



## **Biblical Eschatology and Qur'anic 'Ākhirāh: A Comparative Approach of the Concepts Afterlife, Death and the Day of Judgement**

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### **Abstract**

This article deals with the topic of eschatology ('ākhirah) both from the perspective of the Bible and the Qur'an. A comparative approach is pursued, in which three fundamental concepts are discussed, namely: afterlife, death and the Day of Judgement. First, the term eschatology and its Arabic equivalent 'ākhirah are examined etymologically, terminologically and theologically from the Biblical and Qur'anic point of view as well. Then, the issue of death is investigated both as a concept and as an existential reality. Finally, the theme of the Day of Judgement is deeply examined according to the Bible and the Qur'an to compare these two important concepts in the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. At the end of this article, we have concluded that these three eschatological concepts intersect remarkably in the Bible and the Qur'an, especially on the semantic level, and to a lesser extent on the theological level, where the nature of each religion resurfaces. These semantic and theological intersections underscore the common origin of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. This would further contribute to bringing the followers of these religions closer together in the contemporary pluralistic context.

**Keywords:** Ākhirah; Bible; Death; Eschatology; Qur'an; the Day of Judgement.

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini membahas topik eskatologi ('ākhirah) baik dari perspektif Alkitab maupun Al-Qur'an. Pendekatan komparatif ditempuh, di mana tiga konsep dasar dibahas, yaitu: akhirat, kematian dan Hari Pembalasan. Pertama, istilah eskatologi dan padanan bahasa Arabnya 'ākhirah diperiksa secara etimologis, terminologis dan teologis dari sudut pandang Biblika dan Al-Qur'an. Kemudian, masalah kematian diselidiki baik sebagai konsep maupun sebagai realitas eksistensial. Akhirnya, tema Hari Pembalasan diperiksa secara mendalam menurut Alkitab dan Al-Qur'an untuk membandingkan dua konsep penting ini dalam tiga agama monoteistik: Yudaisme, Kristen, dan Islam. Di akhir artikel ini, kami telah menyimpulkan bahwa ketiga konsep eskatologis ini sangat bersinggungan dalam Alkitab dan Al-Qur'an, terutama pada tingkat semantik, dan pada tingkat yang lebih rendah pada tingkat teologis, di mana sifat masing-masing agama muncul kembali. Persimpangan semantik dan teologis ini menggarisbawahi asal usul yang sama dari tradisi Yahudi, Kristen, dan Islam. Hal ini selanjutnya akan berkontribusi untuk mendekatkan para pengikut agama-agama ini dalam konteks pluralistik kontemporer.

**Kata Kunci:** Akhirat; Alkitab; Kematian; Eskatologi; Al-Qur'an; hari penghakiman.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Although the theme of eschatology in the three monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) has been extensively investigated both in the past and in our time, we note that this theological field still needs more hermeneutic and comparative research. Certainly, the nature of contemporary pluralistic societies, which embrace people of different religions, cultures and philosophies, requires the deepening of mutual knowledge among all social groups. We believe that comparative studies between various religions and philosophies would enhance this knowledge, and thus bring people of different faiths, nationalities and cultures closer.

This article has come to address the subject of eschatology as it occupies an important space in people's thinking and their daily and intellectual discussions. The end of life, death, pain, fate and destiny are common issues between Muslims and non-Muslims, between religious and secular people, and

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between ordinary and educated people. Everyone tries to find appropriate explanations for these phenomena, whether in myth, religion or science. Therefore, we believe that it is important to discuss this topic again in our contemporary context, focusing on the moral and theological commonalities between the three monotheistic traditions, and we may expand this discussion in the future to other religious and secular traditions.

