THE WILL OF ALLAH AND OUR DESTINY

Part VIII: The Problem of Evil

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Abstract: *In this part, the origin of evil is discussed and whether or not human action is Allah' creation. The relation between the will of Allah and human's voluntary evil actions as well as harm events that occur in this world are also addressed.*

Keywords: *Evil actions; harmful events; will of Allah.*

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Introduction

From ancient times, the origin of evil has been the subject of debates. Those who think that Allah has relinquished His authority to his creation believe that it is people who create evil, and the harmful events that occur in this world are merely natural phenomena which have no relation with people's action or Allah's punishment. On the other hand, those who believed in compulsion, consider that any action, be good or bad, is Allah's creation imposed on the world. In this part, in the light of the two weighty sources (*Thaqalain*) treasured by Allah, namely the holy Quran and the

sayings of the Prophet Muhammad *(PBUH&HF)* and his Ahl al-Bait *(PBUT)*, the problem of evil is explained.

Is our action Allah's creation?

It is clear that people's evil actions are not Allah's actions; otherwise, many tokens of the holy Quran would become meaningless. For instance, Allah states in the Quran:

إِنَّ اَللَّهَ لا يَظْلِمُ اَلنَّاسَ شَيْئاً وَ لكِنَّ اَلنَّاسَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ.

Verily Allah does not do any injustice to people. It is people that wrong their own souls. (10:44)

The above token proves that injustice is a human action, and that human action is not the action of Allah since Allah denies committing any injustice. As another example, Allah states:

لا يُسْئَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَ هُمْ يُسْئَلُونَ.

He shall not be questioned for whatever He does, but they shall be questioned. (21:23)

The above token proves that Allah's actions and our actions are mutually exclusive; otherwise, the above token bears logical contradiction. If our actions were really His, then there should be no questioning. We should not be questioned for what He does just because according to this token there is no questioning for what He does! Elsewhere, Allah states:

أَلا لَعْنَةُ اَللَّهِ عَلَى اَلظَّالِمِينَ.

Behold! The curse of Allah is upon the wrongdoers. (11:18)

Allah is most exalted from what His enemies attribute to Him. The above token is a proof for the fact that the wrongdoing or injustice is not Allah's action, and cannot be attributed to Him.

Hisham Ibn Hakam narrated:

سَأَلَ الزِّنْدِيقُ أَبَا عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع فَقَالَ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ كَيْفَ لَمْ يَخْلُقِ الْخَلْقَ كُلَّهُمْ مُطِيعِينَ مُوَحِّدِينَ وَ كَانَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَادِراً قَالَ ع لَوْ خَلَقَهُمْ مُطِيعِينَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ ثَوَابٌ لِأَنَّ الطَّاعَةَ إِذَا مَا كَانَتْ فِعْلَهُمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ جَنَّةٌ وَ لَا نَارٌ وَ لَكِنْ خَلَقَ خَلْقَهُ فَأَمَرَهُمْ بِطَاعَتِهِ وَ نَهَاهُمْ عَنْ مَعْصِيَتِهِ وَ احْتَجَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِرُسُلِهِ وَ قَطَعَ عُذْرَهُمْ بِكُتُبِهِ لِيَكُونُوا هُمُ الَّذِينَ يُطِيعُونَ وَ يَعْصُونَ وَ يَسْتَوْجِبُونَ بِطَاعَتِهِمْ لَهُ الثَّوَابَ وَ بِمَعْصِيَتِهِمْ إِيَّاهُ الْعِقَابَ قَالَ فَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ هُوَ فِعْلُهُ وَ الْعَمَلُ الشَّرُّ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ هُوَ فِعْلُهُ قَالَ الْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ الْعَبْدُ يَفْعَلُهُ وَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَمَرَهُ وَ الْعَمَلُ الشَّرُّ الْعَبْدُ يَفْعَلُهُ وَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ نَهَاهُ قَالَ أَ لَيْسَ فَعَلَهُ بِالْآلَةِ الَّتِي رَكِبَهَا فِيهِ قَالَ نَعَمْ وَ لَكِنْ بِالْآلَةِ الَّتِي عَمِلَ بِهَا الْخَيْرَ قَدَرَ بِهَا عَلَى الشَّرِّ الَّذِي نَهَاهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ فَإِلَى الْعَبْدِ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ قَالَ مَا نَهَاهُ اللَّهُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا وَ قَدْ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يُطِيقُ تَرْكَهُ وَ لَا أَمَرَهُ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا وَ قَدْ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يَسْتَطِيعُ فِعْلَهُ لِأَنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ صِفَتِهِ الْجَوْرُ وَ الْعَبَثُ وَ الظُّلْمُ وَ تَكْلِيفُ الْعِبَادِ مَا لَا يُطِيقُونَ.

