DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?

ATHEISM

ISLAMIC RESPONSE



ENGLISH

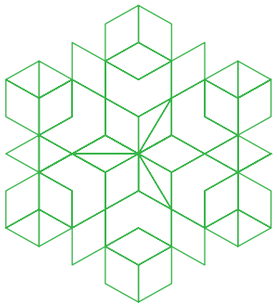
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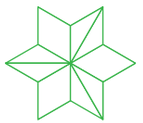
ISLAMIC RESPONSE

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"Every responsible adventurer across unknown frontier has to develop a contingency plan. If you were scaling a mountain that you had never climbed before or perhaps nobody had ever climbed before, you would have devised your main track for reaching to the top and an alternative track to take you to the top just in case of any miscalculation, unexpected circumstances or simply bad luck. Our humble advice to disbelievers of God and the Hereafter: since you have never experienced death before, what would be your backup plan when the truth is unveiled at the moment of your death and when you come face-to-face with the reality of the unseen?"



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

- Does God really exist? 5
- What is the argument for denying the existence of God? 7
- I exist, and therefore, God exists 9
- How could I possibly know God without seeing Him? 10

REASONS TO BELIEVE IN GOD

- Beginning of the Universe 11
- How does the Universe exist? 12
- Perfection of the Universe 16
- Moral Anchor 17
- Belief Conservation 20
- Revelation from God 22
- Let the Qur'an Speak 24

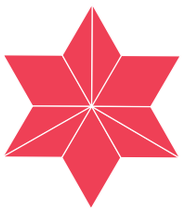
REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE LIFE HEREAFTER 28

ATHEISTS' QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD 30

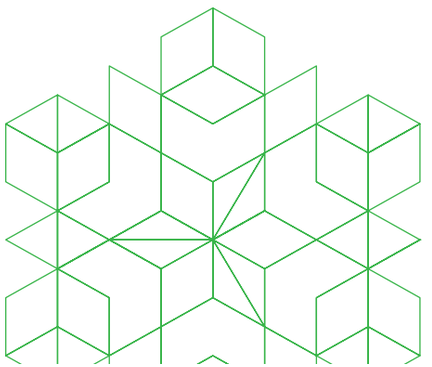
GOD'S SIGNS: ISLAMIC VIEW OF LIFE 48

INTRODUCTION

Atheism is the denial of the existence of God and the life hereafter. Proponents of atheism have been a part of civilization for hundreds of years, but in recent years it seems the atheists have become bolder with their campaign.







There have been many writings on this subject recently, with books by Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens being the most well-known.

Freud, Russell, Marx, and Nietzsche led the classical ring of atheism, but they at least understood that if you take religion out of the equation, the world would fall into a moral quagmire. It is primarily religion that moralizes people, and its sole purpose is to create better, more compassionate human beings. As Voltaire said, "If God did not exist, we would have to invent Him." However, modern atheism—led by people like Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, and Hawking—not only denies the existence of God and the life hereafter, but vehemently opposes all religions. These leaders, sometimes called the four horsemen, have been aggressively propagating their views

through writings, public talks, and debates. They probably would think if they turn all of the Mosques, the Churches, the Synagogues, and the Temples into entertainment houses, people will free themselves from the grip of their Creator, and they can live happily thereafter.

Three things are very surprising about atheist campaigns. First, before denying God, one should thoroughly research all claims of His existence, which doesn't appear to have been done by atheists. Second, atheists claim that the full weight of the reasoning of their campaigns is based on scientific findings—something that would actually support the belief in existence of God if studied objectively. Third, many atheists come from Christian backgrounds that view the world and nature as a veil separating humanity from God—a view that has encouraged modern science to regard religion as irrelevant. Islam, on the other hand, doesn't share that view. Islam demands rational and spiritual conviction based on thinking, reasoning, searching, reflecting, and verifying as opposed to blind belief. The Qur'an even equate non-believers as people without intellect and therefore unable to think and reflect. Islam establishes an unbreakable connection between religion, life, nature, reason, and science.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Does God really exist?

Islam not only affirms the existence of God; it teaches that the belief in the existence of God was never the achievement of human mind; it is ingrained in humans' very nature.

In fact, the Qur'an asserts that the very first thought that man had of God was that of oneness and an unseen almighty Being who created and sustains the universe and all that one could see or feel about and around. That prehistoric thought slowly underwent a change over time, marking a "retrogression" that gave rise to beliefs in multiplicity of deities, association of partners with God, doubting or complete denial of God's existence. Studies in anthropology have established this fact—that the concept of God is ingrained in human nature. Every man and woman is not only a born believer (contrary to atheists' claim), but also undergoes the experience of calling on Him especially in times of helplessness and crisis. If man has primordial

knowledge of God, then why does he question or deny His existence? The reason could be he wants to know whether there is a rational basis to his inner belief, perhaps searching for some form of scientific proof in favor of his inner feelings. But science (classical or modern) as a branch of knowledge has its scope confined only to the observable physical aspect of the world. It has kept itself aloof from higher spiritual matters. No scientist has ever claimed that science attempts to find out the absolute truth, and thus we need to accept that science gives us only a partial knowledge of reality. Nevertheless, a number of scientists have reverted to Islam after finding out what they have been researching for was already written in the Qur'an fourteen centuries ago.

This booklet introduces the Islamic perspective on atheism. It is prepared for those who are open-minded and genuinely seeking the truth. It provides a viewpoint and reasons for believing in God and the life hereafter. It basically explains how God provides signs of His existence for us to know Him—both through His creations and through His



revelations. It also clarifies common questions that are raised by non-believers, especially atheists. It is important to note that due to the significant differences between Islam and Judeo-Christian teachings, many criticisms of Christianity and Judaism raised by atheists and agnostics simply do not apply to Islam, and therefore, it will not be correct to superimpose those objections on it.

What is the argument for denying the existence of God?

Why would some people think there is no God? Usually to prove a negative is very difficult.
If I want to prove that there is someone here, then I may look for clues pertaining to the presence of that individual.



Maybe his coat is hanging somewhere; perhaps his favorite umbrella is leaning in a corner, and maybe his car is parked outside. These might be clues that the person is here. Not absolute proof, but at least some clues that will give us some reason to look around for the possibility that he is somewhere around the premises. This is a positive type of evidence. But if you want to prove that somebody is not here, how do you prove that? That is in itself difficult. If you want to prove that somebody is not here, you have to check every nook and cranny. You must check every room to make sure he is not there. You have to check every store and the washrooms to make sure that he is not in there somewhere. And then you can proclaim, I've checked everywhere



and I couldn't find him.

So, how do you prove that God does not exist? Where do you check? Where do you look? Do you look on earth? Do you look on mars? Do you look beyond the solar system? Do you look throughout the Milky Way galaxy? Do you go to our next neighboring galaxy? Where do you look? And how many galaxies are you going to search before you can proclaim that God does not exist anywhere? It turns out, not only is it difficult to prove that God does not exist, but if somebody says that God does not exist, he doesn't really know what he is talking about because he cannot really prove that. It would have been more respectable and intellectually honest if someone were to say, 'I did not find any evidence for the existence of God in the vicinity of my own experience. So far I haven't seen Him to exist, I haven't found Him, but perhaps He does exist.' One has to have that openness, and if one has that openness, he or she would be qualified as an "agnostic," a person who says 'I do not really know whether God exists or not, but I am open for some ideas.'

I exist, and therefore, God exists

Interesting enough, what everyone (including atheists and agnostics) is undoubtedly convinced of, is their own existence.



