

# Diy Janet

Journal

ISSUE 1 | JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH

## GOODNESS WILL CHANGE THE WORLD

| Goodness and Benevolence

| Artificial Intelligence on the Axis of Religion

| Ism al-Jami': Allah



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**Type of Publication**

Quarterly, Common, Periodical,

English

**Date of Issue:** 30.03.2023

**Printed in**

SalMat Basım

Yay. Amb. San. Tic. Ltd. Şti.

Zübeyde Hanım Mahallesi, Sebze

Bahçeleri Cd. 99/22

Altındağ/Ankara

Tel: +90 312 341 10 24

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**Cover Image:** As an important symbol of goodness, birdhouses are an element of Ottoman-era architecture with their unique designs and tiny buildings.

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# Editorial

In opening its first pages, Diyanet Journal wishes to greet its readers with peace: May Allah's peace be upon you! We start our publishing life with the objective of conveying the universal message of Islam to the world through accurate explanation based on true knowledge. We also aim to preserve and develop further the historical, cultural, and social heritage that shapes and builds the Muslim identity. In this first issue of our Journal, we welcome you with the principle of "increasing goodness", which is the central focus of our Holy Book. As the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Türkiye, being fully aware of our responsibility to do good and spread goodness, we set out to expose Islam's message of goodness and peace to people from all over the world.

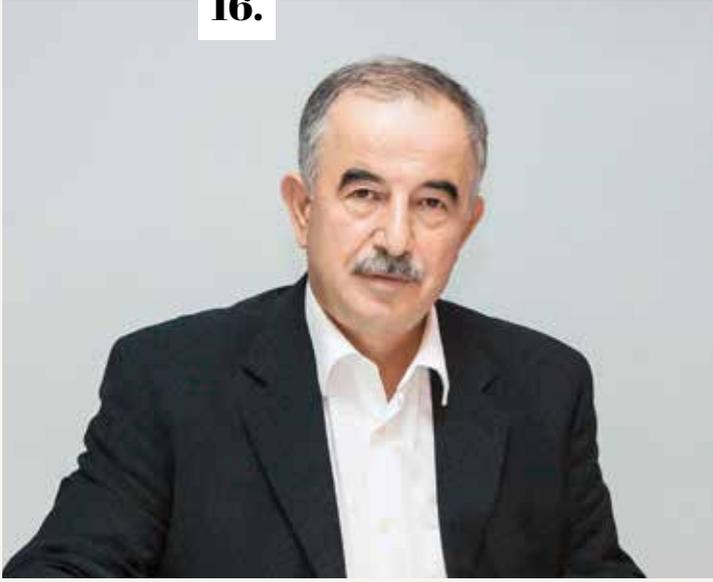
We always attach importance to the dissemination of knowledge based on authentic sources about the religion of Islam, which is literally rendered as peace and well-being. Spreading true knowledge and increasing goodness constitute the basic publishing principle of the Diyanet Journal. Within this principle in mind, we will address our readers and discuss, in every issue of the Journal, current religious and cultural articles, and columns dealing with current questions along with their possible answers, including news from the Muslim world, as well as interviews with experts in their fields.

We set out on our journey of publishing Diyanet Journal with the article, "Goodness and Benevolence", written by Prof. Huriye Marti. Stating that life is a journey of goodness and that people are passengers who come to this world "to do good deeds", the author emphasizes that it is necessary to bring goodness to all people, regardless of their race, gender, color, language, or belief. Prof. Cagfer Karadas, who explains the indisputable place and importance of reason in Islam, contributes to our "Questions on My Mind" column with his article, "Is Islam the Religion of Reason?". Dr. Naoki Yamamoto, who declares that "conversion to Islam is a beginning, not a goal", speaks about his embrace of Islam and further discusses his studies on Sufism, and the universality of Islam under "the Revert Stories" column. The guest for our interview in this month is Prof. Ali Bardakoglu, one of the former Presidents of Religious Affairs.

As the team of the Diyanet Journal, we present our First Issue to our esteemed readers, wishing them pleasant reading. Hoping to meet you, again, in our next issue.

*Dr. Lamia LEVENT ABUL*

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

## DUTY OF FAITH: GOODNESS

One of the main goals of Islam is to spread goodness, beauty and good morals on earth and to eradicate evil and malice. The duty of “*amr bil ma’ruf wa nahy an al munkar*” (commanding good and forbidding evil), which the Holy Qur’an assigns to believers as a responsibility that cannot be neglected, is also directed towards this goal. In this context, it is a duty of faith and servitude for Muslims to live in the line of goodness and to work to build a livable world dominated by goodness. Indeed, the worldly life will only gain value and meaning through the struggle for goodness.

As stated in the Holy Qur’an, humankind, who was created in the most beautiful way, has taken its place on the world stage by being equipped with certain characteristics, responsibilities, and authorities. Undoubtedly,

these opportunities and blessings, which are part of Allah’s bestowals, have been entrusted to humankind for a purpose, and human being is obliged to utilize them in accordance with Allah’s will and consent. According to our Holy Book, Allah is the true owner of all property, and humans are obliged to consider the rights of those in need while utilizing this property. This is because human beings are the noblest of all creatures (*ashraf al-makhlukat*) and were created as “*mukarram*” (respected, honored). To be *mukarram* means to be perfect in one’s relationship with all beings and to see everyone as respectable, honorable, and valuable. It means opening one’s heart to everyone, knowing how to give and love without expecting anything in return. It means being



**Prof. Dr. Ali ERBAS**

The President  
Presidency of Religious Affairs

with the needy and the oppressed and caring for them, believing that Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate, is on the side of the brokenhearted. In the end, to be *mukarram* means to be a good person.

Goodness is to help, show solidarity, and share with the intention of gaining Allah's pleasure; to take care of the oppressed, the needy, the orphan, and the poor; to be a shelter for the destitute. Goodness is not limited to material means. Sometimes it is a sincere smile or a sincere prayer. Sometimes it is sharing sadness or pain, and being a companion to happiness. Goodness also means taking care of the property as a trust.

Today, our duty is to instill this belief, ideal, and morality in humanity, to increase hope, fraternity, and love on earth, and to carry Islam's concept of sharing and the legacy of goodness of our ancestors to the present and future with a sense of trust. It is to act with compassion and mercy, which are the most valuable aspects of human beings, the most powerful against all kinds of violence and hatred that plague humanity like cancer. Staying away from goodness amounts to staying away from humanity, and being a stranger to goodness is being a stranger to humanity.



**GOODNESS IS TO HELP, SHOW SOLIDARITY, AND SHARE WITH THE INTENTION OF GAINING ALLAH'S PLEASURE; TO TAKE CARE OF THE OPPRESSED, THE NEEDY, THE ORPHAN, AND THE POOR; TO BE A SHELTER FOR THE DESTITUTE.**

The guidance of the Qur'an and the sunnah has taught us to pay attention to doing good deeds without hurting human dignity. In order to ensure this, Islamic civilization, whose foundations are based on the Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), has established hundreds of foundations in every field throughout history and institutionalized the movement of goodness through these foundations. In addition, Muslims have established many institutions such as food pantries, healing centers, hospices, soup kitchens, mosques, schools, fountains, and bridges based on the principle of competing in doing good.

With this belief and awareness, the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Türkiye and the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation extend a helping hand to every part of the world where there is a need, regardless of religion, language, race, denomination, and disposition. From social aid to education, from the construction of mosques to the revitalization of hearts, our charitable activities continue uninterruptedly in many fields. They are the hope and joy of Muslim minorities, the poor, the orphans, the helpless, and the victims of wars, occupations, and disasters. Our belief and civilization thrust upon us the

responsibility to work together to strengthen goodness, to bring the caravan of goodness to every part of the world, and to leave no room for evil. When goodness is deferred and neglected, evil will find a foothold for itself. For this reason, the most effective and correct method in the struggle against evil is to do good and work for the spread of goodness. As commanded by our Almighty Lord, it is to "respond to evil with what is best". It is to keep alive the feeling of respect, affection, and trust towards each other for the construction of a more pleasant and peaceful future. It is to create awareness in minds and hearts in order to make goodness dominant and make it an agenda in a world where evil surrounds the world and captures consciences. It is to initiate a mobilization for goodness, to beautify life and the world with the consciousness and effort of goodness. We know that goodness, when multiplied by sharing and spreading, will change the world.

This publication, whose first issue now meets its readers with great hope and excitement, will hopefully make lasting contributions to the goodness of our hearts and the world. Surely, Allah is the helper of the righteous and never leaves alone those who work for His pleasure on this path.



# GOODNESS AND BENEVOLENCE

Prof. Dr. Huriye MARTI

“Water” means ‘life’ in the burning climate of the Arabian Peninsula. The desert conditions urged people search for water most of the time, and for this very reason, sometimes the tribes that lacked water would fight with one another for water. Although the weather was relatively a little cooler in Medina than to Mecca, the value of water would never change.