As we mentioned above, there are significant accumulations of literature and articles that dealt with the eschatological field. We have tried to build on them in this article, focusing more on the comparison between the three eschatological concepts, specifically the afterlife, death, and the Day of Judgment. In fact, we cannot dispense with such a search for *Kitab Ar-Ruh* (Al-Jawziyyah, 2011), the *Book of the Spirit* by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, especially from an Islamic theological perspective. Although this scholar lived in the fourteenth century AD, his theory of the soul and death is still of great importance for our time. This topic was dealt with in twenty-one issues. The exegetes of the Qur'an also discussed the issue of eschatology from various aspects, and we mention here Al-Tabari (1994), Ibn Kathir (1999), As-Sabouni (1981), and Al-Saidi (2002). Fazlur Rahman's approach is also considered as enriching this research, especially in his book *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Rahman, 2009). In addition, there are various articles by contemporary researchers of interest to the topic, including Mustansir Mir (1987), Oliver Leaman (2006), Rafik Berjak (2006), and Jane Idleman Smith (2002).

With regard to the Biblical context, it was necessary to rely on various articles specialized in the theme of eschatology, especially in some famous religious encyclopedias and dictionaries, such as *The Ancient Hebrew Lexicon of the Bible* (Benner, 2005), *Encyclopedia Biblica* (Charles, 1903), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Ladd, 1982), and *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Richards & Gulley, 1992). We also mention here the most important researchers we relied on, such as Jeff A. Benner (2005), Robert Henry Charles (1903), Norman R. Gulley (1992), and others.

This article does not aim to write the history of eschatology, so to speak, or rather to write down everything that happens from death to the final destination. It is primarily a matter of approaching some common theological concepts in the Bible and the Qur'an, in a comparative method. These are often confused, in both written and spoken language, as if they were completely identical and comparable. Qur'anic eschatology requires a special interpretation and translation that corresponds to the Islamic frame of reference.

In the first place, attention is paid to *al-'āakhirah* as the global landscape where various future events and realities will take place, including death and the Day of Reckoning. These two concepts are thoroughly discussed from an etymological and terminological level as well as from the Biblical and Qur'anic points of view, with the aim of making a comparative approach between the Biblical eschatology and the Qur'anic *'āakhirah*.

This article is divided into three sections. In the first section, the two fundamental concepts: eschatology and *'āakhirah* are examined both etymologically, lexically and theologically from the perspective of the Bible and the Qur'an. In the second section, the issue of death is investigated both as a concept and as an existential reality as well. In the last section, the theme of the Day of Judgement is deeply discussed from the point of view of the Bible and the Qur'an with a view to comparing these two important concepts in the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Regarding the methodology, we chiefly conducted a literature study (Heath, Levay, & Tuvey, 2022; Soaita, Serin, & Preece, 2020; Xiao & Watson, 2019) to define and clarify the three main concepts etymologically, terminologically and theologically. As a first step we collected various etymological and linguistic information related to the terms afterlife, death and Judgment Day from various Arabic, English, French and Dutch dictionaries and encyclopedias. Then we defined the key terms lexically and terminologically, upon which we built the next step, which is analyzing them in the Biblical and Qur'anic perspectives. At the same time, during this analysis, we compared its epistemological and theological connotations in the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions.

This work has led to important research results on the subject of eschatology. We not only define key terms and clarify related concepts, but we also discuss a number of etymological, linguistic and theological differences and intersections. Here a comparative methodology is used based on a number of exegetical works and academic papers (Hollander, 2020). The conclusions we have reached would enrich communication between adherents of monotheistic beliefs, and of course pave the way for a more comprehensive dialogue between the various components of our contemporary pluralistic society.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Definitions Eschatology and 'Ākhirāh**

The concept of eschatology refers to predestination, posthumous existence, afterlife, etc. It is composed of the Greek *eschatos* (last) and *logia* (discourse). That is, the “doctrine of the last things, in dogmatics all that is taught concerning the fate of man after death, Judgement, etc., doctrine of extremes.” (Boom, Geeraets, & Sijs, 2005, p. 964). Thus eschatology is that part of theology which deals with the four last things (death, Judgement, paradise and hell) and with the ultimate destiny of the soul and of man (Brown, 1993, p. 849).

In a number of Semitic languages, the word *'ākhirah* stands for life after death. The Aramaic *'achira* refers to 'after', 'behind' and 'last', while the Hebrew *'āhira* means the 'end' and 'things that come after' (Orr, 1939). This also applies to the Arabic *'ākhirah* which refers to 'the last', 'the end' and 'the state of the hereafter' (Ibn Manẓūr, 1980, pp. 38–40).