If God's existence appears to be a mystery simply because God is unseen (not observable), so is the existence of every human being. For man is not what he physically appears to be, but consists of what he calls 'I', and the 'I' is not observable. 'I' is the spiritual soul of a person; it is really that person him or herself: his or her particular personality, what makes a person an individual being with a distinct identity and consciousness. It is an overlap of two concepts: 'soul' and 'self.' That is why when the philosopher Rene Descartes [1596–1650] wanted to prove his own existence, he did not say, "I consist of a body that is observable, and therefore I exist." Instead, he had said, "I think, therefore I exist." Man undoubtedly has an observable existence; we all know that man exists, but his existence is at the level of cognizance 'I' or at the level of spiritual comprehension, and not at the level of physical observation. The same is true of God. It is, as if God is a 'Great I'. God, at the level of His Being, is not observable; however, God at the level of His creation is. We shall have to believe in God on the basis of the same logical principle that Rene Descartes employed to know himself, and on which all men and women undoubtedly believe in their own existence. I can comprehend God and therefore I can say God exists. If we deny God, we shall have to deny our own selves. Anyone who believes in his own existence is logically compelled to say, "I exist, and therefore, God exists." In other words, I can comprehend the existence of God through His creation.

How could I possibly know God without seeing Him?

God calls on us to acknowledge Him through His signs and has made it our responsibility to ponder and reflect on His creations in order to recognize Him. Some people are receptive to these signs and see God's work all around them, while others dismiss everything as random and meaningless.



God has placed in every person a natural inclination to believe in Him and to surrender or submit to His Will. But this innate predisposition can either be nurtured or suppressed. Importantly, God guides people who are sincere and willing to receive His guidance. In other words, those who keep searching for Him will be guided, and those who do not want to believe in Him will not be guided. God says, *"God guides to Himself whoever turns to Him."* [Qur'an 13:27]. To believe in God requires objectivity and unbiased attitude to the possibility of God's existence, which can be quite confronting and humbling for some people. But without this genuine openness and willingness, no amount of information or persuasion can make someone believe or reach to the truth. In fact, God warns us that those who approach His signs from a position of pride and arrogance will only find justification for their disbelief.

REASONS TO BELIEVE IN GOD

We are presenting here seven rational reasons for believing in God – the Creator and Sustainer of the universe – based on science, logic, and the Qur'an.

Beginning of the Universe



The first evidence that points to the existence of a Creator relates to understanding the origin of the universe. Imagine walking in a desert and finding a smartphone. We know a smartphone is made up of glass, plastic, and metal. Glass comes from sand, plastic from hydrocarbons, and metal is extracted from the ground; all these components are found in the desert. Would you believe that the smart phone manufactured itself? That the sun shone, the wind blew, lightning struck, the oil bubbled to the surface and mixed with the sand and metal, over millions of years the smart phone came together by random natural coincidences? Nobody in his right mind would believe that.

According to modern science, the universe is finite and has a beginning. Where did the universe ultimately come from? Human experience and simple logic tells us that something that has a beginning does not simply come from nothing, nor can something create itself. We can reason that a higher "Being" created the universe. This higher "Being" must be powerful and intelligent as it brought the whole universe into existence and created the "laws of nature" that govern it. We can also reason that this higher "Being"

must be time-less, space-less, and matter-less, because time, space, and matter began only at creation of the universe. All of these attributes make up the basic concept of God, the Creator of the universe. Some may ask, "Who then created God?" God, the Creator, is different to His creation. Unlike the universe and the rest of creation, God is absolute and eternal, which means He has always existed and He has no beginning or end. Therefore, the question of "Who created God?" is not only illogical, it's absurd.

How does the Universe exist?



We all agree that the universe exists. Most people would not deny that. Almost everyone will say that the universe exists. I exist and you exist and we all believe in a world that exists. The question is, "How does the universe exist?" The philosopher Keith Ward in his book,

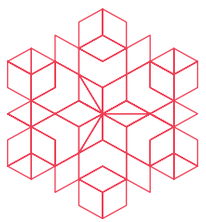


"God, Chance, and Necessity," says there are really only three possibilities for how the universe could exist. One is the possibility that comes naturally to the believer, to think that God created the universe. If not that, then what? The two other possibilities are either the universe came into existence by chance (random process) or it came into existence by necessity (its own necessity).

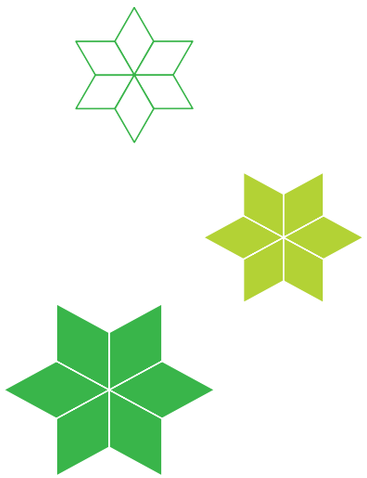
Does the universe exist by necessity? Is there anything that dictates the universe must exist? There is no such thing or any evidence to suggest that the universe must necessarily exist, nor any reason to think that way. When believers speak about God, they speak about God who must exist. Believers cannot imagine that God does not exist. But there are no believers who say the universe must exist. No one can claim that the universe, by virtue of itself, must exist – as if the universe itself is God. Then, I think we can comfortably conclude that there is no reason for thinking the universe must necessarily exist. That leads us to the other possibility that perhaps the universe came into being by some random process or by some chance.

Keith Ward points out that what we are calling a random process or chance actually is part of a larger scheme that we do not fully understand. Somebody says, "I bumped into this person by chance at the supermarket." Well, it's not really by chance because there might be a larger cosmic plan that you are not quite aware of. Things happen that you are not fully aware or in control of. You happen to be there, and you met this person, but because you didn't expect it, you said, "I bumped into this person by chance at the supermarket." Somebody says, "by chance I won the lottery," but of course, there are the signs of numbers behind it – the probability theory. There is a reason why you won the lottery. You bought a ticket to begin with. Without buying the ticket, you wouldn't have won the lottery. And you had a number which actually comes up, which appears to be random, but of course, it's part of a larger program and process through which some number will come up, and it so turns out that this time it is your number. Some other time it will be somebody else's number and so on. What appears to be random actually is part of a larger process, which is not so random after all.

In that case, if you say that the universe popped into existence by some random process, it means that there is some process. There is some



process that operates in such a way that once in a while, it will produce a sort of universe like the one we have now. But what this means is that your question has shifted. If you were asking, "How does the universe exist?" We shall now ask, "How did that random process come into existence to give rise to something like our universe?" We are still back to the same question, "How does something like our universe come into being?" Nobody can claim that it simply comes into existence without requiring an explanation. Rather we are left now with the only possibility that God created the universe.



We now have very strong evidence for thinking that God exists. We know that the universe exists. It must have a cause for its existence and the best explanation for its existence is that God exists and He is the one who created it. That's our first point. The second point, think about the appearance of design everywhere you look. The chair you sit on was designed to support the weight of a person's body, otherwise you would fall to the floor. Thus, the chair you are sitting on was designed for a purpose. The table you are sitting at was designed for a purpose. Everything around you, whether a little piece of ribbon or cloth or napkin or spoon or fork or a teacup or a plate or a house or a car, or a ship or an airplane or a computer or a telephone—everything has been designed for a particular purpose. Now, when you see these objects, you naturally attribute them to a certain designer. That is our common everyday experience. What stops us from thinking that the universe itself with all of its appearance of design actually has a designer? Think about the lunar eclipse. How does that occur? Think about the solar eclipse. How does that occur? Think about



rain. How does it occur? Think about snow. How does it occur? It appears that these things are actually designed for what they are or they do. In the example of solar eclipse, the sun is four hundred times further away from us than the moon, and also four hundred times bigger than the moon. And this precise ratio makes it such that the moon passes between the sun and the earth and completely blocks the disc of the sun, but only the disc of the sun, allowing for the light from the sun to permeate and to surround that dark side of the moon that's blocking the disc of the sun. From where we are looking, we get a complete solar eclipse and we only see the flares around it. A beautiful sight, but it comes as a result of that precise mathematics. Things like this give us the real sense that the universe itself is designed for what it is and what it does, and the designer is whom we refer as God – the Creator.

Perfection of the Universe

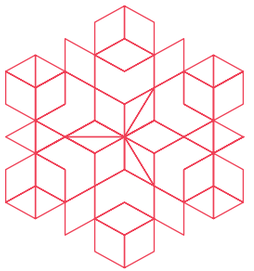


The third evidence of existence of God, the Creator, is the order and perfect balance of our complex universe. Could such a large complex universe have formed by coincidence, without some kind of supervision?