The water wells were so precious for the people of Medina, just as it was for Abu Talha, who was the stepfather of the Prophet’s little servant, Anas. The income of the people there depended on date-palm gardens, and the date-palms grow in abundance around water wells. One of them was Bayruha... The water of the date-palm garden, called Bayruha, located just across the Masjid, was very special. On the days when the heat was intense, nearly melting people, the pure and cold water drawn from Abu Talha’s water well cooled down both the Prophet (saw) and his companions.

Abu Talha loved Bayruha very much and regarded it as more valuable than any other property he had, and hence he would never sell it to anybody.

One day a verse was revealed by Allah: “Never shall you attain piety unless you spend in Allah’s cause from that which you love.” (Al-i ‘Imran, 3:92) Abu Talha was greatly impressed and moved by the message of this verse. Having made his chest numerous times as a shield to guard the Prophet, his heroic heart trembled upon it. Abu Talha’s generosity had already been well known on account of his offerings and feasts for the Prophet and his Companions. Upon hearing this verse, he immediately acted upon its invitation to goodness. So decided to offer his most loved property, the Bayruha garden and the water well in it, for the good of the public, and donated it to the poor.

What a gainful property it was! What a rewarding decision it was! How

happy was he to donate his most precious property in Allah’s cause! Having heard of the news, the Messenger of Allah became very happy (Bukhari, Vasayah, 10). The Prophet wanted Abu Talha’s poor relatives to have their share from the donation. Located in the Masjid al-Nabawi today, the Bayruha Garden has been in the service of goodness for years and represented a good example of benevolence...

## What does good mean?

Life is the journey in which good deeds are sought. Human being is a passenger in this life; he has faith in Allah and does good deeds... It is Allah Who creates humans, protects them, bestows blessings upon them, and embraces them with His Compassion. It is He (swt) Who has created death and life to test which of us will do better deeds (Mulk, 67:2). Then, life is a trial to measure goodness.

The verse “Do good, for Allah loves the good-doers.” points out to the most valuable goal



**IN THE ESSENCE OF CREATION THERE IS GOODNESS. EVIL, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THE GREATEST OBSTACLE TO HAPPINESS IN THE JOURNEY OF LIFE.**

that can be achieved by those who turn life into a journey of pursuing goodness: to earn the love of Allah... The reverse of it is embarrassment, deprivation, and sorrow. A bitter end waits for those who stay away from goodness, and serve instead for evil: “Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have better than it; and whoever comes with an evil deed - then those who did evil deeds will not be recompensed except [as much as] what they used to do.” (Qasas, 28:84.)

In the essence of creation there is goodness. Evil, on the other hand, is the greatest obstacle to happiness in the journey of life. One day, one of the Companions of the Prophet, named Nawwas ibn Sam’an, asked the Prophet about righteousness and wickedness. Our beloved Prophet replied, “Righteousness is good character, and wickedness is that which disturbs your conscience and you do not want others to be aware of” (Muslim, Birr, 15). On another occasion said our Prophet (saw), “Bad words and behaviors have no place in Islam. The best people in Islam are those who have the best morality” (Ibn Hanbal, V, 100).

Then, faith (Iman) and Islam are each an invitation to goodness. Sometimes this goodness appears as good morality,

virtue, and merit; sometimes as charitable works and good deeds, almsgiving and zakah; and sometimes as a warm hug, a sweet word, and a smiling face. The name and manner of it may vary, but its importance and value never change.

Goodness means striving to be good. Ihsan, which means doing heartfelt kindness by expecting its reward from Allah only, is the highest level of faith and worship. Ihsan means



**WE SHOULD TREAT WELL ALL PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF THEIR ETHNICITY, GENDER, COLOR, LANGUAGE, OR RELIGION. WE SHOULD TRY TO SPREAD GOOD IN OUR ENVIRONMENT, STARTING FROM OUR PARENTS, SPOUSES, AND CHILDREN.**

adopting an approach to Allah as being aware that Allah always sees and hears you, and doing good deeds to earn His approval. Ihsan means turning towards the Ka’bah and standing in the divine presence of Allah, striving to comprehend Allah’s might when the forehead is on the ground for prostration, getting purified by fasting and zakah, or mentioning Allah’s name in tears in the humblest manner, alone in a corner... They each are worships; they each are goodness. Each of these actions is considered both worship and goodness.

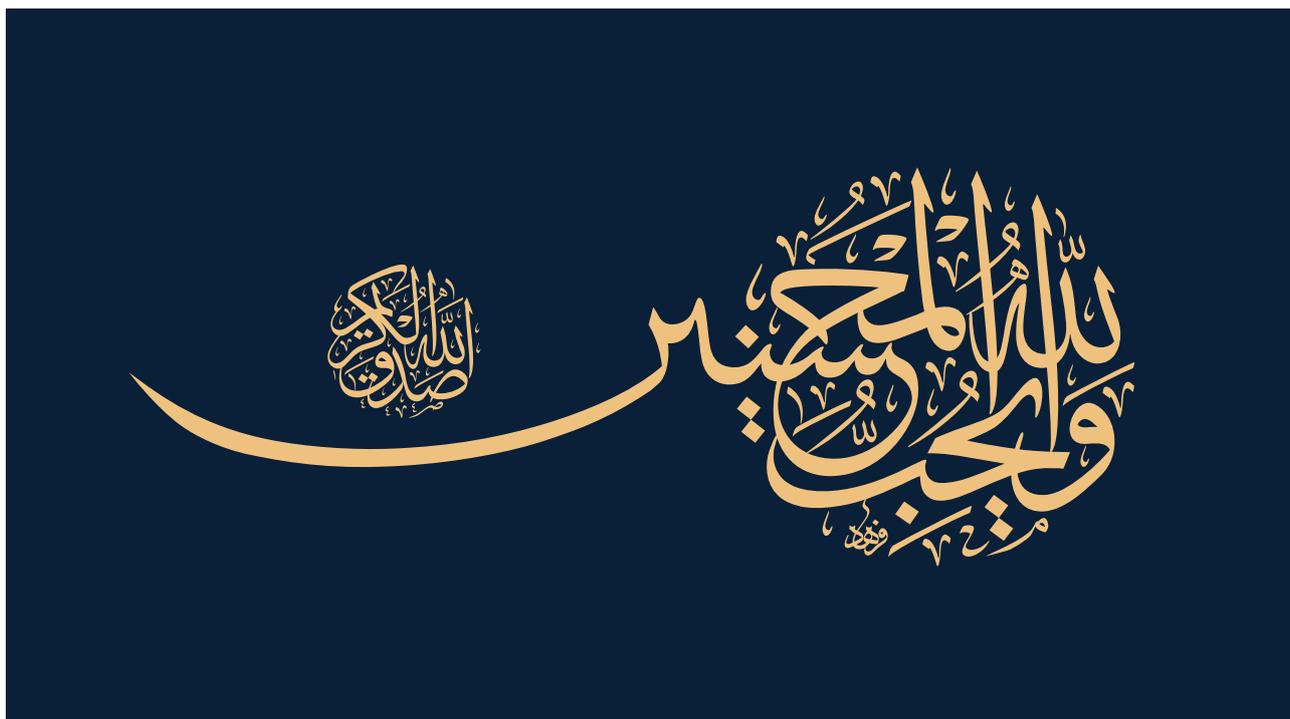
Goodness is to avoid evil. Goodness is not to get closer to the illnesses of the modern era, and to stay away from sin, oppression, and disobedience. Goodness is to stay away from illicit gains, and quit being indifference to and disrespectful for labor. Goodness is to keep oneself away from the tricks of the *nafs* (self) and the whispering of the Satan, as well as from self-pride and sensual desires. Goodness is to put the dress of *taqwa* (piety) on and strive to be resolute on the path to salvation and persevere in *salah* (prayer) and patience.

Goodness is to be a company for the lonely, a wall for the tired to lean on, and a haven for the homeless to take shelter in. Goodness is

to welcome the refugee, and share one’s bread with them. Goodness is to extend a helping hand to the orphan and the widowed, and meet their needs. Goodness is to accommodate the traveler, and to guide the stranger on their path. Sometimes, goodness is to ask children how their wellbeing is, and other times it is to take hold an elderly’s hand.

Goodness is to give without expecting anything in return. Goodness is to be a giving hand and to share one’s strength, energy, experience, property, effort, love, and mercy, without expecting anything worldly in return. Goodness is to be conscientious, sacrificing, just, and compassionate. Goodness means praying, supplicating, and greeting. Goodness means planting a tree sapling sometimes, and some other times it means feeding a hungry cat. You can feel the scent of goodness in a plate of food offered to the neighbor, or hear the tune of goodness in the voice of a person telling the directions of an address. People do goodness when they try to establish peace between the relatives who are on bad terms, and also when they work day and night to sustain their families through lawful and deserved income.

In short, we can see, do, and feel goodness in every moment and at every place during the



(Al-i 'Imran, 3:148)

Calligraphy: Ferhat KURLU

course of our life. The Verse 177 of the Surah al-Baqarah in the Holy Qur'an refers perfectly to the scope of all such good deeds as follows, "Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who are true, and it is those who are the righteous."

What suits a human is to do good deeds. Our souls are fed by good deeds. What goal can we have as Muslims other than trying to become a better person and increase in number the good deeds we do? What duty can we have as Muslims other than embellishing our faith with our good deeds, and paying the utmost attention to follow Allah's orders related to good deeds and to take heed of His warnings related to evil deeds?

