE

- Importance of the Discussion
- The Approach
- Parsing the Verse of Alast
- The First Interpretation
- Critique of the First Interpretation
- The Second Interpretation
- Critique of the Second Interpretation

3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISCUSSION

- Did the souls exist prior to the existence of the body?
- How is the world of pre-existence an argument for Allah (S)?
- Does the world of pre-existence limit human freewill?

4 THE VERSE OF ALAST (7:172)

Segment of the Verse	Text of the Verse
Individualization	When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants
Witnessing	and made them bear witness over themselves,
Questioning	[He said to them,] “Am I not your Lord?”
Confessing	They said, “Yes indeed! We bear witness.”
Remembering	[This,] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, “Indeed we were unaware of this,” (7:172)

THE FIRST INTERPRETATION

- Common Interpretation: Refers to 'Alam of Dharr.
- 'Alam is world, Dharr is small particles.
- This is based on the interpretations found in ahadith.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) has stated, "Allah (S) extracted from the back of Adam (a) his progeny that would come until the day of judgment. They came forth in the form of particles, and he made them know Himself. Had this not occurred, no one would have known his Lord. Then He (S) said, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Indeed." (He said) "Is not Muhammad (a) my prophet and Ali the Amir of the mu'mineen, and my vicegerent and trustworthy?"

Al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an, Vol. 2, Pg. 610

6 CRITIQUE OF THE FIRST INTERPRETATION

1. Not congruent with the apparent meaning of the verse.
2. No collective or individual memory of the incident
3. No meaningful purpose to the incident
4. Necessitates belief in some form of reincarnation.

THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

- The verse is employing symbolic language to describe Fitrah.

Every human being is created in a manner that he witnesses his own servitude and the Creator's Lordship.

- Content and Style supported by Qur'an and hadith.

and He said to it and to the earth, "Come! Willingly or unwillingly!" They said, "We come heartily." (41:11)

By Your desire they follow Your command without Your word and by Your will they obey Your bans without Your prohibition. (al-Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, Dua No. 7)

8 CRITIQUE OF THE SECOND INTERPRETATION

- Necessitates symbolic interpretation of the verse.
- Necessitates fictional descriptions in the Qur'an.
- Not congruent with the apparent meaning of the verse.
- Not congruent with meaning of some of the ahadith.