Many features in the universe clearly indicate being specially designed to support life, such as the earth's distance from the sun, the thickness of the earth's crust, the speed which the earth revolves, the percentage of oxygen in the atmosphere, and even the degree of earth's tilt on its axis. If these measurements were slightly different to what they are, life could not exist. In the same way that a watch has an intelligent maker to keep accurate time, must not the earth too have an intelligent maker to keep accurate time around the sun? Could this occur by itself? When we see the order, the precise laws and systems within ourselves and throughout the universe, is it not rational to think they have to have an organizer? This 'organizer' is again best explained by the existence of God – the one who brought about this order.

If we observe the earth itself, the distance from the moon and sun, scientists tell us if we were a little bit closer or a little bit farther, there would be no life on the planet earth. If the days were a little bit longer, life would cease to exist on earth. If the axis of the earth were a fraction of a degree off, there would be no life on earth. If the atmosphere changed a little bit, solar flares would swallow us up, we would burn to a crisp, there would be no life on earth. Jupiter is in a perfect place with perfect mass acting as a solar cosmic vacuum cleaner that pulls all asteroids that come to the earth and saves us.

It should be noted that Islam encourages scientific research and reflection. The role of science helps to describe the many observed patterns that God places in His creation. Thus, science helps us to appreciate the extent of His power and wisdom. Advances in scientific discoveries—just like any mechanism or process we find in the natural world such as the water cycle or gravity—provides signs of an organizer and designer, not argument against God. If we understand how a smartphone works, it doesn't negate its designer. In the same way, if we understand how the solar system works, it does not negate the fact that it has been designed nor does it negate its designer.



Moral Anchor

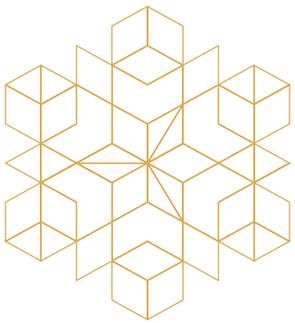


If God did not exist, there would have been no objective moral values system simply because of absence of higher moral authority. Right and wrong would be determined by a dominant group that would be totally subjective and potentially violent too. If my society feels that our morals and values perpetuate our group, why should we consider your morals and values? Quoting Richard Dawkins, who leads modern atheism propaganda, "There is no good nor evil. We are machines to propagate DNA." Thus, what atheism teaches, even evil people could not be immoral because there is no real right or wrong; everything is socially constructed.

Atheists claim to rely on science to explain about the universe and life, but science can neither prove morality nor has any morality. For example,

one can't prove that murder is wrong through the scientific method. All other metaphysical events such as love, hate, emotions, consciousness, memory, thought, imagination cannot be proved by science. Neither can science give us morality in general. Science is fundamentally "non-moral" and there is nothing in science that compels anyone to be moral. You can't extract charity and justice and selflessness and compassion from a double helix or from a chromosome. Those things are extracted from God's scriptures and prophetic teachings.

From atheists' perspective, we're all just animals, slightly more evolved primates, and second cousin to the chimp. Animals don't have moral duties, so why should we? Most



atheists, however, would actually concede that we do have moral duties, but they cannot explain why. If you're sitting on a beach and there's a kid drowning, you feel it's your moral obligation to try to save that kid, but why? Why put yourself in harm's way? Did we evolve to put ourselves in harm's way? Where does this altruism come from? Show me the gene. The theists argue that good and evil have no reference if God doesn't exist, unless we redefine "good" as "something that makes your life more pleasurable," but of course that redefinition of "good" could be dangerous! Your pleasure might be somebody's torture. What if you take pleasure from killing children or from burying them alive in your backyard? From the atheistic perspective, that's not immoral, but not socially acceptable. What if it was also socially acceptable? What if a society comes together to accept that? There are plenty of historical examples where one section of a society came to agree on actions that harmed another section of a society. Think about slavery or the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) against the Blacks in North America or the apartheid system against the Blacks



in South Africa. On what grounds would atheists condemn those crimes against humanity or child exploitation or rapes if the society would find it acceptable and conducive to their perpetuation? On what grounds can they say this is morally wrong?

From a theistic perspective, it is God's revelation that gives us moral imperatives. Regardless, the moral values that are known to us—whether you believe they come from revelation, from society, or infused upon our very souls—we just know them to give us objective moral values. Don't murder. Don't steal. Don't commit adultery. Respect your parents. Don't oppress. Speak the truth.



Richard Dawkins says, "Every single human interaction occurs because humans want to prolong their species or they want reciprocal advantage – I scratch your back you're going to scratch mine, because at the end of the day we are all apes." How can then atheists explain "good" acts? For example, why would I offer my seat to an old woman on the train? Do I want to prolong my species? Do I want her to tip me or something? Give me a dollar. Do I want something from her, or take advantage of her? No. Why would I give blood to people and no one is around to see it, just anonymously I donate blood? Why would I do that? Is this how I evolve? Am I trying to perpetuate my species? Am I trying to get some sort of mutual advantage from somebody? That's why Mother Theresa is an atheistic moral enigma - hugging lepers, a model of sacrifice, charity and altruism. Just like the issue of "evil" in understanding theism bewilders atheists, the issue of "good" in atheism also bewilders theists.

Belief Conservation

5

Islam teaches that the belief in God as both the Creator and the one and only Being who deserves to be worshipped has been ingrained in human nature as primordial knowledge. Every child is born with the ability to recognize the one God and tendency to submit to His Will. This view is in resonance to some of the modern philosophy and anthropology. For example, what you make of the idea that the belief in God is a basic part of the human psyche. It is something that is already basic to the believer. It's not something you have to acquire over time; you just simply know it. It's intrinsic to you. In that case, you don't have to really explain why you believe that God exists; you just know Him, that's it.

If I know Joseph, and I consider him as a friend, the fact that somebody else doesn't know him doesn't mean that my friend Joseph does not exist. In fact, I don't have to prove to anyone that my friend Joseph exists. I just know him and he exists, and for me that's the end of the story. For the believer, God exists. Period. A Muslim reads God's Qur'an, visits the mosque to make prayers to Him, fasts in the month of Ramadan, pays charity, and makes pilgrimage to Makkah to obey His command. In all of these experiences, he or she has the real sense that God is present in his or her life. He is the Reality to whom believers are speaking to and Who is watching over them. One doesn't need any further reason than this.

A famous Philosopher Tom Morris in his book "Philosophy for Dummies," actually explains the principle in philosophy known as "Belief Conservation," which means that we generally believe many things for which we do not require a proof, and it is expedient to keep our beliefs. Think about many things that you believe for which you do not require a proof. I believe that the man I know to be my father is my father and the woman I know to be my mother is my mother. I don't have any actual tangible proof for this, except my lifelong experience that they are my parents. I have no doubt about it, and I have never been required to prove it. But this is something I have accepted without absolute proof. We have accepted many other things in our lives, likewise without absolute proof. We accept things based on science, based on indications, or based on some circumstantial evidence. In fact, many of our beliefs are cases decided based on circumstantial evidences. When we are convinced of something, we believe in it, and we should not give up that belief according to this principle; we should conserve it, unless we are given positive evidence against it or unless someone proves the contrary to you. It's not that you have to prove your belief is right. It's the other person who has to prove to you that your belief is wrong. I have a friend, I know him, I believe in my friend, I don't have to prove to you that my friend exists, but if you think that my friend does not exist, okay, tell me why you think my friend does not exist. So the burden to disprove that God exists is on the atheists. In other words, if believers think God exists and if atheists think God doesn't exist; it is atheists that have to prove God's non-existence – which they could not do it so far.



Muslims believe that God exists and we don't have to prove to somebody else that God exists, but if somebody is saying to us, "No," that's just an imagination or a delusion on your part; God does not exist. Then we can say 'okay, but can you please tell us why you feel that way?' We are very much interested to know. We want to know why do you feel that way, because we know that God does exist, and if you are saying he doesn't exist, we want to know what is on your mind? Tell us, why do you think that God does not exist? And so, we have seen already, that atheists do not really have a good argument and a positive reason for thinking that God does not exist despite all their empty rhetoric, publications and propaganda.