Then, we should free ourselves from the mindset "do evil to those who do evil to you". We should treat well all people regardless of their ethnicity, gender, color, language, or religion. We should try to spread good in our environment, starting from our parents, spouses, and children.



**GOODNESS IS TO BE A GIVING HAND AND TO SHARE ONE'S STRENGTH, ENERGY, EXPERIENCE, PROPERTY, EFFORT, LOVE, AND MERCY, WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING WORLDLY IN RETURN.**

We should teach our children the goodness, make them familiar with good examples, and invest as a family in goodness, because goodness is a never diminishing investment.

Let us ensure that our relatives, neighbors, colleagues, and clients all receive goodness from us. Let us ensure that the hearts in the society that are thirsty for goodness satiate their thirst with goodness from us. Let us make effort in order to increase our good deeds and be a source of goodness for others. Let us accumulate, distribute, and produce goodness in our life, while always praying, "Oh Allah! Grant us goodness both in this world and in the Hereafter. Save us from the fire of the Hell" (Muslim, Dhikr, 26).



# IN THE FACE OF NATURAL DISASTERS: SENSITIVE CONSCIENCES AND BELIEVING HEARTS

**Mustafa IRMAKLI**

Member of the High Board of Religious  
Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs

## **Natural disasters mean challenging times for humanity**

Words become inadequate and nothing is left to say at times. The wreckage of an earthquake breaks all

pure hearts, the flame of a fire singes all sensitive hearts, and a flood or an epidemic opens heavy wounds on every intact conscience. From east to west, from north to south,

millions of people from different geographies, faiths, languages, and colors come together with the same sentiment. The conscience of humanity becomes a

single conscience. The most powerful universal language of humanity is the language of conscience, and pain is experienced again in every misfortune and calamity.



Images: AA

In any disaster zone, the fact that people from different geographies of the world turn into a single heart with the same hope, sadness, and resolve reveals the most powerful resource to heal and beautify life.

**Human beings think about, discuss, and question the meaning of life and the wisdom of existence more deeply following natural disasters**

Human beings need a reasonable explanation of what is happening. At this point, first of all, it

is necessary to consider human beings and the universe as a whole. As a matter of fact, the universe we are in, the Earth, the sky, and everything in between was created by Allah the Almighty with a divine order and infallible measure, based on a purpose and wisdom (Qamar, 54:49; Yunus, 10:5).

Every created being has a mission in the universe, and every object has a wisdom in the context of the continuation of life. In the Holy Qur'an, it is stated that the Earth was created as a suitable ground for human life and that the mountains have a function that ensures the balance of the Earth (Naba, 78: 6-7). It is a fact that the features of nature that come to the fore in the context of natural disasters or the accumulation of energy under the ground have certain functions in terms of the balance of the Earth. For example, while rain is a great blessing for the Earth, it can cause major catastrophes as a result of deforestation and destruction of nature. The important point here, which should not be neglected, is that human beings should be aware of this reality when determining their relationship with nature.

**The human being has a special position and duty in the world of existence**

The most fundamental duty of human beings on

earth—who are endowed with many superior qualities, especially the blessing of reason, and are subjected to divine guidance through revelation—is to realize the purpose and wisdom of their existence and to live in accordance



**FROM EAST TO WEST, FROM NORTH TO SOUTH, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHIES, FAITHS, LANGUAGES, AND COLORS COME TOGETHER WITH THE SAME SENTIMENT.**

with it. By sincerely believing in the Lord of the Worlds and under the guidance of revelation, is to be the guarantor of goodness, mercy, good morals, and justice on earth. In this context, human beings have responsibilities towards their Lord, themselves, their family, society, and nature. Human beings' responsibility towards nature is to utilize its resources without destroying them, with the awareness that nature is a blessing and a trust. It is to take into account the characteristics of nature and the rules of its functioning. When this reality is neglected, many problems will arise, and human beings will be the losers.

**Human beings are obliged to live in harmony with nature**

In trying to understand natural disasters, we must first take into account whether we are acting in accordance with the natural laws that Allah has set in the universe. Of course, Allah is All-Powerful. He has the power to do whatever He wills in whatever way He wills. He can make non-existence out of existence and existence out of non-existence. There is nothing that can stand against His will. However, He regulates the functioning of the universe with the laws He has established

and demands that human beings obey the laws He has imposed on the universe and nature. It is the command of Allah the Almighty to act with a sense of responsibility, to fulfill one's part in matters within one's power, and to take the necessary precautions (Baqarah, 2:195).

### **Precaution is what makes tawakkul meaningful**

Tawakkul, which means seeking refuge in Allah and trusting and relying on Him after taking all precautions, is one of the most important principles of Islam. Tawakkul means to surrender oneself to the will of Allah as the supreme power above all causes and measures after making thorough preparations. According to Islam, which regards both reason and intellect as important values and great blessings, human beings are obliged to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from disasters.

### **Nothing in the universe can occur outside of Allah's knowledge and creation**

Ultimately, everything, good or bad, difficult or easy, is a test for human beings. Human beings may be subjected to troubles and calamities, sometimes due to their own mistakes and sometimes against their will. They may face crises even though they have taken all



Images: AA

precautions. All of these situations are processes that reveal their fortitude, patience, and gratitude. In the Holy Qur'an and the hadiths, there is a lot of information and declarations that human beings are tested with difficulties and blessings on Earth. Prophets, the most beloved servants of Allah, lived through the most trying circumstances and harshest trials. As a matter of fact, our beloved Prophet (saw), who was sent as the last prophet and mercy to the worlds, lost his father before he was born, his mother at a young age, his grandfather whom he took refuge with, and grew up experiencing the indescribable feelings of being an orphan. Six of his seven children passed away before him, and as a father who was



**TAWAKKUL MEANS TO SURRENDER ONESELF TO THE WILL OF ALLAH AS THE SUPREME POWER ABOVE ALL CAUSES AND MEASURES AFTER MAKING THOROUGH PREPARATIONS.**

devoted to his children, he experienced grief and longing in the marrow of his bones. He had to leave his beloved home for the sake of his faith.

**When faced with natural disasters, calamities, and hardships, the main duty of believers is to act with patience, wisdom, and fortitude**

The world is an arena of struggle. The believer struggles with patience in the face of adversity and responds with gratitude for blessings. In fact, patience does not mean internalizing, taking something for granted, or trivializing it; it means striving to overcome obstacles and eliminate troubles with perseverance, determination, and faith. Gratitude, on the other

hand, is to share one's means, one's beloved property, and one's blessings with those in need without expecting anything in return, with the consciousness of faith and servitude, hoping only for Allah's pleasure. Therefore, hard times are also a test of conscience and morality for those who have the means. It is a time to come to the rescue of those in need, to help, and to share their pain and sorrow.

**Seeking refuge in Allah through prayers and supplications in difficult times will heal and soothe heavy hearts**

It will open paths from the vortex of loneliness and despair to confidence and hope. The realization of a supreme being who knows everything and has infinite mercy will strengthen spirituality. Prayer has a feature that heals the heart and brings peace. Prayer is taking refuge in the Lord of the Worlds. It is to present one's state to Him. Allah, who has absolute power and might, says, "Invoke Me and I will respond to you." (Ghafir, 40:60) On the other hand, the belief that the world is a temporary testing ground and that in the Hereafter, real life, everything will be recompensed in full and divine justice will be realized, is a great blessing that will comfort and strengthen people



**TÜRKİYE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HEAL ITS WOUNDS, RECOVER, AND CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD WITH HOPE.**

in their struggle against troubles, calamities, and misfortunes. As a matter of fact, those who are patient and struggle in the best way against the hardships and suffering in this world will have a great reward and eternal peace and prosperity in the Hereafter (Baqarah, 2:155). On the other hand, our sublime religion, Islam, considers those who lose their lives in natural disasters as martyrs. In one of his hadiths, our Prophet (saw) says that those who lose their lives "by burning, drowning, being trapped under debris" are martyrs (Nasa'i, Jihad, 48; Ibn Majah, Jihad, 17).

**We are anguished and grieving as a country**

We are going through an unprecedented calamity. We are waging an epic struggle as a nation against the aftermath of the catastrophic earthquakes,

which is one of the most difficult circumstances that a country or nation can experience. In every house, neighborhood, street, and city of our country, there is a major collective effort to provide aid for the earthquake region. All institutions and non-governmental organizations have mobilized their means. The aid coming from all over the world is also an expression of how our nation extends its helping hand to all parts of the world. The patience, perseverance, and determination demonstrated by our great nation in the aftermath of the earthquakes have shown that we can overcome all adversities. Türkiye will undoubtedly heal its wounds, recover, and continue to move forward with hope.



# ALLAH: THE CREATOR, SUSTAINER, RULER

**Dr. Bayram KOSEOGLU**

Expert of the High Board of Religious  
Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ  
الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ  
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“He is Allah—there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher of all, the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him in worship!”