An atheist (*Zindiq*) asked Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)*, "Inform me why not Allah created all people obedient while He has power to do so?" The Imam *(PBUH)* replied, "Had He created them obedient,

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there would not have been any reward for them since, in that case, obedience was not their action, and thus, there would have been neither Paradise nor Hell. In contrast, Allah created people, then commanded them to His obedience, forbade them from His disobedience, brought evidence for them by His messengers, and removed their excuses by (descending) His books so that they become the ones who obey and disobey. This way, they will become entitled to reward and punishment for their obedience and disobedience, respectively. " The atheist asked, "Are the virtuous and the wicked actions from the servant His actions?" The Imam *(PBUH)* replied, "As for the virtuous action, the servant does it while Allah commanded him to it. As for the wicked action, the servant does it while Allah forbade him from it. " The man asked, "Isn't one's action by the means that Allah placed in him?" The Imam *(PBUH)* replied, "Yes. However, by the very means that he does good, he is able to do the evil that Allah has forbidden him. " The man asked, "Does any of the capability of affairs belong the servant?" The Imam *(PBUH)* answered, "Allah did not forbid him from anything unless He knew he would be able to leave it, and He did not command him to anything unless He knew he would be capable to do it. This is because oppression, futility, injustice, and charging the servants what they cannot bear, are not of His attributes. .. "[1]

In the above Hadith, the Imam *(PBUH)* stressed that a voluntary action of a servant, be it good or evil, is not Allah's action.

Once Abu Hanifa went to meet Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq *(PBUH)*. The Imam was inside his house and Abu Hanifa was waiting for him to come out. Meantime, a small child came out and someone informed Abu Hanifa that the boy was the Imam's son, Musa al-Kadhim *(PBUH)* (the succeeding Imam). To belittle the child, Abu Hanifa posed a question before the child. Below is a part of conversation between Abu Hanifa and Imam Musa *(PBUH)*:

ثُمَّ قَالَ يَا غُلَامُ مِمَّنِ الْمَعْصِيَةُ قَالَ يَا شَيْخُ لَا تَخْلُو مِنْ ثَلَاثٍ إِمَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَ لَيْسَ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ شَيْءٌ فَلَيْسَ لِلْحَكِيمِ أَنْ يَأْخُذَ عَبْدَهُ بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلْهُ وَ إِمَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ وَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَ اللَّهُ أَقْوَى الشَّرِيكَيْنِ فَلَيْسَ لِلشَّرِيكِ الْأَكْبَرِ أَنْ يَأْخُذَ الشَّرِيكَ الْأَصْغَرَ بِذَنْبِهِ وَ إِمَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْعَبْدِ وَ لَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْءٌ فَإِنْ شَاءَ عَفَا وَ إِنْ شَاءَ عَاقَبَ قَالَ فَأَصَابَتْ أَبَا حَنِيفَةَ سَكْتَةٌ كَأَنَّمَا أُلْقِمَ فُوهُ الْحَجَرَ.