Revelation from God

6

The sixth evidence of God's existence is in the actual revelation that God has sent to mankind for guidance, but also as a sign of His existence. One of the main purposes of the book of Islam, the Qur'an, is to invite people to reflect and appreciate God's creation as a way of believing in Him. Throughout the Qur'an, God calls our attention to His marvelous designs and complexities in the universe and within ourselves, which are sufficient to indicate that we are a product of design, purpose and intelligence. For example God says, *"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason"* [Qur'an 2:164]. There are many verses like this one in the Qur'an to invite readers to think, to ponder, to contemplate, to reflect, and to research on the signs of God.

One may ask, "How do you know that the Qur'an is the word of God?" Our answer would be, there are clear signs that the Qur'an itself is the word of God. When we refer to the Qur'an:

- It is free from errors or contradictions.
- It has been preserved, word-for-word, since it was revealed in its original Arabic language, unlike other scriptures. God says in the Qur'an, *"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message and We will assuredly guard it (from any corruption)."* [Qur'an]
- It has a simple, pure, and universal message, which appeals to man's intellect and inherent beliefs about the Almighty God.
- It is made easy to be memorized; in fact, millions of people across the globe who don't necessarily speak Arabic, but could read the language, have memorized it cover-to-cover.
- It has a deep and moving effect on people.
- It is over 1400 years old with many scientific facts that were unknown to people of that time and have only been discovered recently by scientists. Examples include: water being the origin of all living things [Qur'an 21:30]; the expanding universe [Qur'an 51:47]; the individual orbits of the sun and moon [Qur'an 21:33] and many more.
- It contains many historical facts that were unknown to the people of that time as well as numerous predictions, which have proven to be correct.
- It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who could neither read nor write, yet contains a unique style of language that is universally acceptable as the pinnacle of Arabic eloquence and linguistic beauty.
- It has many more signs.



The most rational explanation for the many unique and miraculous aspects of the Qur'an is that it can only be from God. No human being has capacity to produce such work. In fact, God put a challenge; see Qur'an 2:23-24; 17:88.

Let the Qur'an Speak

7

It would be interesting to note that the Qur'an draws upon the display of God's signs in His creations for its argument in support of His existence – the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The Qur'anic plea in the very fact that the working of the universe should regulate itself in such a way that everything contributes to life and growth and provides for every situation and every condition, should instinctively raise the conviction in man that there exist a being who provides life to the entire universe and looks after it and who for that purpose possess attributes, without which such a complete and flawless machinery of existence would never have taken its rise.

The Qur'an asks if the instinct of man can ever compel him to believe that all this machinery of life has come into existence by itself, and that no aim or purpose underlies it. Is it possible that this machinery of existence such as it is, has no designer for it whatsoever? Does this entire order of life owe its existence to just a blind and deaf "nature," a lifeless matter, or an insensitive electron, and not to a being possessing a will of its own and a direct intellect? If so, the situation would have been as follows: the function of providence is at work everywhere, but without an agent behind it; there is design in everything, but without a designer; mercy is dispensed in everything, but without a merciful dispenser; in short, everything is there, but without there being anything. The nature of man can hardly agree to believe that there can ever be an action without an actor, orderliness without a director, a plan without planner, a building without a builder, a design without a designer, everything without the existence of anything. The very instinct of man will cry out that such cannot be the case.

The Qur'an points out that it is against the nature of man that he should ponder over the working of the universe and then deny the existence of God. Man can deny everything under the stress of indifference or arrogance, but he cannot deny his own nature. He can go against everything, but he cannot go against himself. When he looks around and finds that the power of God is at work everywhere, his very nature will proclaim that what he beholds cannot exist without God. The Qur'an addresses human nature itself and invites answer from its very depth.

Some of the verses that appeal to man's natural instincts and aptitudes: *"...Who provides for you from the sky and earth? Who controls hearing and sight? Who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from living? And who governs everything?"* [Qur'an 10:31] *"That is God, your Lord, the Truth. Apart from the Truth, what is there except error? So how is it that you are dissuaded?"* [Qur'an 10:32] *"In this way, your Lord's word has been proved to those who defy [the Truth] – that they do not believe."* [Qur'an 10:33]



"Who created the heavens and earth? Who sends down water from the sky for you – with which We cause gardens of delight to grow: you have no power over the trees that grow in them. Is it another god beside God? No! But there are people who take others to be equal with God. Who is it that made earth a stable place to live? Who made rivers flow through it? Who set immovable mountains on it and created barrier between the fresh and salt water? Is it another god beside God? No! But most of them do not know. Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is

it another god beside God? Little notice you take! Who is it that guides you through the darkness on land and sea? Who sends the winds as heralds of good news before His mercy? Is it another god beside God? God is far above the partners they put beside Him! Who is it that originates creation and reproduces it? Who is it that gives you provision from the heaven and earth? Is it another god beside God? Say, 'Show me your evidence then, if what you say is true.' Say, 'No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen except God.' They do not know when they will be raised from the dead: their knowledge cannot comprehend the hereafter; they are in doubt about it; they are blind to it." [Qur'an 27:60-66]

"Let man consider the food he eats! We pour down abundant water and cause the soil to split open. We make grains grow, and vines, fresh vegetation, olive trees, date palms, luscious gardens, fruits, and fodder: all for you and your livestock to enjoy." [Qur'an 80:24-32]

Man may shut his eyes to everything in the world to see signs of God, but he cannot shut them to the means of his own sustenance. The Qur'an reminds him to look at the food he places before himself. What is it? – a grain of wheat. Let him place that grain into the hollow of his hand, and let him think over what stages it had to pass through before it could emerge in its present form. Was it possible for this insignificant grain to have come into existence had not the entire framework of life participated actively in its growth, and that in a particular manner? And when such system of organized cooperation is at work, could it be said that it has no organizer to direct its operation? *"It is God who sends water down from the sky and with it revives the earth when it is dead. There truly is a sign in this for people who listen. In livestock, too, you have a lesson - We give you a drink from the contents of their bellies, between waste matter and blood, pure milk, sweet to the drinker. From the fruits of date palms and grapes you take sweet juice and wholesome provisions. There truly is a sign in this for people who use their reason. And your Lord inspired the bee, saying, 'Build yourselves houses in the mountains and trees and follow the ways made easy for you by your Lord.' From their bellies comes a drink of different colors in which there is healing for people. There truly is a sign in this for those who think."* [Qur'an 16:65-69]

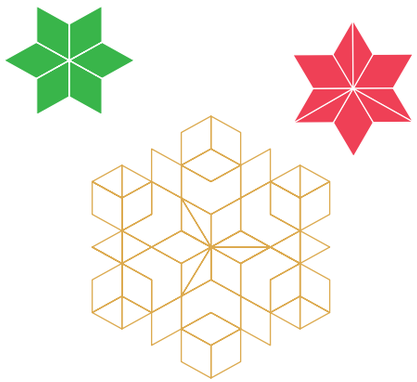




The Qur'an has cited the world of creation as a proof of the existence of God as the Creator. It has also referred to the order of life and growth in the universe not only to prove the existence of a directing mind, but also to establish that even as this order is flawless and complete, so is the Mind that regulates it. One can easily notice that everything in this world needs sustenance and is provided with it. Surely, there must be someone who could provide it, but who could that be? Certainly not the one who himself is in need of sustenance. *"It was We who created you: will you not believe? Consider [the semen] you eject – do you create it yourself or are We the Creator? We ordained death to be among you. Nothing could stop Us if We intended to change you and recreate you in a way unknown to you. You have learned how you were first created: will you not reflect? Consider the seeds you sow in the ground – is it you who make them grow or We? If We wished, We could turn your harvest into chaff and leave you to wail, 'We are burdened with debt, we are bereft.' Consider the water you drink – was it you who brought it down from rain-cloud or We? If We wanted, we could make it bitter: will you not be thankful? Consider the fire you kindle – is it you who make the wood for it to grow or We? We made it a reminder, and useful to those who kindle it, so [Prophet] glorify the name of your Lord, the Supreme."* [Qur'an 56:57-75]

REASONS TO BELIEVE IN THE LIFE HEREAFTER

Life hereafter or the life after what is called "death" is the destination towards which the life on earth has to move to. It is unthinkable that man should be created just to live for a few moments on this earth and then get annihilated completely.