The Qur'anic term for eschatology is *al-'ākhirah* or *aḥwāl al-'ākhirah*, the afterlife situations such as introduced in the manuals of Islamic theology. Unlike *al-'ākhirah*, the term *al-'ūlā* is used in the sense of worldly life (Al-Tabari, 1994; Saritoprak, 2006; Smith, 2002). In addition, other related terms or designations of *al-'ākhirah* can be found in the Qur'an, such as *ad-dār al-'ākhirah*, the last house (Mir, 1987, p. 94), *al-hāqqā*, “reality”, *al-ġāšiyya*, “the overwhelming event”, etc. (Saritoprak, 2006, p. 197).

### **Biblical Eschatology**

According to the Bible, eschatology refers to ideas about the future life, the end of the world, and the eternal fate of mankind (Ladd, 1982, p. 130). In the Old Testament, eschatology takes shape under the influence of certain fundamental ideas such as God, man, the soul and one's fate after death. The strange thing is that the Old Testament always has Israel in mind (Nelis, 1963, pp. 677–678). In this way, the dogmatic concept of eschatology is related to the Israelite community and to its future bliss, especially during the day of Yahweh (Charles, 1903, p. 1348; Nelis, 1963, pp. 680–681).

But what should be noted is that the concept of “afterlife” is scarcely present in the Old Testament except in the Second Book of Maccabees, in which life after death occupies a prominent place. In the story of the seven brothers and their mother, one of them responded to the king who tortured them: With his last breath, he said: “You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to live again forever, because we are dying for his laws.” (2 Macc. 7:9).<sup>1</sup> Before this passage, the deaths of various prophets, kings, and people are depicted, but without referring to the afterlife in a clear manner. Jacob charged his sons, and said to them, “I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite” (Gen. 49:29). The formula ‘gather to my people/fathers’ is often used by Israelite prophets and kings at the time of their death, such as Abraham (Gen. 25:8), Aaron (Num. 20:24), Moses (Deut. 32:50), etc.

In addition, another associated word “the realm of the dead” with the concept of afterlife is mentioned for the first time in Gen. 37:35 as a place where the dead end up after death. When Jacob mourned his missing son Joseph, he refused to be comforted and he said to all his sons and all his daughters: “For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning.” Also in the Old Testament there are other terms that refer to the same meaning, such as the underworld, because the realm of the dead is the devised place under the earth to which all the dead go indiscriminately (Katholieke Bijbelstichting, 2012, p. 234), and Shoel as in Job 11:8 and 14:13, showing that Shoel is a deep and dark place under the earth where the dead end up.

Furthermore, the concept of afterlife is more developed in the later Old Testament Books where a number of eschatological concepts made their appearance, including the day of the Lord (Ezek. 13:5; Am. 5:18; Ob. 15; Zeph. 1:14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 2:17), the end times (Dan. 8:19; Joel 1, 2), the destruction of the world (Isa. 24-34), and judgment (Joel 4:14).

As far as New Testament eschatology is concerned, it is connected with the Old Testament and with the Jewish faith. This theological concept plays a prominent role in the doctrine and religion of the New Testament. Christianity is originally eschatological in nature. This means looking forward to the appearance of the Messiah who will inaugurate his work (Nelis, 1963, pp. 684–686). The eschatology of the synoptic gospels relates to the completion of God’s kingdom. Access to it depends on man’s right attitude toward the kingdom (Charles, 1903, p. 1373; Nelis, 1963, p. 686). Furthermore, eschatology in the Christian Creed is one of the articles of faith; believing in the resurrection of the dead, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life (Leith, 1992, pp. 1203–1206).