(Hashr, 59:23)

Almighty Allah (swt) is the one Who created humans, the earth and the heavens, and the universe, together with all living and inanimate beings, out of nothing. He created all beings for a reason. Besides being the Absolute Creator, He is also the Owner and Manager of all beings. So much so that He showed people the ways of guidance through the prophets and books He sent (Ma'idah, 5:16). He programmed the moon and sun, day and night in an order which is unfailing (Ya-Sin, 36:40). He taught the bee how to make honey and how to build a nest (Nahl, 16:68-69). Briefly, “He conducts every affair from the heavens to the earth.” (Sajdah, 32:5)

In Ayat al-Kursi, after it is stated that Allah the Almighty is one and alive, it is emphasized that He is *Qayyum* (Baqarah, 2:255). The name al-Qayyum expresses the reality that He is the one Who rules and controls every living thing He created. al-Qayyum—an adjective that exaggerates the meaning of the root *qiyam* (resurrection)—means “to stand up; to continue and endure; to take over the management of a business; to look after and protect; the existence of everything depends on it; and the ruler of the universe”.

Regarding the creation and maintenance of the universe, *Qayyum* is one of Allah's actual attributes (Bekir Topaloglu, DIA, article of “Qayyum”).

This verse conveys the existence and oneness of Almighty Allah as well as the reality that He always oversees, guides, directs, and rules the beings He creates. Because his *Kursi*, the quality of which only He knows, spans both the heavens and the earth, it is used metaphorically to refer to rule, dominion, and property (Kur'an Yolu Tefsiri, 1:398-401). The Qur'an specifically emphasizes the existence of Allah, and His oneness, rejecting movements that assert there is no creator, as well as polytheism, which assigns partners to Him while maintaining a belief in a creator. The rejection of movements claiming that Almighty Allah is only the creator and does not interfere with the operation of the universe emphasizes that He is a *qayyum* with attributes such as knowing, seeing, having will and power, and creating. Of course, it is inconceivable that Allah, who created human beings, all living things, inanimate objects, and this perfect universe from nothing, would leave them to their own devices. In this context, the names

and attributes of Almighty Allah in the Qur'an shed light on having a proper belief in Allah.

Al-Khaliq means Allah is the Creator. He is al-Muhaymin, the one Who sees and rules everything. He is al-Latif, Who endows upon His servants. He is al-Khabir, Who is aware of everything. He is al-Hafiz, Who protects. He is al-Shahid, Who witnesses everything. He is al-Wakil, Who is trusted and relied upon. He is Maalik al-Mulk, Who is the real owner of the property. He is al-Nur, Who illuminates. He is al-Hadi, Who guides. He is al-Rashid, Who shows the right way because, "All those in the heavens and the earth are dependent on Him. Day in and day out He has something to bring about." (Rahman, 55:29) He is the one Who creates all of nature's blessings, including the wind and rain (Araf, 7:57). He is the one Who provides sustenance to all living things (Dhariyat, 51:58). As Prophet Ibrahim stated, He is the one Who created us and showed us the right path. He is the one who feeds us. He is the healer when we are sick. He will be the one to take our souls and then resurrect us. He is the one Who we hope will forgive our mistakes on the Day of Judgment (Shu'ara, 26:78-82).



**HAVING FAITH  
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WITH.**

In addition to all these names and attributes, isn't the fact that Almighty Allah has sent prophets to all societies since the first human being, Prophet Adam, and that he informs people of divine truths through the books he sent down to the prophets an indication that he is always in contact with humans and the universe? At the same time, the events described in the stories of the prophets, which have an important place in the Qur'an, and the dialogues conveyed are demonstrative of the communication of Almighty Allah with people throughout history. In that case, it is an undeniable truth that Almighty Allah exists, creates, directs, and manages every moment of our lives, from birth to death, from death to resurrection, and throughout the eternal life of the Hereafter. In this case, the duty of people is primarily to believe in the existence and oneness of Allah, which is expressed in kalimah al-tawhid. Moreover, it is to be aware that He is with us at all times and that He sees and watches over everything. It is to comprehend "He knows what is in the land and sea. Not even a leaf falls without His knowledge, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth or anything—green or dry—but is written in a

perfect Record." (An'am 6:59) Therefore, by recognizing that He is the Creator, any denial of the existence of Allah or false ideas that He does not intervene in our lives will prove to be pointless. Because the basis of such views is an empty conception of faith that excludes Allah from life. It is clear that these notions cannot bring about peace in a real sense for people, beyond a temporary happiness. In that situation, having faith in Allah and getting to know Him properly will be the strongest rope we can hold onto in order not to succumb to the appeal and deceitfulness of modern lifestyles, which we chase after but cannot keep up with. It is not enough to simply say that we believe in Him, but to know that He is with us at all times. And to be conscious of the fact that we are not only accountable to ourselves but also to those around us, especially our families. Therefore, Almighty Allah will be at the center of our lives. We have the option to access the consciousness of being with Him at any time from our daily worship to our family life, from our professional life to our social life. From faith to servitude and from servitude to *ihsan* (benevolence). This is a blessed journey. How happy are those who have faith! How happy are those who live accordingly!

# RAMADAN: THE MONTH OF MERCY

Halil KILIC

Expert of the High Board of Religious Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs

We have been reciting this prophetic prayer in the two months preceding Ramadan: “O Allah! Make the months of Rajab and Sha’ban blessed for us, and let us reach the month of Ramadan.” (Tabarani, al-Mu’jam al-Awsat, IV, 189) First of all, we cannot thank our Almighty Lord enough for bringing us once again to this blessed time when mercy and forgiveness rain like a downpour.

## **Ramadan is the month of the Qur’an**

Ramadan is the month in which the Qur’an, which is “a guide for those mindful of Allah” (Baqarah, 2:2) for our happiness in this world and in the Hereafter, was first revealed.

This sublime book has described a seemingly ordinary night as “better than a thousand months”

(Qadr, 97:3); the month of Ramadan as “the sultan of eleven months”; an arid and drought-ridden city, Mecca, as the “Mother of Cities” (An’am, 6:92); and most importantly, the orphan Muhammad in Mecca as a “mercy to the worlds” (Anbiya, 21:107) and “the last prophet” (Ahzab, 33:40). We should take the month of Ramadan as an opportunity to review our ties with the Qur’an. We seek to strengthen this bond in order to find the right path with the guidance of the Qur’an, avoid the ranks of the “asfal al-safilun” (lower than beasts) and reach the degree of “ashraf al-makhluqat” (the noblest of creation).

## **Ramadan is the month of fasting**

There is a remarkable relationship between

fasting and the month of Ramadan, when the Qur’an was revealed. For, it is emphasized that the Qur’an, is a guide for the “muttaqin” who hold fast to Allah’s orders and avoid His prohibitions: “This is the Book! There is no doubt about it—a guide for those mindful of Allah.” (Baqarah, 2:2) In the verse about fasting, it is stated, “O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you—as it was for those before you—so perhaps you will become mindful of Allah.” (Baqarah, 2:183) and it is stated that one of the main purposes of fasting is to bring people to piety. The worshippers will first reach the level of taqwa (piety) by fasting and enter the group of the righteous, and after joining this group, the Qur’an will now become a road map

that will take them to the destination of Paradise.

## **Ramadan is the month of repentance and supplication**

As stated in the hadith above, the month of Ramadan is a season of mercy when the devils are chained, the gates of hell are closed, and the gates of heaven are opened. Due to this spiritual atmosphere, Muslims generally take themselves to account during Ramadan and serve their Lord with more enthusiasm. However, many do not show the necessary sensitivity to benefit from the prosperity and blessings of Ramadan. In this respect, the statement “shayatin are shackled” in the hadith may confuse some people, and questions such as, “If devils are shackled in

إِذَا كَانَ أَوَّلُ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ صُفِّدَتِ الشَّيَاطِينُ، وَمَرَدَةُ الْجِنِّ، وَغُلِّقَتِ أَبْوَابُ النَّارِ، فَلَمْ يُفْتَحْ مِنْهَا بَابٌ، وَفُتِّحَتِ أَبْوَابُ الْجَنَّةِ، فَلَمْ يُغْلَقْ مِنْهَا بَابٌ، وَيُنَادِي مُنَادٍ: يَا بَاغِيَ الْخَيْرِ أَقْبِلْ، وَيَا بَاغِيَ الشَّرِّ أَقْصِرْ، وَلِلَّهِ عِتْقَاءُ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَذَلِكَ كُلُّ لَيْلَةٍ

“On the first night of the month of Ramadan, the shayatin (devils) are shackled, the jinns are restrained, the gates of the Fires are shut such that no gate among them would be opened. The gates of Paradise are opened such that no gate among them would be closed, and a caller calls: ‘O seeker of the good; come near!’ and ‘O seeker of evil; stop! For there are those whom Allah frees from the Fire.’ And that is every night.”