A creation like the human beings, whom God has given them special favors over and above a great part of His creations (Qur'an 17:70) and for whose development so much has been carefully provided, is certainly not meant to be a thing with no better purpose to serve than to strut on earth for a few moments and then disappear forever. God, the Creator of the universe, who has created everything for a specific purpose, will not throw away this creation (human being), as if a piece of no value at all or little consequence. *"Did you think We had created you in vain, and that you would not be brought back to Us?" [23:115] "Have they not thought about their own selves? God did not create the heavens and earth and everything between them without a serious purpose and an appointment time, yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord."* [Qur'an 30:8]



The Qur'an makes other references, *"Does man think he will be left alone? Was he not just a drop of split-out sperm, which became a clinging form, which God shaped in due proportion, fashioning from it the two sexes, male and female? Does He who can do this not have the power to bring the dead back to life?"* [Qur'an 75:36-40] *"You will progress from stage to stage. So why do not they believe?"* [Qur'an 84:19-20] In the evolution of a man in this life, God has said in his Qur'an that He created man from an essence of clay, then He placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place, then We made that drop into a clinging form, and He made that form into a lump of flesh, and He made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later He made him into other forms –glory be to God, the best of creators! Then you will die and then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be raised up again. (Qur'an 23:11-17) Why then can't a man believe that God can raise him up again after death?

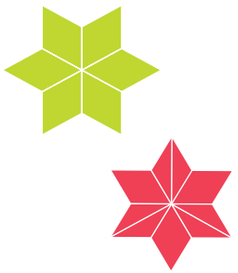
ATHEISTS' QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

Why did God create us?



Everyone would acknowledge that our body parts, such as our eyes, ears, brains, and hearts, have a purpose.

Wouldn't then make sense that an individual, as a whole, also has a purpose? God, the all Wise, did not create us to simply wander aimlessly or to only fulfill our basic instincts and desires. Rather, God created mankind to worship Him and He describes this life as a test. Every person is being tested as to who will choose to acknowledge God and follow His guidance. God says, *"Indeed, We (God) created man … in order to test him; and We gave him hearing and vision. Indeed, We (God) showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful."* [Qur'an 76:2-3] For many, the underlying issue of rejecting God is not really about believing in God, but about the implications of believing in Him. It would mean being held into account and judged for one's action, which may be inconvenient for the lives they want to lead. Therefore, the test in this life involves following and humbling oneself before God rather than in preference to our own desires, pride and ego.



Why would God create human beings with free choice?



This is a typical atheists' question. God tells us in the Qur'an that this worldly life is a test ground for human beings.

In the story of the creation of Adam in the Qur'an, God talks to the angels about His intention to create a human being as His vicegerent on earth and endowed him with intellect and with the ability of free choice, unlike to other creations. Furthermore, God showed us the straight path through His revelations and His messengers that if we follow, it will lead us to the Paradise and if we neglect, it will lead us to the Hellfire. *"[Prophet] When your Lord told angels, I am putting a successor on earth,' they said, 'How can you put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?'…"* [Qur'an 2:30] For the angels, it didn't make sense to them. They are continually worshiping God, singing His praises, celebrating His glory, never deviating from His commandments, and now they learn about a creature with a choice to obey or disobey God that will be placed on earth to be His representative! They reasoned that such creatures will have the ability to cause corruption on earth and to shed blood.

Why would God create such beings that would have this capacity to commit wrong and do evil? God does not spell out the answer there, but He just assures them that He knows what He is doing. He said, *"I know things you do not know."* [Qur'an 2:30] He taught Adam all the names of things, and then He challenges the angels to name the objects, and they couldn't. They said, *"We have knowledge only of what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing and All-Wise."* [Qur'an 2:32] God has His reasons for why He has created human beings. He has given human beings that special knowledge, that consciousness, that

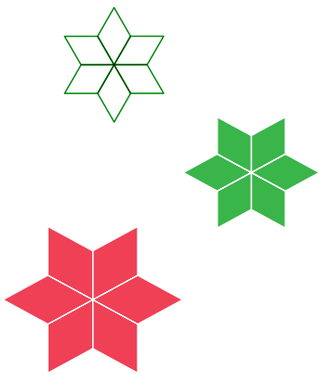
ability to differentiate between right and wrong. So that He does not have to strip jacket all human beings to generate the good results that He wants. He can create us and give us freedom within certain limits—the freedom to choose to do that which is right. He has given us the intelligence to recognize what is right, and to shun what is wrong. But that means, He has to put up with the real possibility that some people will misuse that intelligence, and that ability, and that free choice and they will do wrong things instead. The fact is that a certain amount of wrong happens in the universe, not because God wants it or desires it, but because that is desirable in itself as part of a grand scheme, which entails the freedom of choice for human beings. One can argue that the amount of wrong that happen in the universe is a proof of the freedom of choice that human beings enjoy in this worldly life.



Automatic Obedience vs. Deliberate Obedience

What is the point of human beings to have that freedom of choice? Angels do not have free choice and therefore they are engrossed in worshipping God all the time without failing or deviating. God has commended His angels in the Qur'an as noble and righteous and that they only obey what they are commanded to do. On the other hand, human beings have free choice and therefore they vary in ranks according to their faith and action. Human beings can achieve high ranking to that of angels or better, but also can achieve low ranking to that of animals. What is the difference between automatic obedience and deliberate obedience? We know what is automatic obedience. Your mobile phone works precisely the way you want it to. If it's ringing, it's because you left it on. That's automatic obedience. It does what you program it to do. We all recognize that the machines that serve us, serve us precisely with the way they are programmed to serve us. They are just simply doing what they have been programmed to do; that's automatic obedience. What about deliberate obedience? What if you have a child who obeys you even in your absence? What if you have a young kid who sees the cookies but does not take the cookies even when you're absent because you told her not to touch the cookies? That child becomes so special to you, because he or she had the opportunity and the ability to disobey you, but he or she chose not to. That chosen obedience or deliberate obedience becomes special. And that is what God desires from human beings.

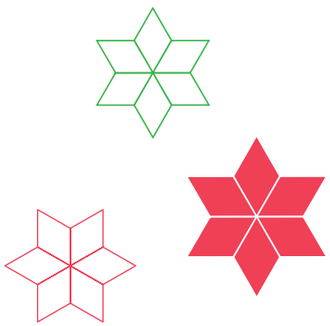
God gives us the ability to do wrong, and He Himself can boast to the angels that His servants obey and serve Him. He doesn't expect that result from everyone, but He wants the chosen few, those who will in turn choose to serve Him. In order to create that, He has to put up with the fact that some people will be evil and they will bring suffering in the world. Not because God desires it, and not because He does not have the ability to remove it, but because this serves some greater purpose—to test human beings. The evil that human beings and other creatures of God perpetrate is only possible by the very fact that God gave the freedom of choice, which itself is a necessary ingredient to promote the greater good of people choosing to love God, and to serve him. Thus, the main atheist's argument that says that God does not exist because of the fact that there is evil and suffering in the world is actually flawed and fails to provide good reason for believing that God does not exist.



Why doesn't God just reveal Himself?



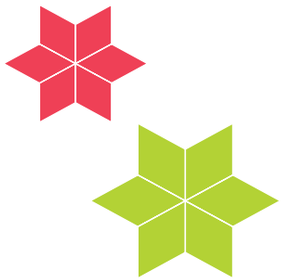
It is in God's wisdom that He has chosen to make Himself unseen to us, but He made Himself known to us through His signs. This is part of the test of this life. He has made it our responsibility to use the abilities He has given us to acknowledge Him.



