

# Did We Recognized Allah (SWT) and Day of Resurrection Before We Were Even Born?

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ  
أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

O Prophet, remind mankind about the incident when your Rabb brought into existence the offspring's from the loins of Adam and his descendents (Virtually each single individual of mankind) and made them testify about themselves. Allah asked them "AM I not your Rabb?" They all replied: Yes! We bear witness that You are .” This We did, lest you mankind should say on the Day of Resurrection: “ We were not aware of this fact that you are our Rabb and there will be a Day of Judgment. Q7/172

## Context of the Verses

These verses refer to the Primordial Covenant (Mithaq), also known as the Covenant of Alast (from the phrase” – “Am I not

your Lord?”). This event is understood to have occurred in a pre-eternal or spiritual realm where Allah extracted the souls of all of Adam’s descendants and made them acknowledge His Lordship. The purpose, as stated in the verses, is to remove any excuse for humanity on the Day of Judgment, preventing claims of ignorance or blame on their forefathers for associating partners with Allah (shirk).

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Tafseer by Different Scholars

1. Tafsir Ibn Kathir (d. 1373 CE)

Ibn Kathir, a prominent Mufasssir (exegete), explains these verses as follows:

- Ayah 172: Ibn Kathir describes the Covenant of Alast as a divine act where Allah brought forth all the souls of Adam’s progeny from their loins (in a spiritual or metaphysical sense) and made them bear witness to His Lordship. The phrase “from their loins” indicates the extraction of souls from the descendants of Adam, generation after generation. The testimony (“Yes, we have testified”) establishes the innate recognition (fitrah) of Allah’s oneness (Tawhid) within every human soul. Ibn Kathir cites a hadith from Sahih Muslim where the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explained that every child is born upon the fitrah (natural disposition to recognize Allah), but external influences may lead them astray.
- Ayah 173: This verse addresses potential excuses on the Day of Judgment. Ibn Kathir notes that humanity cannot claim ignorance (“we were unaware”) or blame their forefathers for introducing polytheism. The covenant ensures individual accountability, as every soul has acknowledged Allah’s Lordship. Ibn Kathir emphasizes that this covenant is a proof of Allah’s justice, as no

one can deny their innate knowledge of Tawhid.

Key Point: Ibn Kathir views the covenant as both a spiritual event and a mechanism to establish human responsibility for recognizing Allah's oneness.

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## 2. Tafsir Al-Tabari (d. 923 CE)

Al-Tabari, one of the earliest and most comprehensive Mufasssirs, provides a detailed exegesis:

- Ayah 172: Al-Tabari interprets the extraction of descendants "from their loins" as a reference to a metaphysical event where Allah gathered all human souls before their physical creation. He cites various narrations, including one from Ibn Abbas, which suggests that this event occurred in a spiritual realm before human beings were born into the world. The testimony ("Yes, we have testified") is understood as an affirmation embedded in human nature (fitrah), which predisposes humans to recognize Allah as their Lord.

- Ayah 173: Al-Tabari explains that this verse preempts excuses on the Day of Judgment. He notes that some might claim they followed their forefathers' polytheistic practices out of tradition or ignorance. However, the covenant eliminates such excuses, as every soul has directly acknowledged Allah's Lordship. Al-Tabari also discusses the phrase "would You destroy us for what the falsifiers did?" as a rhetorical question, emphasizing that Allah's justice does not punish individuals for others' sins unless they willingly follow falsehood.

Key Point: Al-Tabari stresses the universal nature of the covenant and its role in affirming human accountability.

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## 3. Tafsir Al-Qurtubi (d. 1273 CE)

Al-Qurtubi's Tafsir focuses on legal and spiritual implications:

- Ayah 172: Al-Qurtubi explains that the covenant is a divine proof (hujjah) against humanity. He suggests that the event may not be a literal, physical gathering but rather a spiritual or intellectual affirmation embedded in human nature. The fitrah, according to Al-Qurtubi, inclines humans toward monotheism, and the covenant reinforces this innate disposition. He also references a hadith where the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that Allah took the covenant from the souls in a realm called the "World of Atoms" (Alam al-Dharr).
- Ayah 173: Al-Qurtubi elaborates that this verse addresses the human tendency to deflect blame. He explains that polytheists might argue they were merely following their ancestors' traditions, but the covenant ensures they cannot escape responsibility for their beliefs and actions. Al-Qurtubi emphasizes Allah's mercy and justice, as the covenant provides clear evidence of Tawhid to every soul.

Key Point: Al-Qurtubi highlights the covenant as a manifestation of Allah's mercy, ensuring humans have no valid excuse for denying Him.