(Tirmidhi, Sawm, 1)

Ramadan, why do people still commit sins?” arise. First of all, it should be known that it is not only Satan that causes people to commit sins. It should not be overlooked that the *nafs* is also a factor that leads a person to commit sins. As a matter of fact, verses in the Holy Qur’an such as “And by the soul and the One Who fashioned it, then with the knowledge of right and wrong inspired it!” (Shams, 91:7-8); “...for indeed the soul is ever inclined to evil...” (Yusuf, 12:53) show this reality. Similar to this, in Surah Nas, Allah Almighty has stated that we should seek refuge in Him from the evil of the insidious Satan, who puts mischief in the hearts of people, whether they are from the jinn or humans (Nas, 114:1-6). As it can be understood from here,

even when the devils are shackled, those who have devilish qualities among people can sin. Again, those who are constantly attached to evil desires in the eleven months of the year may continue to sin due to their habits, even if the devils are shackled in Ramadan. On the other hand, hadith scholars say that the expressions mentioned in the hadith can be understood literally or metaphorically. When the expressions in the hadith are understood literally, it can be said that the devils in shackles are not all the devils but their biggest and fiercest ones. If the hadith is understood metaphorically, it can be said that the purpose of the expression in question is as follows: Due to the spiritual atmosphere of the month of Ramadan,



**WHAT MUSLIMS HAVE TO DO IN ORDER TO GET THEIR SHARE OF THE MERCY OF RAMADAN IS TO REMEMBER THEIR MAIN DUTY OF WORSHIP.**

people remember their Lord more and commit fewer sins through fasting, *khatim* (reading the Qur’an from start to finish), and prayers. This situation is an indication that the devils are incapacitated and that their hands are tied.

In this respect, what Muslims have to do in order to get their share of the mercy of Ramadan is to remember their main duty of worship, to restrain their inner devil *nafs*, and to keep their own devil in shackles by keeping away from external devils (environment and friends that lead them to sin). The gates of Heaven will be opened wide and the gates of Hell will be closed for the believers who act in this way and succeed in shackling their devils.

# Prof. Dr. Ali Bardakoglu: “Virtuous people always have the feeling of doing good to others in their essences.”



Interview by:  
Dr. Lamia LEVENT ABUL

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**There are some concepts on the basis of which the civilizations in the world appear to have been built. When we want to understand and explain Islam as a religion and civilization, one of these concepts we encounter is goodness. What is the concept of goodness in Islam, which attaches great importance to both good people and kindness?**

The understanding of “goodness”, which constitutes one of the main foundations of Islamic civilization, has been built and supported by a series of concepts, such as “*khayr*, *birr*, righteous deeds, *ihsan*, *akhlaq*, *taqwa*, *husn*, mercy, *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ta’awun*”. However, to comprehend these concepts better and establish firmly their meanings in the human mind and the heart, and also reflect them on behaviors, we ought to provide a solid ground for them. To understand this, therefore, we need to look at the basic teachings of the main sources of Islam.

In the early years of Islam, as has been narrated in the hadith, Jibril came to the Prophet Muhammad and had a conversation with him in the presence of his Companions. The purpose of this conversation was to teach Muslims the three basic concepts that form the backbone of our

understanding of Islam. These are *iman*, *Islam*, and *ihsan*. These are also the three main pillars of our religious understanding and life.

Iman is belief in Allah. Islam means obeying Allah’s injunctions and prohibitions. Ihsan, on the other hand, is the consciousness that we are under the grace and supervision of Allah at all times, and that while living with that consciousness, we constantly improve our behavior. Ihsan is the perfection of morality and piety. Ihsan comes from *husn*, which means beauty. The distinction between good and bad, beautiful and ugly (*husn* and *qubh*) in Islamic thought is also related to this issue. If people lose the consciousness that they are living under Allah’s supervision and control, mercy, grace, and His favor, their piety becomes shallow without going from the shell to the core.

In order to realize the feelings, thoughts and attachments that lie at the heart of the Muslim conception of goodness, we need to elaborate a little further on the *Hadith of Jibril* mentioned above.

Islam as religion from the Divine is a general invitation that the Creator has conveyed to humanity through His prophets from Adam to Muhammad (saw). Islam’s basic creed is built



**ISLAM AS RELIGION FROM THE DIVINE IS A GENERAL INVITATION THAT THE CREATOR HAS CONVEYED TO HUMANITY THROUGH HIS PROPHETS FROM ADAM TO MUHAMMAD (SAW).**

on three things: The beliefs of *uluhiyyah* (Divinity), *akhirah* (Hereafter) and *nubuwwah* (Prophethood). Our relationship with Allah is based on two precepts: 1) knowing Allah, i.e. *ma’rifah*, 2) Debt of gratitude to Him for having been the recipient of His blessings; that is, *shukr* and *hamd*.

Iman is at the center of Islam, as it means knowing Allah (*ma’rifah*), internalizing the belief that the command and rule belong to Him, living in this awareness, and having a sense of gratitude and thankfulness towards Him. Iman also means to be safe and secure under the ownership and sovereignty of the Almighty Creator. For believers, all existing things in the world are the greatest blessings, and iman is the heart’s gratitude for this blessing. However, iman is not a simple acceptance of what is happening in the inner world of individuals, but it is, and should be, the main source of strength that determines their behavior and life path, their basic values, and their priorities.

The debt of gratitude to Allah is to acknowledge that He is the One Who brought us into existence and granted us all the blessings we have, and to show all of these by our behavior. Indeed, the first verse of Surah al-Fatiha, the Opening Chapter of the

Qur'an, which is recited in every cycle (*rak'ah*) of the ritual prayer, is usually translated as "All praise be to Allah—Lord of all worlds". But this sentence is better understood when elaborated as "O Lord, all my gratitude, thanksgiving, servitude, and submission are to You. Because it is You Who created us; it is You Who gave us life; it is You Who sent us into the world; it is You Who addressed us, valued us, and blessed us with countless opportunities and blessings."

Being thankful to Allah and not being ungrateful and disbelieving is a threshold in religion, and once you cross this threshold, religion begins. The owner of the religion is Allah. We believe in Him as He has revealed it. The debt of gratitude and thankfulness to Allah should not be considered a passive confession and acceptance or a duty that can only be fulfilled by pronouncing it, but a state of consciousness that should be reflected in behavior. Therefore, we fulfill our debt of gratitude by doing what Allah commands in the way He commands and avoiding what He forbids.

To summarize, Islam is the sincere embrace and internalization of the fact that we have been created and that we are boundlessly connected to and grateful to Allah, to know how to be grateful

for this existence, and to reflect this consciousness in all our behaviors is also integral part of Islam.

**Not only ihsan, but also a number of concepts in our religious culture, such as taqwa, hikmah, irfan, birr, infaq, khayr, etc. also describe the perfection and essence of piety, that is, its moral aspect. Could you tell us about the moral values that constitute the characteristics of a good person?**

Moral values are the common values of society. They are not so simple, plain, and rootless that they can be defined by the individual initiatives, compulsions, and subjective evaluations of individuals. This is where religion makes an important contribution; it gives strength of morality and a spiritual foundation by confirming and affirming the common moral values of society, which have been filtered through history and are connected to the essence of being human. When we look at the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, we witness a series of moral values and the manifestation of these values on behaviors. This is what he must have meant when he said, "I was sent to perfect good character."

(Malik, Muwatta, Husn al-Khulq, 8) We can infer that Islam does not reintroduce common moral values



**ISLAM IS THE SINCERE EMBRACE AND INTERNALIZATION OF THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN CREATED AND THAT WE ARE BOUNDLESSLY CONNECTED TO AND GRATEFUL TO ALLAH, TO KNOW HOW TO BE GRATEFUL FOR THIS EXISTENCE, AND TO REFLECT THIS CONSCIOUSNESS IN ALL OUR BEHAVIORS IS ALSO INTEGRAL PART OF ISLAM.**

but refer to them, affirm them, support them, and reinforce them.

When we talk about Islamic morality, it is not important to talk about morality per se, but to live in these grounded values that have already entered our lives. Islam considers it hypocrisy to express moral values with the most beautiful and fancy words but to act contrary to them. What is important is that moral values should take root in us and that we must internalize them and that we should consider acting contrary them -even if we are alone- as detrimental as losing our humanity, dignity, and mission of creation. Moreover, it is important that these values are reflected in our lives, manifest themselves in our behavior, and bear fruit. In Islamic civilization, goodness derives its power from this essence. Indeed, not only the Islamic world but all of humanity needs such an essence and a profound channel of nourishment.

**By sending the Holy Qur'an, Allah Almighty intends to give us the consciousness of doing good and being a good person. How should one read the Holy Qur'an to achieve this consciousness?**

If we read the Holy Qur'an as a Book of knowledge and view the Prophet Muhammad's sunnah as a



source of information, we cannot establish a sincere and deep connection with them at the level of consciousness. The guidance of the Qur'an and the sunnah is essentially a light that illuminates our world of heart. We should think of Allah's message sent to the Prophet through revelation as Allah's call to us. We can even read the Qur'an as Allah's special address to each of us and think, "This is what Allah wants from me". For the Qur'an is Allah's dialogue with us. It is not a one-sided directive. The Qur'an was revealed in a dialectical relationship with its interlocutors in 23 years, and it built a heart-bond among the Companions, who were seen as the

founding generation of Islam. It was this warm bond and this very consciousness that formed the Companions' society, and thus history witnessed a high level of human quality.