That means that evangelical eschatology is a continuation of the Old Testament eschatology, especially in the poetic books (Job, Psalms), in the prophetic books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel) and in the collection of the twelve minor prophets (Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi). A number of Old Testament eschatological concepts (the realm of the dead, end times, judgment, eternal life, hellfire) are present, especially in the synoptic gospels, but with the focus on the fact that Jesus Christ will occupy a crucial position at the end of times and in the afterlife. In Mark 14:62 it says, “And thou shalt see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.” In heaven those who are abused and persecuted because of Jesus will be happy. There a great reward awaits them (Matt. 5:11-12) and they will have treasure (Mark 10:21). However, whoever is angry with his brother without a

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<sup>1</sup> The edition of The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is here used, because both The Oxford Annotated Bible and The King James Version don’t contain the two books of Maccabees. See: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/2maccabees/7>

cause shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:22). After the divine judgment of men's deeds, the wicked will "go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46).

Stephen R. Spencer (2005) assumes that the doctrine of the last things, eschatology, is the culmination of God's purposes, centered on the last, namely Jesus Christ. He is mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:45 portrayed as "the last Adam," whose (second) coming in judgment and salvation is the focus of Christian hope. The Scriptures associate the last things with the Messianic "last days" or "those days." These last things are described in the Bible in the trinitarian style: the return of Christ to reign forever, the fullness of the work of the Spirit, and the eternal presence of God with his people (Spencer, 2005, pp. 794–802).

### ***Qur'anic 'Ākhirah***

How, then, is the concept of eschatology introduced in the Qur'an? Where do the biblical eschatology and the Qur'anic '*ākhirah*' differ and where do they overlap?

The concept of *al-'ākhirah* occupies a crucial place within the Qur'an. It is mentioned in almost every chapter (116 times). Belief in the afterlife is one of the six articles of the Islamic faith. "From the Qur'anic point of view, the hereafter constitutes a vindication of God's justice and wisdom, and it is probably for this reason that 2:28 equates disbelief in the hereafter with disbelief in God" (Mir, 1987, p. 95).

In other words, the belief in the '*ākhirah*' is the foundation of the Islamic faith, because "the faith of a Muslim is tested by belief in the hereafter. One cannot be genuinely Muslim until one believes in the unseen and still to be experienced next life" (Berjak, 2006, p. 27). Each individual will undergo and experience this future phase. The Qur'an teaches us that earthly life will come to an end. For man, real life begins immediately after death. The existence of the afterlife is necessary (Saritoprak, 2006, p. 194; Smith, 2002, p. 45). The necessity of the afterlife has to do with "the fact that the present world is not the world where complete recompense for good or bad actions can be given. Good actions often go unrecognized, and evil actions often go unpunished. It is, therefore, morally necessary that there be another world where good and evil can be fully recompensed and all accounts settled in strict accordance with the principle of justice" (Mir, 1987, p. 95). Therefore, God assures the Prophet Muhammad that "the latter portion will be better for thee than the former". In Al-Tabari's expression: "Do not grieve over what you have missed, for what you have with God is better for you than it" (Al-Tabari, 1994, p. 538).

In this way, it appears that man does not perish with his death, but shall have another life. On an appointed day God will resurrect the dead, judge them according to their deeds, and send the righteous to heaven and the wicked to hell (Mir, 1987, p. 94). It is striking that a distinction is often made between two abodes: the earthly life and the afterlife, but Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya adds a third abode, namely the *barzakh*, as a transitional stage, in which every departed will remain and wait until the Day of Judgement (Al-Jawziyyah, 2011, p. 187).

According to the typology of Azmoudeh Khashayar, Qur'anic eschatology is divided into three major stages: the perishing (*fanā'*) of all creatures, the resurrection of the dead (*qiyāma*), and the gathering of humans (*ḥashr*) for final assessment. These events are preceded by some signs of the end of the world (Azmoudeh, 2007, p. 268). There will be a universal gathering in anticipation of God's judgment, bringing together all beings, humans, *jinn* and angels. That will take fifty thousand years (70:4). At the end of this eschatological process, people will be judged, with the final verdict being either the punishment of hellfire (*an-nār*), or the reward of eternal happiness in paradise (*al-jannah*) (Azmoudeh, 2007, pp. 269–270; Berjak, 2006, p. 27).