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#### 4. Tafsir Al-Razi (Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, d. 1209 CE)

Al-Razi, known for his philosophical and rational approach, offers a nuanced interpretation:

- Ayah 172: Al-Razi explores whether the covenant was a literal event or a metaphorical representation of human intellect and fitrah. He leans toward the view that the covenant symbolizes the innate capacity of the human soul to recognize Allah's Lordship through reason and intuition. The phrase "made them testify of themselves" suggests an internal acknowledgment rather than a

physical dialogue. Al-Razi also discusses the possibility that this event occurred in a pre-eternal realm, as supported by narrations from the Prophet (peace be upon him).

- Ayah 173: Al-Razi emphasizes that the covenant eliminates excuses based on cultural or ancestral influences. He argues that the human intellect, combined with the fitrah, is sufficient to guide individuals to Tawhid, even if their environment promotes polytheism. The verse underscores Allah's fairness, as no one can claim they were unaware of their obligation to worship Allah alone.

Key Point: Al-Razi's interpretation bridges rational and spiritual perspectives, viewing the covenant as both a metaphysical event and a reflection of human intellectual capacity.

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5. Contemporary Tafsir (e.g., Tafsir Al-Jalalayn and Sayyid Qutb)

- Tafsir Al-Jalalayn (by Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin al-Suyuti):

- Ayah 172: This concise Tafsir explains the covenant as Allah extracting the souls of Adam's descendants and addressing them directly to affirm His Lordship. The response "Yes, we have testified" is seen as a collective acknowledgment by all human souls, ensuring they cannot claim ignorance on the Day of Judgment.

- Ayah 173: The verse prevents excuses based on following misguided ancestors. Al-Jalalayn emphasizes that the covenant establishes individual responsibility, regardless of societal or familial influences.

- Sayyid Qutb (In the Shade of the Quran, d. 1966):

- Ayah 172: Sayyid Qutb views the covenant as a profound spiritual event that embeds the recognition of Allah's Lordship in

every human soul. He describes it as a moment of direct communion between Allah and humanity, reinforcing the fitrah as a natural inclination toward monotheism.

- Ayah 173: Qutb stresses the verse's role in upholding justice. He argues that the covenant ensures humans cannot blame their circumstances or ancestors for their disbelief, as their souls have already acknowledged Allah's sovereignty. Qutb connects this to the broader theme of human responsibility in Surah Al-A'raf.
- Key Point: Contemporary Tafsir works emphasize the covenant's role in affirming the fitrah and ensuring accountability.

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## Key Themes Across Tafsir

1. Primordial Covenant (Mithaq): All scholars agree that these verses refer to a pre-eternal covenant where human souls acknowledged Allah's Lordship. The event is often understood as spiritual or metaphysical, though interpretations vary on its exact nature.
2. Fitrah (Natural Disposition): The covenant reinforces the concept of fitrah, the innate inclination to recognize and worship Allah alone. This is why humans are held accountable, as they possess an inherent awareness of Tawhid.
3. Elimination of Excuses: The verses ensure that no one can claim ignorance or blame others (e.g., ancestors) on the Day of Judgment. Allah's justice is emphasized, as the covenant provides clear evidence of His Lordship.
4. Individual Accountability: The covenant establishes that each person is responsible for their beliefs and actions, regardless of external influences like family or culture.

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## Differences in Interpretation

- **Literal vs. Metaphorical:** Scholars like Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari lean toward a literal or semi-literal understanding of the covenant as an event in a spiritual realm. Al-Razi and some modern scholars (e.g., Sayyid Qutb) allow for a metaphorical interpretation, emphasizing the fitrah and human intellect.
- **Nature of Testimony:** Some scholars (e.g., Al-Qurtubi) suggest the testimony occurred in a “World of Atoms,” while others (e.g., Al-Razi) view it as an inherent acknowledgment within the soul.
- **Philosophical Depth:** Al-Razi’s Tafsir is more philosophical, focusing on the role of human reason, while Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari emphasize traditional narrations and hadiths.

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### Relevant Hadiths

Scholars often cite the following hadiths to support their Tafsir:

- **Sahih Muslim (Book 33, Hadith 6378):** The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “No child is born except upon the fitrah, and then his parents make him a Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian.” This supports the idea that the covenant embeds Tawhid in every soul.
- **Hadith on the Covenant:** Narrations from Ibn Abbas and others describe Allah extracting the souls of Adam’s descendants and making them testify, as referenced by Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi.

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### Conclusion

Ayahs 172 and 173 of Surah Al-A’raf establish the Primordial Covenant, where all human souls acknowledged Allah’s Lordship, ensuring they cannot claim ignorance or blame others on the Day of Judgment. Scholars like Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari emphasize the covenant’s spiritual reality and its role in affirming the fitrah, while Al-Razi adds a rational perspective, viewing it as an innate intellectual acknowledgment. Al-Qurtubi and modern scholars like

Sayyid Qutb highlight Allah's justice and mercy in providing this covenant to guide humanity. Despite slight differences in interpretation, all agree that these verses underscore human accountability and the universal recognition of Allah's oneness. If you'd like a deeper analysis of a specific scholar's Tafsir or additional details (e.g., linguistic analysis or related verses), please let me know!