Abu Hanifa asked, "O young man! From who is sin?" Imam Musa *(PBUH)* replied, "O old man! There are only three hypothetical cases for that: If it is from Allah and the servant does not have any share in it, then it does not

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befit Allah, the Wise, to blame and chastise His servant for what he did not do. On the other hand, if it is from both the servant and Allah, then since Allah is the stronger partner, it does not befit the greater partner to chastise the lesser partner for the (mutual) sin. But if it is from the servant and Allah did not have any share in that, then if He wills He forgives, and if He wills He penalizes. " By hearing that, Abu Hanifa was strangled as if he swallowed a rock. [٢]

In the above Hadith, based on Allah's justice, the Imam *(PBUH)* proved, that Allah does not have any contribution in the wrongdoing that is manifested by man, and an evil deed is not the actions of Allah. But, one may point to the following token of the holy Quran:

اَللَّهُ خالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ عَلى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ.

Allah is the creator of everything and He has authority over all things (39:62)

and ask, "Does this sentence not imply that actions are the creation of Allah, including the evil ones?" In response to this question, the Imams *(PBUT)* have stated that Allah has created the measure and plan (*Qadar; Taqdir*) for everything. In other words, people's evil actions happen according to what Allah measured and considered in His planning. As explained in the previous sections, this planning is not a compulsory one. It is according to the foreknowledge of Allah on our would-be choice of action.

Once Ma'mun, one of the tyrranical ruler of the Abbasi dynasty, asked Imam al-Ridha *(PBUH)* to summarize in writing the pure Islamic beliefs. Of the many things that the Imam *(PBUH)* enumerated was:

انَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى لَا يُكَلِّفُ نَفْساً إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَ أَنَ أَفْعَالَ الْعِبَادِ مَخْلُوقَةٌ لِلَّهِ خَلْقَ تَقْدِيرٍ لَا خَلْقَ تَكْوِينٍ وَ اللَّهُ خالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ لَا نَقُولُ بِالْجَبْرِ وَ التَّفْوِيضِ.

".. . Allah, the glorious, does not charge people except to the extent of their ability. The actions of the servants are the creations of Allah; however, it is only the creation of their planning and arrangements (*Taqdir*), not the creation of their being (*Takwin*). And (this is what is meant by) Allah is the creator of everything. We maintain neither compulsion nor relinquishing authority (on the voluntary actions).. . "[٣]

A similar narration was reported from Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* when he was asked for the same thing. [٤]

Moreover, Fudhail Ibn Yasar narrated:

سَأَلْتُ الرِّضَا ع عَنْ أَفَاعِيلِ الْعِبَادِ مَخْلُوقَةٌ هِيَ أَمْ غَيْرُ مَخْلُوقَةٍ قَالَ ع هِيَ وَ اللَّهِ مَخْلُوقَةٌ أَرَادَ خَلْقَ تَقْدِيرٍ لَا خَلْقَ تَكْوِينٍ.

I asked Imam al-Ridha *(PBUH)* about the

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actions of the servants and whether they are created. The Imam *(PBUH)* replied, "They are, by Allah, created. He intended the creation of their arrangements (*Taqdir*) (of what He allowed to happen), not the creation of their being (*Takwin*). "[٥]

This way, Allah is the creator of our action in the sense of *Taqdir*, but we are the creator of our actions in the sense of *Takwin*. The doer of the action is he who creates it in the sense of *Takwin* and brings about the action. Therefore, Allah does not do our actions, though He makes detailed planning and synchronizes our choice of action with other events with respect to time and place if He permits it to happen. Thus, in terms of *Takwin*, Allah is not the only creator in the world. Fat'h Ibn Yazid al-Jurjani narrated:

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي الْحَسَنِ ع هَلْ غَيْرُ الْخَالِقِ الْجَلِيلِ خَالِقٌ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى يَقُولُ فَتَبارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخالِقِينَ فَقَدْ أَخْبَرَ أَنَّ فِي عِبَادِهِ خَالِقِينَ وَ غَيْرَ خَالِقِينَ مِنْهُمْ عِيسَى صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ خَلَقَ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ فَنَفَخَ فِيهِ فَصَارَ طَائِراً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَ السَّامِرِيُّ خَلَقَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَداً لَهُ خُوَارٌ.