Fazlur Rahman concludes that the basic idea underlying the Qur'anic teachings about the afterlife is that there will come a time, *as-Sā'ah*, the Hour, when every person will dwell in a tremendous self-

consciousness of his deeds. Thus, each person will find his innermost self. At that time, he will face the “real truth,” where the essence of the “afterlife” has to do, not only with the end of life, but primarily with the results of his efforts on earth (Rahman, 2009, pp. 106–108).

Finally, how do the biblical eschatology and the Qur'anic *'ākhirah* relate to each other? In Azmoudeh's view, the eschatological themes of the Qur'an are an extension and development of the eschatological doctrines of Judaism and Christianity. These doctrines, in turn, were influenced by the Zoroastrian religion. Similarly, a number of elements present in the Jewish, Christian and Islamic teachings of the end times are of Iranian origin (Azmoudeh, 2007, p. 267). Consequently, there are divergent parallels regarding eschatology in the Torah, in the Gospel, and in the Qur'an. This is quite normal, as these scriptures come from the same divine source, as the Qur'an itself affirms. Such overlaps between the monotheistic and Zoroastrian religions are probably due to the fact that Zoroastrianism was originally a monotheistic religion. Therefore, the second Caliph 'Umar 'Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb regarded the followers of this religion as the People of the Book (Hobson, Drake, & Davis, 1989, pp. 434–435).

### **Definitions Death and *Mawt***

In both Hebrew and Arabic, the Semitic root m.w.t. refers to death (Benner, 2005, p. 114; Ibn Manzūr, 1980; Strong, 2012, pp. 381–382). In addition, there are other terms associated with death in the Bible as well as in the Qur'an. According to Kent Harold Richards “Just as in English, there are diverse verbal and nominal terms which are employed to speak of death (e.g., perish, de cease). Most of the efforts to understand the Hebrew perspectives have begun lexically with words derived from the common Semitic root *mwt*. In biblical Hebrew these words include the verb *mūt*, die (e.g., Gen 2:17) and the noun *māwet*, death” (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 108).

In the Arabic terminology, the word *mawt* mainly refers to death. It also has other connotations such as silence, serenity and extinction. Death is regarded as one of the creatures of Allah, and as the opposite of life (Ibn Manzūr, 1980, pp. 4294–4296). About this the Qur'an says: “Who hath created life and death that He may try you which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.” (67:2). This means that “death is an existential matter because it is created” (Ibn Kathir, 1999, p. 178).

In Hebrew, a variety of terms are used to refer to death. Some of these terms include *'abad*, perish; *hārag*, kill, murder, slay; *hālal*; *nākā*, kill, smite; *tam*, consume, destroy; and many others. In addition, metaphors such as sleep (Deut. 31:16) further shape the concepts of death (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 108; Strong, 2012, pp. 133, 181, 476, 515). Likewise, Arabic contains several homonymous terms for death. In the Qur'an, the term *mawt* is mentioned 145 times. Also, there are other words such as: *'aḡal*, time limit (7:34); *fanā'*, perish (55:26); *tawaffā*, to die (8:50); *qatala*, to kill (3:169); *halāk*, destruction (10:13).

Generally speaking, death is understood as the end of worldly life and the beginning of a new phase in the hereafter. In other words, “Death is thus a line of demarcation between life on earth and life in the hereafter” (Mir, 1987, p. 48). The condition of the deceased after death is determined by the actions he has performed in earthly life.

### **Death According to the Bible**

The Old Testament refers to the “good” death, especially when an individual with enough offspring and wealth dies after a long age (Gen. 24:1ff). Death is seen as a problem if it occurs prematurely (Ps.

103:15). While death is sometimes seen as a punishment, especially for those who sin and disobey God (Lev. 20), it is also regarded as part of the divine plan and as the way that awaits each man (Josh. 23:14).

Attention in the Old Testament is more often focused on finding out the impact of death on life; Yahweh is the source of life and death. Yahweh could give or take away life. Life depends on the deity. "Life, as biological or physical existence, was significant; but Israel looked for qualities of relationship with the deity to express the meaning of life and hence the relationship of it to death" (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 109). In addition to the meaning of death as a biological phenomenon in the Old Testament, death refers to two other senses. On the one hand, death is a metaphor for those things which detract us from life as Yahweh intends it. On the other hand, death is power in opposition to the created order, Bailey argues (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 109).