This means that only those who are sincere, humble and reflect deeply will recognize and believe in Him. The more you delve into the question, "Why doesn't God reveal Himself?" you begin to realize "Wow, what a foolish question, to demand to see God." In fact, you have seen God enough by looking at his creations. You might say, "Oh, that's a leap of faith." No, it's not because in a scientific world, you have all kinds of conjectural arguments too.

Stephen Hawking wrote "A Brief History of Time," and is a proponent of the idea of "Black Holes;" when he studied the density of the universe, he noticed that the universe is far denser than what was visible. He could not reconcile mathematically that huge discrepancy in the numbers with regards to the density of the universe compared to what was visibly measurable. He knew there was some kind of dark matter out there, that could not be visibly seen, and that light could not penetrate it, which he called the "Black Hole." If Hawking has reached this conclusion without seeing this dark matter, and yet it is acceptable in science, that means we derive scientific understanding, without having to tangibly see something, but we see the effect of that thing that is hidden through that which is seen. In fact, in the world of science we are deriving so many things without having to tangibly see them. For example, Michio Kaku, a Japanese Physicist (and there are many others out there) who studied String Theories and Super String Theories, talks about two-digit dimensions, such as the 13th dimension, that no science in the world today can experiment, but it can be derived indirectly, and we can try to see the effects, just like we can't see electrons around a proton, but we know they are there. Why then are we rejecting belief in a Deity that we cannot see or measure, for we can derive Him by observing His creations?

A good example in the world of science and mathematics is that of a function referred to as "infinity." Not only the whole world of science and mathematics is driven by "infinity;" without "infinity" nothing makes sense. As important as this entity is, it's not tangible, we can't touch it, we can't measure it. So what is infinity? Infinity is the idea of something that has no end. In our world we don't have anything like it. So we imagine traveling on and on, trying hard to get to the destination, but never get there. We can talk about it, we can apply things towards it, but we can never feel it—something always approaching infinity, but never becomes infinite. The minute it becomes infinite, you can't talk about it. For those who insist, "Give me this tangible God. If you don't have a tangible God, you're talking nonsense in your religion," our response would be, "Give me this tangible infinity because if you're not, you're talking nonsense in your science."



If God is just, why does He choose destiny for us? And if he doesn't, then how can He be All-Knowing?

Islam teaches that God is All-Knowing and there no doubt in that. God's knowledge is complete. Our knowledge is incomplete and subject to time. Time is an element that controls the quantity and quality of our knowledge.

God is not bound in time. He created time, so His knowledge is not bound in time. For me to say, "How does God know the future?" it is actually a question outside the parameters of God because God has no future. We make mistake to put God in the spectrum of time. God is beyond time. You and I are subjected and bounded by time, but God isn't. How does He know the future? God is instant and His knowledge is instantaneous. Even the word "instantaneous" is time bound because "Where", "how", and "when" are "time" bound, and we as a human race cannot escape them. Hence God's knowledge is beyond instantaneous! The time and space continuum that you and I experience are built on "time", "matter", and "space;" we can't escape it. Our language is built around it, and our concepts and our understanding are also built around it. Hence sometimes we tend to put God into the same kind of questions.

God's knowledge is infinite and absolute, and therefore that is a condition. The question now is, "Does God know where we will end up in the hereafter, even before we exist?



The answer is "Yes, at all times" since God is All-Knowing. We may also ask, "Since God knows where I'm going to be in the hereafter, why did He create me on this earth?" Knowing something does not imply interjecting in it. I can know that it is going to rain tonight, because I heard the weather report. The meteorologist looked at the physical world of sciences, and he knows that when there is certain amount of pressure in the air, when there is a certain amount of clouds in the air, such and such atmospheric parameters, yes, I can conclude that there is a high probability of rain falling in this place. But that does not mean the meteorologist brought the rain. Knowledge does not imply interjection of it. God's knowledge is complete, but does not imply interjection of it.

Muslims believe in the absolute good God. Islam doesn't teach divine duality of a "Good God" and a "Bad God" like in Christianity and other religions. Does evil exist? Yes, it does. Do people do wrong things? Of course they do. An atheist would say, "Then, who's doing it? If God is doing everything, then how can He do anything evil?" Islam teaches whatever evil being performed is not God's, because God would never intend to do evil. When a person chooses to do any action, good or bad, God creates the action based on the person's choice. God is the one who creates for us the power to carry out our actions based on our own choice as we exercise our own free will. Thus, God's knowledge does not imply He interjected in it, but He knows our choices, He knows the essence of our choices, He creates for us the power to carry out our actions based on our choices, and that does not negate our liability in our choices.

Why is there suffering in the world?



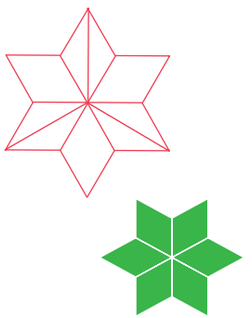
Many atheistic arguments against the existence of God actually have been formulated in response to Christianity. The modern world comes at the other end of the European renaissance, which was in part a reaction to Christian dogma and the grip of the Catholic Church.

Many of the people who trumpet the call to atheism are in fact former Christians who are looking at what they have been taught regarding religion, and they are responding to that with their atheistic arguments.

Christianity prides itself in speaking about the love of God, which is a good thing. But the atheist's argument says that, if God is All-Loving, then obviously He loves everyone and He doesn't want anyone to suffer in any way. And of course, Muslims share with Christians the belief that God is All-Powerful. Naturally, the atheists ask if God is All-Loving, and He is All-Powerful, then He has the power to remove the suffering that people experience and He is loving enough to want to remove that suffering. Muslims, Christians, and Jews will agree that God is Omniscient, He knows everything. If He knows everything, He knows the suffering exists; if He is All-Powerful, He has the power to remove the suffering. The fact that suffering is still here, to atheists it proves that God does not exist.

But one can easily notice the logical flaw in atheists' arguments. So far, they do not have a definite proof that God does not exist simply because there may be some good reasons for God to allow suffering to exist even though He knows that suffering is here and He is powerful enough to remove it. He may have good reasons for wanting to remove the suffering because He is All-Loving and kind, but at the same time, He may have some better reasons for permitting some suffering than for removing all of them and it is for those good reasons that He might allow the suffering. The atheist's argument, which on the surface appears to be a logical deduction from some accepted premises, is in fact not a logical deduction at all. The premises do not lead inevitably to the stated conclusion because there might be some reasons for God to allow suffering in the world. If atheists are not aware of such reasons, it does not mean they do not exist or God does not exist.

Are there some good reasons for God to allow suffering in the world? Yes, Muslims are aware of some such good reasons. For example, what do you make of the idea that God is testing us in this world? The fact that God is testing us in this world requires that there is going to be a variety. How wide should that variety be? That has to do with the wisdom of God. It's not for us to dictate, but that very variety means that you will have a range of experiences between good and bad. You'll have good experiences and bad ones. You'll have good times and bad times. You'll have times of prosperity and times of economic hardship. You'll have good health and bad health. You'll have joy and you'll have suffering. The two will exist in a range. How wide should be that range? That's a different question and we leave that to God. But the fact

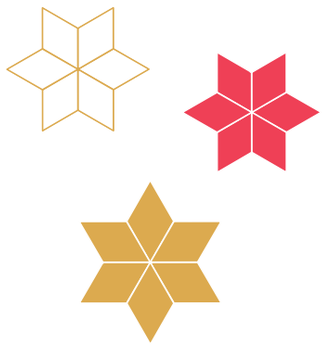




that there is going to be this range means that there is always going to be somebody jubilant and happy and another person complaining. It doesn't require a great deal of suffering for a person to complain, just the minor inconveniences of daily life will give people a reason to complain. It goes one degree colder, and somebody is complaining. It goes one degree warmer, someone else is complaining. It rains one day and somebody who was planning to have a picnic starts to complain. But a farmer, who was hoping for rain for his crops, is now happy. And in fact if the farmer gets a good crop, then we will have something to eat and we can pack some sandwiches and go out on a picnic. What might appear to be bad in a certain situation might be good in another situation. What appears to be bad for one person might be good for another person.