I asked Imam al-Ridha *(PBUH)*, "Is there any creator other than the lofty creator?" He *(PBUH)* replied, "Verily Allah, the glorious, states, 'So blessed be Allah, the best of the creators!' (23:14) Thus, He has indeed conveyed that there are creators and non-creators among His servants. Among them is Jesus *(PBUH)* who created from clay the shape of a bird by leave of Allah, and then he breathed into it, and it became a bird by leave of Allah (referring to holy Quran ٣:٤٩). Moreover, Samiri created for people the body of a calf that had a lowing sound (referring to Quran 20:88). "[٦]

١ The Origin of Evil

One should also distinguish between the evil attributed to people and the evil and misery that come from Allah. Both of them are called evil (*Soo'; Sayyi'a; Sharr*) in the holy Quran. The misery that Allah sends down upon people in this world and in the Hereafter is due to their evil actions, and is thus a just punishment for them. For instance, Allah says:

وَ إِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَللَّهِ وَ إِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اَللَّهِ فَما لِهؤُلاءِ اَلْقَوْمِ لا يَكادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثاً.

If some good befalls them, they say, "This is from Allah"; but if evil (*Sayyi'a*) befalls them, they say, "This is from you (O Prophet). " Say, "All are from Allah. " But what has come to these people that they fail to understand a single fact. (4:78)

According to interpretation of Ahl al-Bait *(PBUT)*,[٧] the goodness in this holy token means good heath and wealth. On

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the other hand, the evil here means the (worldly) punishment that Allah sends down to the wrongdoers. This punishment, though is from Allah and is His creation, it is due to people's evil deeds, as it is made clear in the next token:

ما أَصابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اَللَّهِ وَ ما أَصابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.

Whatever good (O man!) happens to you is due to Allah's (help); but whatever evil (Sayyi'a) happens to you is due to your (own) soul. (4:79)

Wrongdoing is an action attributed to people, and punishment is an action attributed to Allah, and although they were both called evil (*Sayyi'a*), they are of an entirely different nature. Yet they are linked to each other by Allah's will and planning. In other words, an evil action of a person may become a punishment (or even mercy) by Allah for another person. Both types of evil were used in the following token of Quran:

وَ جَزاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِثْلُها.

The penalty of an evil (i. e. , wrongdoing) is an evil (i. e. , a punishment) like it. (42:40)

We also recite in the holy Quran:

وَ إِذا أَرادَ اَللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوْءاً فَلا مَرَدَّ لَهُ وَ ما لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ والٍ.

.. . And if Allah intends an evil (i. e. , punishment) for a group of people, there would be no (other power) to drive it away, nor will they find any protector from other than Him. (13:11)

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا اَلَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اَللَّهِ إِنْ أَرادَ بِكُمْ سُوءاً أَوْ أَرادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً وَ لا يَجِدُونَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اَللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَ لا نَصِيراً.

Say, "Who can withhold you from Allah if He intends an evil (i. e. , punishment) for you or intends a mercy for you?" Nor will they find for themselves from other than Allah any protector or helper. (33:17)

Notice that the intention mentioned in the above two tokens is the intention of imposition, as it is clear from the context. In other words, the punishment is the action of Allah imposed on people, and is not the action of people, though it is due to the action of people.

Other instances where evil (*Sharr* and *Soo'*) that are mentioned as Allah's punishment appear in the following tokens of the holy Quran: 5:60, 76:7, ٧٦:١١, ١٦:٢٧, ٢٧:٥٨, ٤٠:٤٥.

٢ The Harmful Events

Any harmful event created by Allah should not be necessarily judged as evil for all afflicted people. Anything that people have, belongs to Allah and He

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may take it back if He wills. Moreover, Allah does not decree harmful events only for punishing people for their previous wrong deeds. At the same time that these events may be merely punishments for disbelievers, they act as awakening atonement for some sinful believers or misguided people. Moreover, these calamities may be merely blessings for some people, since by tolerating these afflictions, they attain higher spiritual positions and greater reward. In fact, Allah has willed to test people in hard situations. Whoever seeks refuge in Allah in all such circumstances, Allah will grant him more tolerance, more faith in Him, and more reliance (*Tawakkul*) upon Him, and in this manner, Allah brings up a faithful servant and also increases his reward in the Hereafter for his turning to Him when facing such situations. Thus, harmful events by Allah may have many positive outcomes for the believers both in this world and in the Hereafter. In the holy Quran, Allah says:

وَ ما أَرْسَلْنا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إِلاَّ أَخَذْنا أَهْلَها بِالْبَأْساءِ وَ الضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضَّرَّعُونَ.