Iman, worship and ihsan, all stand at the center of piety, good morals, and virtues; and taqwa and goodness, seen as their fruits, lead ultimately to a state of consciousness rather than knowledge. Therefore, in piety, essence rather than form, intention rather than words, practice rather than knowledge are important.

**In Islamic thought, the foundations of the sense of goodness and why a Muslim should do good**

are explained in the Holy Qur'an within the framework of the concept of "good deeds ('amal al-salih)". Could you tell us about the relationship between good deeds and goodness?

There are two things that the Holy Qur'an constantly states: Believe and do beneficial deeds, do good deeds, and do righteous deeds that benefit people and benefit you. There are many different translations of good deeds. But all meanings converge on the common denominator of "useful, decent, peaceful, and righteous deeds". Faith and good deeds/useful deeds are the common denominator of all the divine religions and the summary of the religious message. You can also see faith as the more fixed or static pillar of religion and good deeds as the more variable or dynamic pillar. This is because the main line of faith has always remained the same within the tradition of revelation, while the form and details of good deeds have changed over time, even though the intention and purpose remain the same.

The concept of good deeds, which is emphasized by religion and which is broad enough to encompass all beneficial and auspicious deeds, is closely related to the concept of Sunnatullah. The religion-world balance and the



**WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT MORAL VALUES SHOULD TAKE ROOT IN US AND THAT WE MUST INTERNALIZE THEM.**

concept of Sunnatullah should be urgently discussed by those who want to take lessons from all the experiences from the earliest times to the present day and from the mistakes that humanity has collectively committed, and to understand what good deeds are.

Allah created life in the world in a certain order. He ordered us to live in the world within its own rules and discover the cause-effect relationship therein, while staying on the course as guided by religion without exceeding the limits set by it. He also informed us that the life in the Hereafter depends on what we do in this world. In verse 25 of Surah al-Nur, the Qur'an explains that having a say in the world is about belief and doing good deeds: *"Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely establish for them their faith which He has chosen for them; and will indeed change their fear into security..."* Here it is about leadership and exemplarity in the good, the beautiful, and the truth in general.

Since the Companions and early Muslims understood the balance between religion and the world, and were well aware of Allah's

laws on earth, they relied on causes; they traveled to distant lands on horses or camels, carried the divine message, progressed in worldly affairs, and succeeded. This is what Sunnatullah is. When this is the case, even making a

distinction between religion and the world does not make much sense. Religion, the world, reason, thought, and science are all the work of Allah's creation and grace. Accordingly, people will be able to foresee the cause and

effect relationship in the functioning of the world and foresee the consequences of every action they do; this is what it means for people to be intelligent, willful, free and responsible for their actions.



**The most important condition for all deeds, favors and acts of worship to be accepted by Allah the Almighty is that they are done with pure intention and sincerity. Why is sincerity so important in religion?**

What is most contrary to the nature of morality, virtue, and goodness is to practice them for vanity and worldly benefits. If the performance of a religiously required act of worship or good deed is done with the expectation of one's being seen or heard by others, or for material gain, then sincerity ends and the act becomes worthless in religious terms. The essence of piety requires sincerity toward Allah, the Prophet, and the whole society (Muslim, Iman, 95). The Prophet stated that Allah will accept only the deeds that are performed with sincerity and for His sake alone (Nasa'i, Jihad, 24), and also said, "Verily Allah does not look at your faces and your wealth but He looks at your heart and to your deeds." (Muslim, Birr, 34)

Our religion commands that our words and deeds should be free from any kind of ostentation and games of gain, and it also advises us to do good deeds in the hope that Allah alone will reward us. Because the hypocrites who do good deeds "so that others may see and



**ALL MUSLIMS SHOULD UTILIZE THEIR MEANS, KNOWLEDGE, AND EXPERIENCE TO PRODUCE DEEDS THAT ARE BENEFICIAL TO ALL HUMANITY AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE PEACE, TRANQUILITY, AND SECURITY OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND HUMANITY, STARTING FROM THEIR IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS.**

hear" will gain nothing in this world or the Hereafter. In fact, doing good deeds not for the sake of rewards in the Hereafter, but for the sake of gaining Allah's pleasure, is considered a high level of behavior and worship and it is the real consciousness in religious terms. Because such a behavioral quality is ultimately the product of self-respect and the effort to make one's existence meaningful, as well as the outcome of one's faith and trust in Allah.

**In the Holy Qur'an, we often see the word *ihsan* used in different derivatives in relation to goodness. Allah commands us to treat our parents, relatives, and spouses with *ihsan*. In this respect, what is the relationship between goodness and *ihsan*?**

Verse 90 of Surah al-Nahl, which is recited at the end of the khutbah in Friday prayers every week, states: *"Indeed, Allah commands justice, grace, as well as courtesy to close relatives. He forbids indecency, wickedness, and aggression. He instructs you so perhaps you will be mindful."*

This is one of the most comprehensive statements of the Qur'an concerning *ihsan*, good, and evil. This verse points to the unbreakable link between justice, *ihsan*, and doing good to relatives. People who are just, balanced,

good, and virtuous always have a sense of doing good to others. On the one hand, this is a requirement of their faith and trust in Allah and the fulfillment of their debt of gratitude; on the other hand, it is also the result of their self-respect and their endeavor to give meaning to their existence.

**Although it has a very wide scope, today we see that the meaning of goodness has been narrowed down to almost only material aid. Does the condition for helping require sufficient material means? Can helping be dependent on any conditions?**

None of the words such as *khayr*, *birr*, *infaq*, *tasadduq*, and good deeds mentioned in the Holy Qur'an should be compressed into a narrow field and understood as "giving material aid". All Muslims should utilize their means, knowledge, and experience to produce deeds that are beneficial to all humanity and contribute to the peace, tranquility, and security of their community and humanity, starting from their immediate surroundings. The Prophet's statement "(Saying) a good word is charity." (Bukhari, Adab, 34) suggests that we should approach these concepts in a more complete and broad perspective.

# PEOPLE WHO CHANGED THE WORLD WITH GOODNESS

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ  
اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝ ١١٠

“Establish prayer, and pay alms-tax. Whatever good you send forth for yourselves, you will certainly find its reward with Allah. Surely Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.”

(Baqarah, 2:110)

**Hakan Emin OZTURK**

As Muslims, we will always be guided by the Qur’an. When read carefully, the Qur’an not only helps us improve our morals and strengthen our bond with Allah but also gives us the formula to change the world.

The Almighty Allah commands: “Do good deeds!” In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad (saw) says:

“The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial to people.” (al-Mu’jam al-Awsat 6/139)

These two messages best illustrate what Islam offers to humanity and how we can change the world for the better. So how can we internalize and practice them? In the stories of people who were inspired by Islam, they all made it a principle to transform their inner world and then the world outside. These are five beautiful stories featuring strong morals that will inspire you to be a better believer.

## **A Couple Dedicated to Raising the Children of the Ummah: Ahmet Kemal and Gulbahar Oncu**

When a newly married couple found out that they couldn’t have children, they were both disappointed. However, they firmly believed in Allah’s mercy and continued steadfastly in prayer. They welcomed the fact that they were not able to have kids and thought:

“If Allah did not give us children of our own then we should raise the children of the ummah!”

Therefore, they devoted themselves to African children. For nearly 25 years, they have tirelessly carried out several activities regarding education of the children in dozens of countries and have managed to reach out to hundreds of thousands of people. Finally, Allah rewarded them with hundreds of children and grandchildren bearing their names in various countries.

## **A Life Dedicated to the Environment: Selim Petek**

Selim Petek is one of the best examples of how a verse and a hadith can change humanity: “...He is the One Who produced you from the earth and settled you on it.” (Hud, 11:61) Petek, who has set the verse as a motto for himself, has made it his duty to have a good relationship with nature. “If the Final Hour comes while you have a shoot of a plant in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it.” (Al Adab Al-Mufrad, Book 27, Hadith 479) Inspired by this hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), Mr. Petek has planted 8,500 seedlings in Sivas in 15 years.

### A Youth Building Her Paradise: Baraka Khan

Like everyone else, she was a student who attended classes regularly at the university and hoped that one day she would pursue the profession she dreamed of. However, there was one important aspect that set her apart from her friends: her enthusiasm for charity projects. The latest one on her agenda was a mosque to be built in the city where she was studying. Yes, Europe's first ecological mosque in England, the Cambridge Central Mosque, was being built, and it would be possible with donations. Knowing this, Baraka Khan rolled up her sleeves and started organizing various activities at the university to collect donations for the mosque. As a result of the fundraising campaign she started, she and her friends raised about £255,000 and donated it to the mosque project. During this time, she was diagnosed with last-stage cancer and unfortunately passed away before the construction of the mosque was completed. A section of the mosque was named after Baraka, and her friends dedicated a website in her name. Tens of thousands of people visited this website and shared their thoughts. Even though she passed away at a young age, her story continues to inspire many others.

### A Man Who Taught Us Compassion: Mohamed Bzeek

A 64-year-old US citizen of Libyan descent, Mohamed Bzeek is otherwise known as "an angel walking on earth". In 1978, he went to the USA for his university education, but a different educational adventure awaited him. In 1989, he was introduced to the concept of "foster family" and this phrase was to define the rest of his life.