God has to do a great balancing act in keeping everyone as happy as possible, and creating the world in such a way that it will produce the maximum goodness possible while at the same time, retaining some of the essential features of the kind of world that God wanted to create. The fact that God is testing us in this life actually requires that range. One has to be tested and if one is always in the same situation, there is no test – because nothing changes. But if there is a change, how do you respond to that change? You had money and now you have none. Where does your faith lay? Does it lay in the wealth that is now gone and your faith has gone with it? Or is your faith is in God, which remains firm whether the wealth comes or goes. You are being tested. You are being tested in wealth as you are being tested in poverty. When you have wealth, do you celebrate the glory of God and give thanks to Him? When you have poverty, do you have patience and sober and turn to God? You are being tested when you are in good health as you are being tested in sickness. You are being tested when you are in power as you are being tested in weak position. This worldly life is a test and that requires variety.

This worldly life is not the entire existence of a human being. Muslims believe in the life hereafter. There may be some inconveniences in this life, which will be compensated for in the life hereafter. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is quoted to have said, "Amazing is the situation of the believer. If a thorn pokes the believer and he praises God, it gets stored up as a reward in a life hereafter." It doesn't matter what happens to the believer. The final outcome for the believer is good. A person may look at a large canvas and notice by zooming in that there is a tiny spot on that large canvas, but if you are too far away (zoom out) you can't see it. From the point of view of God, He looks at the entire big picture, not only this life, but the entire eternity. He sees the final good that manifests itself, that is the outcome of everything that has transpired in this life. But we see that which is close—what is near to us. That is what we are pre-occupied with. We only see the evil and suffering of this world, we don't see that in the final outcome, people who have served God or who have been wronged in this world are being rewarded generously by being admitted into the Paradise. So that the final outcome is such that, the way that God sees it, is that ultimately good prevails. And this world, with all of its evil and suffering, still leads to an ultimate good.



Why believing in God when Darwin's theory of natural selection can explain all mysteries of life?

All believers agree that Adam and Eve evolved into what we are today. We're all children of Adam and Eve, and obviously there has been some evolution, within the human race, from Adam and Eve to us now.

We don't know the precise measures that they were, some mention some spectacular height for Adam and the Qur'an mentions about Noah who lived for 950 years, but that just goes to show that even on a very traditional and classical view of Islam, there has been some evolution within the human race. They say that human beings have continued to become shorter in stature over time and live shorter life span. Of course, we can also see that there is a diversity of races. God says that from a man and woman, He has made you into many different nations and tribes, that you should know each other. If you look around at the very many nations and tribes, obviously there have been some evolution and some differentiation between peoples. Not everyone is an exact copy of our original parents Adam and Eve.

If we try to understand Darwin's theory of natural selection, we observe two elements. One, is the element of observing the changes that do occur, and two, is a natural selection presupposition that excludes God from the whole picture and accounts for creation. Yes, we can

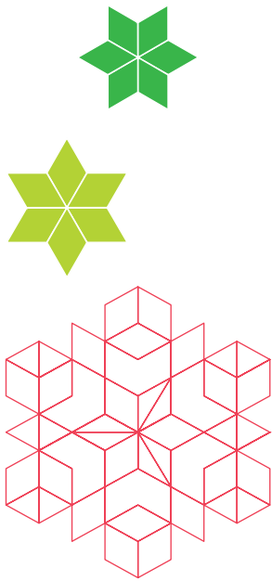


see that things do evolve and change, but that does not require us to say that things change on their own, and that the universe works by itself, as if the universe is a big wind-up clock. Somebody wound it up, left it to run, and it's just running on its own without any sort of intervention or involvement by whoever wound up this clock in the first place. The universe seems to work, at least as we believe, by the direct supervision and continuous control of God Almighty. We may use a similitude of a computer-animated movie representing a series of images generated by computer, all produced and put together. You just hit play and the images flow one after another, and you get the impression of continuous movement. What if the graphic artist is there, giving you one frame right after another, and he's doing it live, in real time? You see one screen image, and he's working on the next one. It's entirely up to him what he wants to do with the next one, he's in full control, and he can change whatever he wants.

If our moment now is, as it is, before we blink the next eye, God is in full control, and He determines what the next moment is going to be. In real time, He is continuing to evolve and change the universe, one moment after another. That is probably the best way of conceiving how God can be in full control, and He, in fact, cause to evolve and change things. Darwin looked at the common observation that things are changing, and he used that to speak of natural selection. You should understand what he means by that. He's saying that nature selects what is going to survive in the next generation, as if nature is some person who has this full control. As if nature

is God, who makes decisions, who is going to survive and who isn't? This is the way that people have come to speak of things happening without mentioning God. They say "mother nature" does something. Who is this "mother nature?" The best way of thinking of this is to say not that there is "natural selection," but rather there is "divine selection."

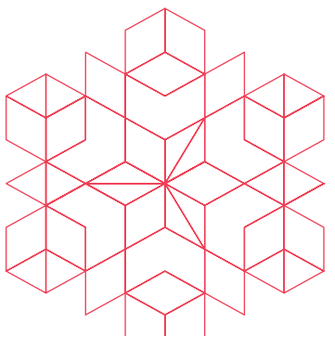
What do you make out when God speaks about the generations gone by whom He had destroyed because they did not listen to his message, and he brought another people instead? That's evolution, the bad is swept away, and a new thing is introduced with the expectation that there will be some good coming out of this. That's evolution, a change in the composition of living beings on the Earth. It's not by "natural selection," it's not the earth decided, "Oh, let me swallow up these guys here." It's by "divine selection." When we think about things evolving and changing, we should understand that everything that we say that God does in creation, happens through a process. When we say, "God has given me a baby, thank you," we know the mechanism by which babies come into the world, but we don't give credit to the mechanism, we give credit to the one behind everything. The one who controls the universe, evolves it, and changes it moment by moment, and who decides what is going to be. When we say God has created us, we are not denying the process of embryology behind which scientists could discover and explain. Bear in mind also, that when we discover the process, we shouldn't exclude or deny the processor, God.

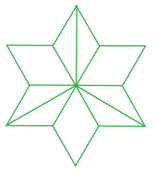


If everything is created from something, what was God created from?



The question implies that God did not exist before, but God is eternal, meaning, He has always existed. The question of "What was God created from?" is both illogical and absurd, because He is the Creator of everything.





It is impossible to describe or explain, what He is made of or from since God is the Creator of everything. No being who is sensible in his mind, can ever describe the nature of God's existence or attempt to do so. The Qur'an answers this same question, *"Say, 'He is God the One, God the eternal. He begot no one nor was He begotten. No one is comparable to Him.'"* [Qur'an 112:4]

Muslims do not conceptualize God as image, physical or mental, but they know God through His many attributes that have been mentioned in the Qur'an and Prophetic teachings. The Qur'an says, *"Call on God, or on the Lord of Mercy– whatever names you call Him, the best names belong to Him."* [Qur'an 17:110] He is Allah – the First, the Last, the Compassionate,

the Merciful, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Giver of Peace, the Protector, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Maker, the Shaper, the Forgiving, the All-Provider, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing, the All-Hearing, the Judge, the All-Aware, the Watchful, the Truth, the Loving, the Generous, the Powerful, the Hidden, the All-Exalted, the All-Strong, the Witness, the Trustee, the Resurrector, the Sublime, the Wise, and many more.

What is God made up of? Nothing makes Him, but He makes everything. The Creator is not in need of anything; rather He is independent of everything. Many a times, we have a problem with that because we try to place God physically in our realm. Remember, God has no frames, no references, no bodies, the way we think it is. That's where we have a problem. If someone asks, "How do I conceptualize Him?" The answer is to conceptualize and understand Him, through His creation. Everything around us indicates the presence of God. As the Prophet said, "When you know yourself, you will know your Lord." This is how God is described, and let's leave it that way.

Why does God need to test us?



God is not in need to test us. He does not need to create anything and does not need to test anyone.