Whenever We sent a prophet to a town, We took up its people in suffering and adversity so that they might call (Us) in humility. (7:94)

Hisham bin Salim narrated that Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* said:

إِنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ بَلاَءً الأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الأَمْثَلُ فَالأَمْثَلُ.

"The most severe afflictions and tests (*Balaa*) were for the prophets, and then those who came after them in virtue. "[٨]

Humran narrates that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir *(PBUH)* said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَيَتَعَاهَدُ الْمُؤْمِنَ بِالْبَلاَءِ كَمَا يَتَعَاهَدُ الرَّجُلُ أَهْلَهُ بِالْهَدِيَّةِ مِنَ الْغَيْبَةِ وَ يَحْمِيهِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا يَحْمِي الطَّبِيبُ الْمَرِيضَ.

"Allah cares for a believer with affliction and hardship like a man who cares for his family by sending them gifts when he is away from them. Allah prevents the believer form (indulging into the comfort of) this world, like a physician who prevents a patient (by some strict diets). "[٩]

Zaid Ibn Zarrad narrated from Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* that the Messenger of Allah *(PBUH&HF)* said:

إِنَّ عَظِيمَ الْبَلاَءِ يُكَافَأُ بِهِ عَظِيمُ الْجَزَاءِ فَإِذَا أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ عَبْداً ابْتَلاَهُ بِعَظِيمِ الْبَلاَءِ فَمَنْ رَضِيَ فَلَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّضَا وَ مَنْ سَخِطَ الْبَلاَءَ فَلَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ السَّخَطُ.

"Certainly (enduring) a greater affliction is recompensed by a greater reward. Thus, when Allah loves a servant, He afflicts him with a great hardship (*Balaa*). Then, if he is pleased with it, for him is Allah's satisfaction, and if he is displeased with it, for him is Allah's dissatisfaction. "[١٠]

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Husain Ibn Ilwan narrated Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْداً غَتَّهُ بِالْبَلاَءِ غَتّاً وَ إِنَّا وَ إِيَّاكُمْ يَا سَدِيرُ لَنُصْبِحُ بِهِ وَ نُمْسِي.

"When Allah loves a servant, He immerses him in the sea of suffering. And we (Ahl al-Bait *(PBUT)*) and you (Shia) start our morning and evening with these (afflictions). "[١١]

Like a swimming instructor who throws his new student headlong into the water, and makes him struggle in order to teach him swimming, Allah does the same to develop his beloved servants. If one devotes his whole lifetime to reading about swimming, he will never learn how to swim. One should enter the water and exercise under the guidance of a qualified teacher to learn how to swim.

As for a sinful believer, there is another reason that Allah may afflict him with hardship. The hardship that he receives is an atonement to his sins, which cleanses him before he leaves this world. Thus, such hardship is a mercy from Allah for the believers. Sama'a narrated that Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* said:

إِنَّ الْعَبْدَ إِذَا كَثُرَتْ ذُنُوبُهُ وَ لَمْ يَجِدْ مَا يُكَفِّرُهَا بِهِ ابْتَلاَهُ اللَّهُ بِالْحُزْنِ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِيُكَفِّرَهَا بِهِ فَإِنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ بِهِ وَ إِلاَّ أَسْقَمَ بَدَنَهُ لِيُكَفِّرَهَا بِهِ فَإِنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ بِهِ وَ إِلاَّ شَدَّدَ عَلَيْهِ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ لِيُكَفِّرَهَا بِهِ فَإِنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ بِهِ وَ إِلاَّ عَذَّبَهُ فِي قَبْرِهِ لِيَلْقَى اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ يَوْمَ يَلْقَاهُ وَ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ يَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ ذُنُوبِهِ.