In 1995, he and his wife made a decision to open the doors of their home to dozens of terminally ill, orphaned children, and so far, they have taken in about eighty children. Forty of these children were terminally ill, and there was no hope for them. Sadly, ten of them departed soon, but Bzeek and his wife helped seventy of them live with their love. Mohamed says, "Nothing but the compassion in my heart was what kept me going for all these years."

"They are like my own children; I don't see them as adopted children. When they die, my heart hurts... We are human beings, and we have mercy in our hearts, given to us by Allah."

### The Imam Who Changed the History of Islam in Korea: Zubeyir Koc

In 1956, he was only 21 years old when he received the news that he was going to Korea. A young imam was sailing to a strange land with a mission to be a leader and a role model for the people. He boarded the ship saying Bismillah, and when he arrived in Korea, he strived to live in accordance with the universal message of Islam. Through his exemplary morals, he won the hearts and minds of many, and soon he had many brothers and sisters in Islam. He left two things behind when he returned from Korea after only one and a half years: More than 200 Korean Muslims who embraced Islam through his efforts and good memories with them. "We learned good manners from Zübeyir Hodja."

All these examples remind us of one truth:

**Goodness will change the world.**



# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE AXIS OF RELIGION

Emine ACAR

Religion is a phenomenon as old as the dawn of humanity. The behavior of developing tools and machines that humans use is another phenomenon that goes back just as far. While these systems, which are reflections of imagination, once represented physical strength, the thought that, in time, they could also represent intellect gave birth to artificial science technology. The idea of the artificiality of intelligence, which emerged as a result of the mechanical universe and human understanding, is the locomotive technology of Industry 5.0 today.

Islam offers principles to guide people in their relations with God, other people, and nature. On the other hand, aside from the opportunities that artificial intelligence technology provides humans and their relationships with God, society, and the environment, there are radical and largely threatening implications. In this context, this technology, in a sense, is a

product and achievement of the collective effort, which can be counted as the peak, of humankind throughout history, which the creator has equipped with knowledge and wisdom and made inclined to development and progress with his own effort. In this way, it can contribute to the establishment of a more prosperous, fair, moral, and livable world order in favor of the material and spiritual development of humankind. However, as it is a very powerful technology with revolutionary potentials that will directly affect people, society, social institutions, and nature, its use with malicious intent and without the control of universal ethical principles will have devastating consequences.

## Humans in the age of artificial intelligence

At the core of artificial intelligence's claim to mimic the nature of humans is the assumption that they can be reduced to mere matter and are

therefore a mechanical and imitable entity. Thus, it is possible to develop machines that do not have human physical limitations and weaknesses and that have much faster and more advanced cognitive skills. However, this runs the risk of lowering humans to object status amid the rise of machines.

In the religion of Islam, human beings are revered and responsible beings, consisting of the unity of spirit and body, and are made superior to most of the creatures due to their intelligence and will (Isra, 17:70). The fact that they are the most perfect, beautiful, and distinguished beings on earth in terms of both physiological and mental qualities is stated in the following verse: "Indeed, We created humans in the best form." (Tin, 95:4) Islam is at odds with the attempt to minimize humans—who have soul-body integrity, free will, values, and faith—to the dimension of matter, abstracting them from value, meaning, and spirituality and making them robots.

## History and religion in the age of artificial intelligence

The philosophical background of artificial intelligence constitutes the teaching that we find in other religions, especially conceptualized as *imago dei* ["God created man in his own image." (Genesis 1:27)] in the Bible. According to this, the development of an artificial intelligence means that humans create intelligent machines in their own image, similar to the fact that God creates human beings in His own image by granting them qualities such as intelligence, power to rule on earth, etc. In addition to this approach, in which humans are given the role of god, there are also approaches in which artificial intelligence is deified, representing a new type of perfect and superhuman intelligent being. Presented to replace the traditional metaphysical god, this new god is brought to the attention of modern humans who need to rely on a transcendent

being. Another possible effect of artificial intelligence on religion in the context of the human-god relationship is the development of mostly atheistic new movements focused on artificial intelligence and transhumanism.

According to Islam, there is no beginning or end to the existence of Allah, who exists spontaneously and necessarily (*wajib al-wujud*) as a requirement of His essence. Allah, who is not compound and is one and unique in His essence, attributes, and actions, is the creator and maintainer of the universe. Artificial intelligence systems, on the other hand, are not obligatory and need human-made software and hardware other than themselves. Again, it should not be forgotten that artificial intelligence is based on limited and finite materials in the universe, which has been revealed to have a beginning and an end with theories such as the Big Bang and entropy. One cannot speak about uniqueness when referring to intelligent devices and robots that were created by imitating human cognitive abilities and physiological traits. Although artificial intelligence possesses abilities such as knowledge and strength, due to its later creation and limited



## AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE QUALITY OF A TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, IS DETERMINED NOT BY THE TECHNOLOGY ITSELF BUT BY THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH IT IS USED.

life, it is not feasible for it to possess the perfection of Allah's (swt) attributes. Furthermore, no artificial device, no matter how advanced, will be able to provide a believer with the sense of tranquility, security, and assurance that comes from believing in Allah (swt).

### Society in the age of artificial intelligence

When it comes to the risks of artificial intelligence, the first issue is how societies and social institutions will adapt to the innovations that this technology will bring. Considering that this adaptation will not occur simultaneously in all countries, it is inevitable that global injustice will increase. On the other hand, it is predicted that robots will displace people in many more professions in the future. In this case, the first to lose their jobs will be low-skilled workers, while the rapid increase in the income of those who use technology better will deepen the gap between classes. Leaving people without income and aimless will cause social and global upheaval.

The increasingly efficient and wide-reaching nature of artificial intelligence systems in almost all areas of life requires the reorganization of legal systems. Determining the social and legal status of artificial intelligence as an active agent interacting with its environment, making decisions, and acting is essential for determining the rights and responsibilities of machines and the mutual ethical principles between humans and machines.

The fact that intelligent systems operate with increasing autonomy increases the importance and urgency of drawing up this ethical and legal framework.

Islam has adopted the protection of the five fundamental principles (*zarurat al-hamsa*) for all people: life, mind, honor, religion, and property. In Islam the implementation of moral, just, and balanced economic policies—in which the interests of society are prioritized over the interests of individuals, wealth is distributed equally, and all members of society are engaged in business in line with their means—is one of the main requirements for the formation of this ideal order.

In order to determine the legal and social status of artificial intelligence, it should be clarified whether these intelligent systems should be considered as subjects or objects. At this point, explanations of Islamic sciences about the nature of artificial intelligence will be an important source. The fact that *kalam* is a discipline that develops theories about the elements and nature of the universe by closely dealing with physics and cosmology and presents

human conceptions from there reveals its leading role in the examination of this technology. On the other hand, as kalam is a universal science that reveals and proves the principles of other sciences, it will also establish a basis for approaches to be developed by other Islamic sciences, especially fiqh.

### **The environment in the age of artificial intelligence**

Artificial intelligence, which is a sub-branch of technology that people have developed in order to channel nature for their own purposes and benefit from it, is not only a human concept but also a concept related to nature. Especially in the period of the COVID-19 epidemic, the value of sustainable ecological balance has been better understood, and it has become more important to determine the contribution or threats of technology to this balance and to take the necessary steps. According to the majority of experts, artificial intelligence has the potential to mitigate the effects of climate change. However, one of the main contributors of carbon emissions, which is one of the biggest causes of the climate crisis, is the very high amount of energy used by intelligent



**IN THE RELIGION OF ISLAM, HUMAN BEINGS ARE REVERED AND RESPONSIBLE BEINGS, CONSISTING OF THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND BODY, AND ARE MADE SUPERIOR TO MOST OF THE CREATURES DUE TO THEIR INTELLIGENCE AND WILL.**

systems, especially in intensive data processing and storage.

According to Islamic belief, Allah created the universe according to a certain measure and made perfect order, balance, and harmony prevail in it. The world, which is equipped with evidence pointing to the existence, oneness, names, and attributes of Allah, is at His command at all times, and people are tasked with protecting the unique order that Allah has placed. Of course, it is natural and even necessary for people to benefit from the opportunities of science and technology while fulfilling this duty. In this context, the development of environmentally friendly artificial intelligence systems and their use in predicting, detecting, and eliminating global ecological problems will yield beneficial and effective results.

### **Evaluation**

Artificial intelligence is perhaps the most controversial technology in terms of its religious, philosophical, and ethical implications and consequences among the technologies that humans have discovered thanks to the intelligence, inquisitiveness, and inventive abilities bestowed on them by

Allah. In particular, it can be the subject of claims that clearly contradict the traditional interpretations of religion about the nature of people and the understanding of God. In this respect, their intellectual backgrounds require deep religious and philosophical investigations. However, during this examination, a biased opposition should be avoided. As a matter of fact, the quality of a technology, including artificial intelligence, is determined not by the technology itself but by the purposes for which it is used. Therefore, religions will have no objection to a moral, ethical, legal, faultless, reliable, and environmentally friendly artificial intelligence technology that will be used as a tool for the responsibility of construction and reformation on earth of people whose nature and dignity have been preserved. Considering the widespread use of this technology and the power gained by countries with this technology, it is essential for Muslims to put this issue on their agenda in all fields, including religious and social sciences, in order to have a say in the development and implementation of artificial intelligence.