He does not benefit from our belief and is not affected by our disbelief. Rather, it is part of His infinite wisdom that He created us and gave us the opportunity to know Him. God knows the future; the point is for us to live through the experience of our lives and make our own choices.

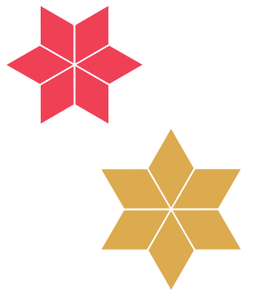


Why does God punish people?



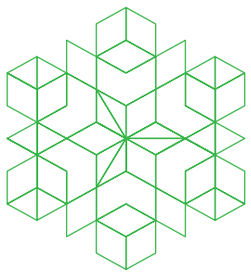
No one can disagree with the concept of punishment that is necessary for justice. We have the concept of punishment in our worldly justice system.

God has created us with the ability to choose how we want to live, and in turn, be accountable. Those who sincerely strive to obey God will earn God's mercy and enter paradise. But those who are careless about their purpose in life and deny God have ultimately made their own choice and will be held accountable. No one can blame God. God did not create people to punish them – rather, He intends to shower them with His mercy. The fact that God knows our choices does not make our actions any less voluntary and does not absolve us from responsibility. Islam is a practical religion that encourages a balance between hope in God's mercy and fear of His punishment – both of which are required to lead a positive and humble life in this short journey of earthly life. God is the Most Merciful, but also He is the Most Just. If there were no Day of Judgment, it would have contradicted the perfect justice of God, and life would be unfair. Imagine those who caused corruption, bloodshed, and human suffering in this worldly life and died before they were brought to justice in this life. Islam gives you hope that those criminals will not escape God's justice on the Day of Judgment.



GOD'S SIGNS: ISLAMIC VIEW OF LIFE

Islam views human life to be God-oriented and must revolve around Him, just as the earth revolves around the sun, which means that man should build a life based on the concept of God.



While the earth rotates around the sun and obeys willingly the orders of God, man too should surrender to God of his own free will, because this God-consciousness is the real ascension of man and in it lays the secret of all his success.

The God-oriented life begins with the discovery of God. When individuals, whether men or women, discover God, it means they have found the truth that pervades their whole being. This feeling of having discovered the truth becomes such a thrilling experience that it fills them with everlasting conviction that removes all frustrations from their lives. Whenever they suffer from losses whether health, wealth, loved ones, job, material, they never lose the feeling that God is still with them. It is Him we worship and it is Him we ask for help.

The Qur'an generally employs the term *"ayah"* to designate anything that gives news of, or point towards, the existence of God. It is equally correct to translate *"ayah"* as "sign" or "evidence" and these terms are useful for those who really want to pursue a specifically rationalistic approach to the question of God's existence. According to the Qur'anic view, everything in the universe (literally everything) is a sign pointing towards existence of God. *"We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until Truth becomes manifest to them. Is it not enough that your Lord does witness all things?"* [Qur'an 41:53]

Man can realize the truth of God's existence by pondering upon God's creations. The universe is an expression of God's signs for people of intellect to ponder upon leading to His glorification. God is not visible to us, but we can realize His existence by observing His signs in His creation. Among observable God's signs is the vastness of space of the universe,



the solar system with the sun at the center and the planets orbiting, the moon and the stars, the heights of the mountains, the waves of the sea and the flow of the river, the greenery of plants and trees, the minerals under the earth, the formation of clouds, rain and snow, the seasons and climatic changes. Man's existence and all things and phenomenon around him become a proof of God's existence. In the waft of air, he experiences a divine touch. In the chirping of the birds, he hears God's praise.

Once man recognizes the existence of God, the God-oriented life for man

starts by his remembering God or being God conscious. He begins to feel the presence of God. Everything serves to remind him of God. God's remembrance is never absent from his heart and mind. His mornings and evenings should be spent as if he is living in God's neighborhood. Just as rain replenishes the crops, so does he remain ever immersed in the remembrance of God, and God is the spiritual focus for man. One whose heart is attached to God undergoes spiritual experiences at every moment. Belief in God becomes a source of spiritual experience at every moment. Belief in God becomes a source of spiritual development for him. Filled with the love of God, he does not need anything else further. God's mercy becomes a vast ocean for him to continue to swim in without ever experiencing any limit. In the form of spiritual awakening, he receives such a great wealth that he does not feel any need for anything else.

For the one who discovered God, the entire universe becomes an open book of God for him to learn. Every leaf of a tree becomes a page of a divine book. When he sees the sun, he feels as if God is lighting His heavenly torch so that he may read His book clearly. The universe becomes, as it were, a supernal university and he is a student. Man by birth is a seeker of a Supreme Being who is far above him, who is free from all limitations and who may form the center of his feeling, in short, a Being after finding whom the grown man becomes as satisfied as a child after being held in embrace of his mother. Finding God is to find his center of Love.

The discovery of God saves one from regarding something other than God as a god and mistakenly and unrealistically thinking it to be the answer to the urge inherent in his nature. The discovery of God is to fulfill his or her real urge to find God, and the failure to discover God means failing to find that which is man's greatest need. One who fails to find God is compelled by his natural urge to give the place of God to something other than God. This place is sometimes accorded to a certain human being, sometimes to a certain animal, sometimes to a phenomenon of nature, sometimes to a certain material power, sometimes to a certain supposed concept and sometimes just to the self. Even if one fails to discover God, or if he denies God, it is not in his power to stifle the urge in his nature to find God. That is why those men and women who have not found God inevitably come to hold something other than God as God – even atheists and agnostics do that. By nature, it is possible for man not to accept the real God as God, but it is not possible for anyone to save himself from granting the status of divinity to something other than God, when you failed to find Him.

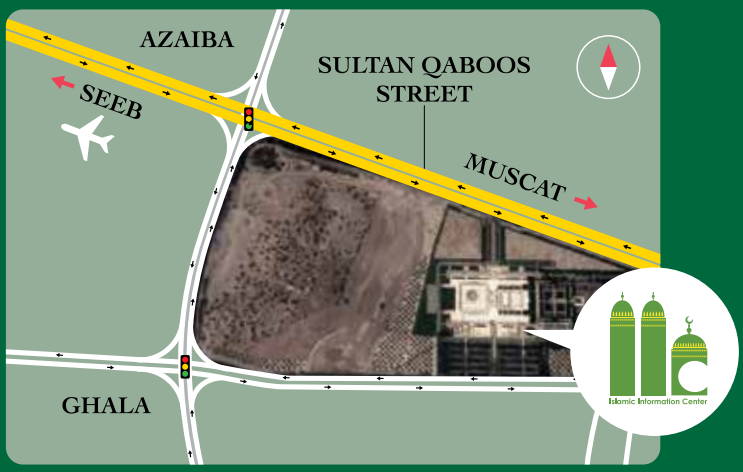
Making God as one's object of worship raises man's position. On the contrary, regarding something other than God as an object of worship amounts to descending oneself from the level of humanity. Submission to the one true God is the only way of life for both man and the universe. Denial of the one true God and attribution of existence of the universe to self-origination, necessity, or chance is delusion. For we can see in the universe the effect of absolute knowledge, the effect absolute wisdom, the effect of absolute will, and the effect of absolute power. Self-origination, necessity, and chance are only concepts without any material reality, and therefore cannot possess any knowledge, wisdom, will, or power. What we call "nature" is a model composed of unseen laws, but not the composer itself. It is a design, not the designer; a recipient, not the agent; an order, not the one who puts in order. It is a collection of laws established by the Divine Will of God, laws that our minds can grasp but in themselves have no power or material reality.



ABOUT ISLAMIC INFORMATION CENTER

The Islamic Information Center, Sultanate of Oman, is a nonprofit organization which is under the support and guidance of The Sultan Qaboos Higher Center for Culture and Science. Its mission is to provide information on the teachings of Islam and its practices to non-Muslims. The Center offers introductory literature on Islam in the form of booklets, the Qur'an translations in different languages, pamphlets and audio/video CDs & DVDs.

HOW TO FIND US



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