

How Are the Future and the Past Related? | A Good Future by Learning from the Past

The Importance of Learning from the Past and Its Role in Shaping the Future

“The past is gone.”

“Don’t dwell on the past.”

“The past will never return!”

“We can build the future by learning from the past.”

“The past is the light that guides the future.”

“Human beings are prisoners of their past!”

You have probably heard these famous phrases; but which of these seemingly opposing views is correct? Is the past truly important, or should it be forgotten and left behind? To what extent does the past shape our present and future?

It is true that the past is behind us, and we cannot alter what has already occurred. However, the reality is that the past continues to influence both our present and our future, and we are capable of taking lessons from it.

Learning from the past does not mean merely recalling or repeating it; rather, it entails awareness, awakening, and the conscious decision not to repeat past mistakes. The past is like a mirror—it reveals us to ourselves and connects us to our root and essence. By learning from the past, we become aware of our shortcomings, capabilities, and vulnerabilities. This awareness allows us to give direction and purpose to our lives. The more we learn from the past, the less regret we carry, and the more we can use those lessons to shape a brighter future.

All experiences—whether failures, disappointments, successes, or life events—can contribute to building a better future. The significance of learning from the past is

evident to almost everyone. And when we give weight to advice such as “forget the past,” it is often just an attempt to soothe our own conscience. Yet, the real question remains: how can we build a better future by learning from the past?

The Future Is the Reaction to the Past

Life is a series of decisions. Each day, we are faced with countless decisions—ranging from minor and seemingly insignificant ones to major, life-changing choices—that collectively shape our present and future. Every decision we make can have a profound impact on our lives, determining the degree of our success, happiness, and contentment. They also affect our relationships, health, and the overall quality of our lives. Every decision carries its own consequences and can influence a part of our life—or even encompass it entirely.

As mentioned in previous lessons, God has created the entire system of existence based on the law of cause and effect or destiny and decree. All of our actions, both in this world and the Hereafter, are outcomes of the decrees and decisions we ourselves have chosen—such as selecting a spouse or a friend—each of which can play a determining role in our worldly and eternal bliss.

We are constantly seated at the table of our own past, and all our emotional states and conditions are the result of the bites we have taken from this table—meaning the accumulation of our past decisions, relationships, thoughts, and behaviors. In truth, our present is the natural outcome of that past.

Most people, if given the chance to go back ten years, would choose to change their decisions, relationships, thoughts, and behaviors. The condition we will find ourselves in, in the future, hinges upon these very four elements. Whether we end

up successful or unsuccessful, near to God or estranged from Him, knowledgeable or ignorant, at peace or anxious, virtuous or immoral—it all depends on what has taken place in our past. We are the product of our own past, and we will inevitably reap the fruits of what we have sown. In other words, our future—both in this world and in the Hereafter—is the reaction to our past.

It is worth noting that our future consists of two parts: one is uncertain, and the other is certain. The uncertain future pertains to our worldly life; whose duration is unknown to us. Yet, everything that is to unfold in this life is dependent upon our decisions, relationships, behaviors, and thoughts. The certain and inevitable future, however, begins with death and continues through the Day of Judgment and beyond. The state of our eternal life, just like our worldly one, is determined by the decisions we make, the relationships we form, and the thoughts and actions we embrace in this world. A truly wise person is one who considers both futures—the worldly and the eternal—and pays heed to both.

Now, given the significant and determining role of the past in shaping the future, how can we create a bright and ideal future for ourselves?

How to Build a Better Future by Learning from the Past

It is often said that “The past is the light that guides the future.” The great religious scholars have always emphasized the importance of learning from the past. Logically, we must learn from our past in order to prepare for both our uncertain worldly future and our certain eternal one. We must strive to prevent our opportunities from being wasted, remain vigilant so that the future does not fall

victim to the same fate as the past, and ensure it does not end in regret. In short, the experience of the past must be stored as a reserve for our future.

Over time, the true nature of each person's character is revealed through their life in this world. One of the fundamental questions we must ask ourselves is this: Does my character suit the living conditions of the *Barzakh*? Will I enter the *Barzakh* in a sound and healthy state?

According to the Holy Quran, the Heaven is as vast as the heavens and the earth. Thus, every decision we make—whether choosing a spouse, a field of study, or a career—must align with the purpose of our creation and be compatible with the living conditions of the Hereafter and the Heaven. Otherwise, we risk being among the negligent.

If we wish to have a peaceful and comfortable future filled with bliss and prosperity, we must elevate the quality of our decisions, relationships, thoughts, and behaviors. This, in turn, requires a deep understanding of “values and decrees.” Knowing the right decrees and measures helps us achieve the best and most meaningful results. We are accountable for all our decisions, thoughts, and even our imaginations. Therefore, we must be mindful of the consequences they bring. If a person harbors impure or false thoughts, lowly desires, or misplaced affections, they will inevitably have to bear the cost—both in this world and the Hereafter. In fact, many people face hardships on the very first night in the grave because of their thoughts and imaginations.

In this lesson, we explored the crucial role of the past in shaping our future and explained that the future is the reaction to the past. By learning from the past and choosing the right decrees, we can build a brighter future.

How mindful are you of your thoughts and decisions? How do you use your past experiences to create a better future? We look forward to hearing your valuable insights.

Mentazer Mentazer

Mentazer Mentazer

Mentazer Mentazer

Mentazer Mentazer

Mentazer Mentazer

Mentazer Mentazer