In this way, "Hebrew literature does not hide a sense of death's power nor does it sequester death from life as though it did not exist. The reminiscences of Israel's seeking to placate or communicate with the dead are heard (1 Sam 28:8-14; Isa 8:19ff.), but intolerance for any cult of the dead is the dominant position.", as Richards concludes (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 109).

According to the New Testament, only God is immortal, unlike humans who are portrayed as mortals. The death of the people is universal in character. The only two exceptions in Scripture are Enoch and Elijah (Richards & Gulley, 1992, p. 110). Enoch directed his steps toward God; so it was that he disappeared, because God took him away (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). Elijah was taken up to heaven in a storm (2 Kings 2:11). Furthermore, death is understood in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was the first to be called from the dead; "Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34).

Even though Jesus was killed on the cross according to the New Testament, he has power over death. That is, Christ (Richards & Gulley, 1992) by his death dethroned the prince of death and the devil (Heb 2:14). Also, death could not hold him: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). In addition, Jesus is considered the "Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:9).

### ***Mawt According to the Qur'an***

The term *mawt* and the derivations of the root word (*m.w.t.*) can be found in dozens of Qur'anic verses. Death is characterized in it as a transition from one life to another, as the first step to the afterlife and as the second renaissance (Al-Tabari, 1994, p. 508). In addition, the Qur'an also mentions different categories of death, such as individual death: "Every soul will taste of death." (3:185; 29:57), collective death: "And every nation hath its term, and when its term cometh, they cannot put it off an hour nor yet advance (it)" (7:34) and they perish in the world at the end of history: "Everyone that is thereon will pass away. There remain but the Countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory" (55:26-27).

In his book *Ar-Rūh, the Spirit*, Al-Jawziyyah addressed the philosophical question of whether the mind dies or just the body undergoes death. After discussing a number of controversial statements, he concluded that the mind dies by detaching from the body to continue to live in happiness or in evil (Al-Jawziyyah, 2011, pp. 97-98).

The transitional stage, in which each deceased will wait until the Day of Judgement, is called *barzakh* in Islamic theology (25:53; 55:20). *Barzakh* in the sense of a barrier separating the dead from the physical world until the day of resurrection. *Barzakh* is comparable to the Biblical realm of the dead where the dead reside (1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 49:15; Rev. 20:13).

As a technical term, it denotes the period between death and resurrection, the period that forms a “barrier” between this life and the next. In this way the *barzakh* separates the dead from the physical world until the day of resurrection (Azmoddeh, 2007, p. 268; Mir, 1987, p. 26; Saritoprak, 2006, p. 194).

According to the Qur'an, death is neither a mystery nor “sleep and forgetting,” but a transitional phase from one life to another, a stage that is an integral part of the plan of existence. “During his earthly life man acts out his role as a moral agent and either succeeds or fails in that task; in the next life he will be recompensed for his actions. Death is thus a line of demarcation between life on earth and life in the hereafter: it closes the chapter of actions and opens that of recompense. Being only a stage of transition in the continuum of life-death-life, death does not mean complete extinction, but only separation of soul from body, and only a temporary separation at that” (Mir, 1987, pp. 47–48).

Is such awareness of the dead confined to the hidden world (*'ālam al-ġayb*) rather than to the perceived world (*'ālam al-shahādah*), or is there some kind of connection between the dead and the living? According to Oliver Leaman, this is a contentious issue within Islamic theology. Some claim that the dead in their graves have the ability to hear a visitor's greeting, supplication, conversation, etc. It is difficult to accept such a position, because there is no text confirming it. This also contradicts several Qur'anic texts and authentic narrations of the Prophet that deny that claim (Berjak, 2006, p. 173). It is true that there are no clear Qur'anic texts confirming the fact that the dead are conscious of our world, but there are several sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that refer to such awareness of the dead (Al-Jawziyyah, 2011, pp. 5–43).