"When the sin of a servant increases and nothing (of his good actions) is found to atone for that, Allah inflicts him by sorrows in this world as an atonement for it, or He will make his body sick to compensate for that, or (in a more serious case) He makes the time of his death more difficult for him so as to cover for that, or else (in a much more serious case) He punishes him in his grave so that he meets Allah on the Day of Judgment without anything that could witness to any of his sins (i. e. , he comes with his sins wiped out). "[١٢]

In a Hadith *al-Qudsi*, Ibn al-Qaddah narrated from Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* that the Messenger of Allah *(PBUH&HF)* said that Allah, to Whom belongs might and majesty, said:

وَ عِزَّتِي وَ جَلاَلِي لاَ أُخْرِجُ عَبْداً مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَ أَنَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَرْحَمَهُ حَتَّى أَسْتَوْفِيَ مِنْهُ كُلَّ خَطِيئَةٍ عَمِلَهَا إِمَّا بِسُقْمٍ فِي جَسَدِهِ وَ إِمَّا بِضِيقٍ فِي رِزْقِهِ وَ إِمَّا بِخَوْفٍ فِي دُنْيَاهُ فَإِنْ بَقِيَتْ عَلَيْهِ بَقِيَّةٌ شَدَّدْتُ عَلَيْهِ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَ عِزَّتِي وَ جَلاَلِي لاَ أُخْرِجُ عَبْداً مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَ أَنَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُعَذِّبَهُ حَتَّى أُوَفِّيَهُ كُلَّ حَسَنَةٍ عَمِلَهَا إِمَّا بِسَعَةٍ فِي رِزْقِهِ وَ إِمَّا بِصِحَّةٍ فِي جِسْمِهِ وَ إِمَّا بِأَمْنٍ فِي دُنْيَاهُ فَإِنْ بَقِيَتْ عَلَيْهِ بَقِيَّةٌ هَوَّنْتُ عَلَيْهِ بِهَا الْمَوْتَ.

"By My Might and Majesty! I shall not send out from this world a servant whom I intend to cover with mercy until I take every sin of his (and exchange it) with either by a sickness in his body or

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by tightening his sustenance or by fear in his life; and if anything still remains of his sins, I will increase his tension at the time of his death. By My might and majesty! I shall not send out from this world a servant whom I intend to punish (due to his disbelief) until I take every good deed of him (and exchange it) either by good health in his body or by increasing his (worldly) sustenance or by security in his life; and if anything still remains of his good deeds I will make his death easy for him. "[١٣]

Although the disbeliever does not do good for the sake of Allah, but Allah clears and recompenses them by some bounties in this world. The disbelievers wrongly interpret these worldly benefits and they think that Allah is favor of them. Thus, these worldly benefits acts as wrong signal from Allah as a punishment for their disbelief and is evil for them. On the other hand, the affliction that befalls a disbeliever in this world is certainly evil. Such evil is naught but Allah's worldly punishment for his rejection and his misconduct, and it is beside the greater punishment that waits for him in the Hereafter. Allah says in the holy Quran:

فَأَمَّا اَلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذاباً شَدِيداً فِي اَلدُّنْيا وَ اَلْآخِرَةِ وَ ما لَهُمْ مِنْ ناصِرِينَ.

As to those who reject faith, I will severely punish them in this world and in the Hereafter, and they will not have any helper. (3:56)

فَلا تُعْجِبْكَ أَمْوالُهُمْ وَ لا أَوْلادُهُمْ إِنَّما يُرِيدُ اَللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ بِها فِي اَلْحَياةِ اَلدُّنْيا وَ تَزْهَقَ أَنْفُسُهُمْ وَ هُمْ كافِرُونَ.

Let not their wealth nor their children dazzle you. In truth, Allah intends to punish them with these things in this life, and that their souls may perish in the state of disbelief. (9:55)

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا ما ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنا عَلَيْهِمْ أَبْوابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى إِذا فَرِحُوا بِما أُوتُوا أَخَذْناهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَإِذا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ.

But when they forgot the warning they had received, We opened to them the gates of all things, until, in the midst of their enjoyment of what they were given, We took them (or their soul) suddenly, when lo, they were plunged in despair! (6:44)

مَنْ كانَ يُرِيدُ اَلْعاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنا لَهُ فِيها ما نَشاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلاها مَذْمُوماً مَدْحُوراً وَ مَنْ أَرادَ اَلْآخِرَةَ وَ سَعى لَها سَعْيَها وَ هُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولئِكَ كانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُوراً كُلاًّ نُمِدُّ هؤُلاءِ وَ هَؤُلاءِ مِنْ عَطاءِ رَبِّكَ وَ ما كانَ عَطاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوراً.

For anyone who intends the hasty pleasure (i. e. , the pleasure of this world), We expedite for him therein what We will (of hasty pleasure) for whom We intend. Then, We assign to him the Hell; he shall enter it despised, driven away (from mercy). And anyone who intends (the pleasure of) the Hereafter, makes all his effort for it, and

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he is a believer, the striving of such individuals shall be appreciated (by Allah). Of the offer of your Lord (in terms of giving opportunity), We extend for these as well as those. And the grant of your Lord is not confined. (17:18-20)

According to the traditions, whatever befalls a believer contains benefit and goodness (*Khair*) for him regardless of how it looks in this world. Ibn Abi Ya'fur narrated form Imam al-Sadiq *(PBUH)* that the Messenger of Allah *(PBUH&HF)* said:

أَبُو عَلِيٍّ الْأَشْعَرِيُّ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْجَبَّارِ عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ فُضَيْلِ بْنِ عُثْمَانَ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي يَعْفُورٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ عَجِبْتُ لِلْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ لَا يَقْضِي اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَهُ قَضَاءً إِلَّا كَانَ خَيْراً لَهُ وَ إِنْ قُرِّضَ بِالْمَقَارِيضِ كَانَ خَيْراً لَهُ وَ إِنْ مَلَكَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَ مَغَارِبَهَا كَانَ خَيْراً لَهُ.

"I am amazed with (observing) the situation of a Muslim (i. e. , he who submits to Allah's decree). Allah does not pass any decree for him except that it is good (*Khair*) for him. If he were to be torn apart with scissors it would be good for him, and if he were to be granted possession of the entire world, East and West, it would be good for him. "[١٤]

٣ Conclusion

In this article, we resolved the complexity of the origin of evil in the light of the Quranic tokens and the divinely appointed saints. We showed that although some evil may be due to Allah and some due to people, both types occur according to Allah's will of knowledge. The harmful events, be the action of man or not, are Allah's decree for other people with different aims: They are Allah's punishment for some people, while they are the means of forgiveness, progress and perfection and earning the Hereafter rewards for other people. Thus, an affliction may turn to be bad for some and good for some others in religious point of view.

Endnotes:

[١] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 19, Hadith 29, as quoted from *al-Ihtijaj*.

[٢] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 27, Hadith 33, quoted from *al-Ihtijaj*; Similar traditions exist in: *al-Tawhid*, p. 96, Hadith 2; *Tuhaf al-Uqul*, p. 411.

[٣] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 30, Hadith 38, cited from *Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha (PBUH)*.

[٤] See *al-Tawhid*, p. 406, Hadith 5 and *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 10, p. 226.

[٥] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 75, p. 338, cited originally from *Tuhaf al-Uqul*.

[٦] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 4, p. 147, Hadith 1, quoted from *al-Tawhid*.

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[٧] See *Tafsir*, Ali Ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, vol. ١, p. ١٤٤; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. ٥, p. ٢٠١, Hadith 27.
[٨] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 252, Hadith 1.
[٩] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 255, Hadith 17.
[١٠] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 253, Hadith 8.
[١١] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 253, Hadith 6.
[١٢] *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 78, p. 176, Hadith ١٥, originally quoted from al-Amali, al-Saduq.
[١٣] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 444, Hadith 3.
[١٤] *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 62, Hadith 8.

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