As the Qur'anic verses (29:57; 3:185) make it clear, every soul or human being will taste death, and be returned to God. That means death will find people and other creatures everywhere. Such an end is unmistakable and inevitable because it is an essential element of the divine plan on the one hand, and the first step into the eschatological world on the other. Therefore, Qur'anic exegetes warn people to become aware of this enormous turning point, where the return of man to God occurs (Al-Tabari, 1994, pp. 373–374; As-Sabouni, 1981, p. 466; Ibn Kathir, 1999, pp. 290–291).

Such a connotation is also found in the Bible. David addressed his son Solomon at the moment of his death: “go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man” (1 Kings 2:2). In the New Testament it says that Paul longed for the moment when he would return to the Lord: “We are confident, [I say,] and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

### **The Day of Judgement According to the Bible**

In the Old Testament, the Day of Judgement is known as “the day of Yahweh,” which will surely take place and will be a happy event for God's people. On that day a distinction will be made between the wicked and the righteous. An unhappy end awaits the wicked, while the righteous will enjoy a certain reward (Orr, 1939). Joel is probably one of the few Old Testament Books in which the end time and day of the LORD is clearly depicted. “In chapter 4 then follows the vivid and very picture-rich description of the ‘day of the LORD’ itself. This will be a day of happiness for Judah. For the enemies of Judah it is a day of judgement and destruction. Judah will be recreated in a paradise. Egypt and Edom will turn into a barren desert” (Katholieke Bijbelstichting, 2012, p. 1432). As in Joel, the “day of the LORD” is found in other writings of the “minor prophets.” Only the LORD will be exalted in that day (Isa. 2:11), which will be a day of darkness and not light! (Am. 5:18). “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” (Zech. 14:9). Remarkably, the “day of the LORD” is at hand, and draws near quickly (Ob. 15; Zeph. 1:14). This is similar to the view of the Qur'an on this, as we will see later.



As for the New Testament, the assessment will take place on a "day," which is derived from the Old Testament "the day of Yahweh." The place where the assessment will take place is unclear. References are made to various places both on the earth and in the air. The Greek word *parusia* refers in the New Testament to the day of judgment, where the judgment will deal with antichrist and all the wicked, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether simply careless or actively hostile. The doom of the wicked is 'eternal destruction' (Charles, 1903, p. 1382), and where the faithful will meet Christ (Matt. 25:31-46). God is mentioned as a judge, but also Christ. Hence the Old Testament conception of "the day of Yahweh" was changed to "the day of the Lord." On that crucial day each individual will be assigned his eternal destiny, which will be either blissful or miserable (Vos, 1939).

A number of eschatological concepts can be found in the New Testament, including end times, hour, days of terror, eternal life, and day of judgement. Concerning the end times, the disciples asked Jesus when he sat on the Mount of Olives, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what [shall be] the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3). In another verse, the end time is introduced as a day or an hour that no one knows when it will come: "But of that day and hour knoweth no [man,] no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36). These stages are described as days of tribulation (Matt. 24:29), day of wrath (Rom. 2:5) and day of slaughter (James 5:5). On that day a judgement will take place, as it is clearly stated in the Gospel of John: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). In addition, the concept of "eternal life" is emphasized in the New Testament. Jesus assures people that whoever listens to his word and who believes in his message has everlasting life (John 5:24, 39; 6:47; Matt. 19:16, 30).

It is important to end this section with an apocalyptic passage from the Revelation of John, in which a number of eschatological elements overlap with the Qur'an's view of the afterlife:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is [the book] of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-14).

### ***Yawm 'al-ḥisāb* According to the Qur'an**

In the Qur'an, the Day of Judgement is called *yawm al-ḥisāb*, the day of reckoning (38:16), because every man will receive his *kitāb*, book (84:7-10; 69:19, 25) in which every good or bad deed during life on earth is written. The one who receives his book with his right hand will feel joy and happiness, while the one who receives his book with his left hand will be extremely remorseful (Ibn Kathir, 1999, pp. 213, 215; Smith, 2002, p. 48). This is comparable to the above verse from the New Testament, where the dead are judged according to their deeds, as written in (Rev. 20:12). That day has other names including *As-Sā'ah*, the Hour (18:21), *Al-Ḥāqqah*, the reality (69:1-3), *Al-Wāqī'ah*, the inevitable (56:1) and *Aṭ-Ṭāmmah Al-Kubrā*, the overwhelming event (79:34). Belief in the afterlife, including the Day of Judgement constitutes the fifth article of faith in which every Muslim should believe (2:4).

On that day the people will be divided into two categories: the fortunate ones who will have their report in the right hand (84:7; 69:19), and the wretched who will have their book in the left hand (69:25) or behind their backs (84:10). The people of paradise belong to the first category, while the final

destination of the second category will be hellfire. In addition, there are those who will enter paradise without judgement (Abdulbari, 2004, pp. 204, 211). It is in this way that “divine justice will be completely fulfilled” on that day (Saritoprak, 2006, p. 198). That means that man will be held responsible for his actions on earth. Qur'an verse 75:36 says “that man shall not be allowed to live like an irresponsible creature, but will be held answerable for his conduct” (Mir, 1987, p. 6).

The Prophet Muhammad will take a decisive position on that day, namely as the *Shafi'* to whom God will give the opportunity to intercede. That means that the sinners and the guilty will request him to save them from hellfire. Such a meaning is found in Qur'an verse 17:79, in which Allah will elevate the Prophet Muhammad to a praiseworthy position of intercession, according to the exegete As-Saidi. This also applies to other prophets who are also allowed to intercede, but the intercession of the Prophet Muhammad is of a higher order. His salvation is not only limited to Muslims, but also has meaning for all people (As-Saidi, 2002, p. 540).

In the opinion of Fazlur Rahman, the final judgment according to the Qur'an is decisive for three reasons. Firstly, the moral reason, because the quality of human achievements on earth must be judged. Real justice cannot be achieved and guaranteed in worldly life. Secondly, it must be clarified what the people had in mind. At the same time, it is made clear what the real purpose of life is. Finally, human disputes, disagreements and conflicts must ultimately be resolved (Rahman, 2009, p. 116).

## CONCLUSION

In summary, through our comparative approach of three fundamental eschatological concepts: afterlife, death and the Day of Judgement, both in the Bible and the Qur'an, it is important to offer a general conclusion of each concept.

Firstly, the eschatology in both the Bible and the Qur'an stands for the end of time and for the predestination of man after death. A number of biblical and Qur'anic apocalyptic concepts can be equated with words, including end times, judgment, eternal life and hellfire. The Old and New Testaments differ in the sense that, eschatology in the Hebrew Bible is associated with the nation of Israel, while in the New Testament and in Christian tradition it is associated with Jesus Christ and God's kingdom. According to the Qur'an, believing in the afterlife is one of the foundations of the Islamic faith, in which every Muslim should believe. That means that Qur'anic eschatology is fundamental in nature.

Secondly, the concept of death (*mawt*) in both the Bible and the Qur'an refers to the inevitable earthly end of man against the immortality and eternity of God/Allah. Such closure is regarded as a transitional phase from worldly life to the afterlife, where death is not a problem but a mere divine predestination that will affect every man or creature without exception. The Qur'an differs from the Bible because death, along with other eschatological elements, is part of the global belief system upon which Islamic theology rests, and in which every Muslim must believe. Moreover, the figure of Jesus Christ is central to the New Testament view of death, while death is introduced in the Qur'anic perspective as a purely divine function.

Finally, the day of 'Yahweh', the day of 'the Lord' and the day of 'Judgement' or 'Account' overlap to the point that on that day man will be judged by Allah/God on the basis of his actions in earthly life. The fortunate will be rewarded with paradise and the wicked will be punished in hellfire. In this way, the concept of *yawm al-ḥisāb*, the Day of Judgement, is depicted in both the Bible and the Qur'an as the time of recompense, with the exception in the New Testament that Jesus Christ will act as judge next to God. In

addition, believing in the Day of Judgement is considered a fundamental article of the Islamic faith, as it is one of the six dogmas of the Islamic Creed.

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