# THE FIRST REVELATION

Prof. Dr. Casim AVCI



He had never shown interest in the idols of the Meccans. He knew that it was meaningless to worship the idols.

Our Prophet believed in one God just like the small number of *hanifs* (believers in the monotheism taught by Prophet Ibrahim). The sadness He felt was due to not knowing the ways to worship Allah.

It had been a few years since He adopted the habit

of climbing up Mount Hira, a mountain about 5 miles away from the Ka'bah, to ponder in the cave. As Ramadan approached, he took supplies with him to Hira in order to spend some time in a cave there, free from gossip and evil.

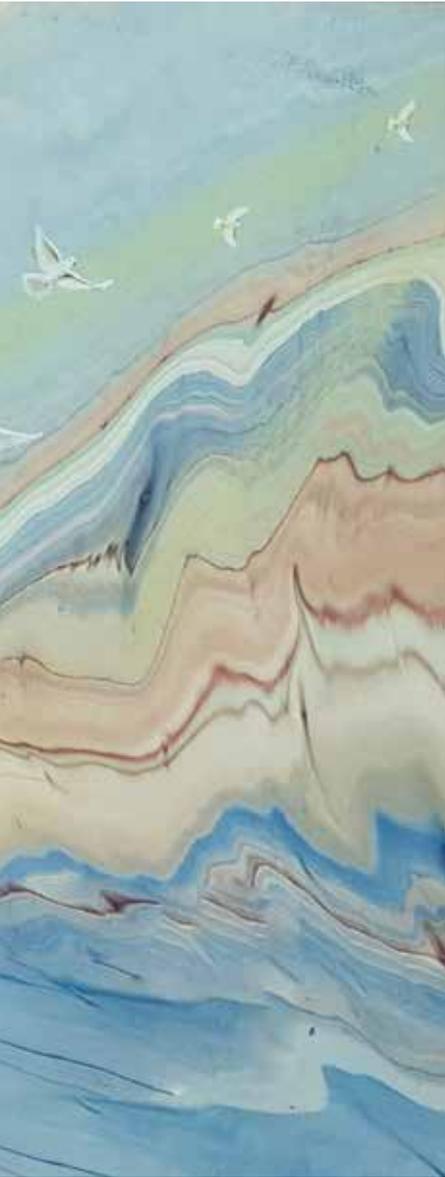
He reflected on many things including the Meccans who were involved in evil and their salvation. Upon consuming all the food, he would go

to the city and help the poor. Then, he would circumambulate the Ka'bah and then return to Mount Hira again with provisions. Once in a while, his wife Khadijah would accompany him.

Meanwhile, the Prophet started having *sadiq* (true) dreams. The dreams he had would happen in real life. In the valleys of Mecca, our Prophet heard voices saying, "Hail to you, O

Messenger of Allah." But when he looked around, he only saw trees and rocks, and as he could not see the owner of the voice, he remained in awe.

It could be said that Muhammad was prepared for revelation by Allah. He had spent long periods of time meditating in Hira; had prophetic dreams; heard voices; lived for 40 years without committing any evil; and everyone



Marbling Art: Muhammed Hamdi Kasapoğlu

trusted him as evidenced by his nickname “Amin”.

All of this had to have a meaning, and that meaning was starting to become clear now. At the age of 40, the Prophet was again secluded in Hira during the month of Ramadan in the year 610. It was one of the last 10 days of Ramadan, most probably on the twenty-seventh night, an angel named Jibril appeared to

him. Jibril informed him that he was appointed as a prophet by Allah and said, “Read!”

Later Prophet Muhammad narrates the event as follows: That night Jibril approached me and said “Recite!” (*Iqra*) “I do not know how to recite,” I said. Upon my answer, the angel held me tight till I could barely stand. Jibril let me loose and said for the second time “Recite!” I replied, “I do not know how to recite.” There the angel held me very tight again and repeated, “Recite!” “What should I recite?” I asked. Jibril, for the third and last time, held me really tight and let me loose. He then revealed the first five verses of Surah al-‘Alaq:

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created created man from a clinging substance. Recite! and your Lord is the most Generous—Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not.”

Our Prophet repeated the verses along with Jibril. He learned the first verses of the Holy Qur’an from Jibril then repeated and memorized them. He returned home under the heavy influence of the first revelation and the odd incident. Thrilled and afraid, the Prophet ran home trembling. Reaching his house, he went straight to bed telling Khadijah,

“Cover me, cover me with a cloth.”

Afterwards, our Prophet fell into a deep sleep, and when he woke up, he told about his experiences. Khadijah attentively listened to him and said the following to console him, “Glad tidings! Do not be terrified, Allah will never disgrace you because you respect the rights of relatives, you are true to your word, you help the poor and the destitute, you host visitors and you run to assist those who face disaster.”



**IN THE VALLEYS OF MECCA, OUR PROPHET HEARD VOICES SAYING, “HAIL TO YOU, O MESSENGER OF ALLAH.”**

After this first revelation, when there was no new revelation for a while, our Prophet was worried. He frequently visited the cave of Hira and waited there for Jibril to come. But the Angel did not arrive. During this period, our Prophet thought that Allah had abandoned him. This period, called “Fatrat al-Wahy” (interruption of revelation), lasted for several months. After some time, Jibril appeared with a new revelation and recited Surah Duhaa to the Prophet. In this surah, the Almighty Allah addresses our Prophet:

“By the morning brightness, And (by) the night when it covers with darkness, Your Lord has not taken leave of you, (O Muhammad), nor has He detested (you) And the Hereafter is better for you than the first (life). And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied. Did He not find you an orphan and give (you) refuge? And He found you lost and guided (you), and He found you poor and made (you) self-sufficient. So as for the orphan, do not oppress (him). And as for the petitioner, do not repel (him). But as for the favor of your Lord, report (it).”

Listening to the verses from Jibril, the Prophet’s concerns dissipated and he relaxed.



# THE FIRST MUSLIMS

One day, when the Prophet was at home Jibril appeared to him and revealed the first five verses of Surah Muddathir:

“O you who covers himself (with a garment)! Arise and warn. And your Lord glorify. And your clothing purify. And uncleanness avoid.” (Muddathir, 74:1-5)

These verses explicitly stated that Muhammad (saw) had been given the duty of prophethood and

was asked to deliver what Allah had revealed to him. From that moment onward, the Prophet was to invite people to the path of the one and only Allah. He would herald those who believed in and obeyed Allah with the happiness of both this world and the Hereafter while informing those who turned away and disbelieved of the torment of hell.

The Prophet, who was tasked with preaching the

religion of Islam, proposed his first ever invitation to his wife, Khadijah. Our Prophet recited the verses revealed through Jibril and asked, “Who would believe me?” His wife answered, “I would, even if no other person would.” Thus she had the honor of being the first Muslim to accept the invitation of the Prophet. The daughters of the Prophet: Zainab, Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum became Muslims the same

time as their mother Khadijah did. Fatimah at the time was a small child at the age of four or five. Meanwhile his cousin Ali, who lived in the same house as our Prophet, was a ten-year-old boy and he believed in the Prophet. Another member of the house, freedman Zayd was among the first Muslims.

In the meantime, Jibril taught Prophet Muhammad how to perform *wudu* (ablution) and ritual



Marbling Art: Muhammed Hamdi Kasapoğlu

prayers. Our Prophet, who taught Khadijah what he learned, began to perform ritual prayers at home with his wife. After his own family, our Prophet secretly invited the people around him to Islam for about three years. His close friend Abu Bakr became a Muslim without hesitation. Moreover, Abu Bakr invited some of his close friends to Islam.

Amongst the new Muslims were: Uthman, Zubayr ibn

Awwam, Abdurrahman ibn Awf, Talha ibn Ubaydullah, Sa'ad ibn abi Waqqas, Uthman bin Ma'zoon, Said ibn Zayd, Abu-Ubaida ibn al-Jarrah, Al-Arqam ibn al-Arqam, Abu Salama, Bilal al-Habashi and Ja'far ibn Abi Talib.

All those who accepted Islam during this period, when they were secretly invited to Islam, were all reliable and discreet Meccans who were not involved in the evil and

perverted traditions of the age of ignorance. Among them were people from all social strata. Also, most of them were young people. During the three-year secret invitation period,

the total number of people who accepted Islam reached thirty people.

In these early years, our Prophet (saw) performed prayers at home, at the desolate mountains, near the Ka'bah during silent hours at noon and sometimes he performed the prayers with other Muslims. In the meanwhile, he recited the revealed verses to other Muslims. Belief in oneness of Allah (tawhid), in the day when one will be held accountable for what one has done in the world, and good morality were the subjects of such conversations. During this period, Muslims could not explicitly worship and could not openly invite to Islam. The Meccan polytheists attacked them on occasion. During the secrecy period, they would gather at a place called "Dar al-Arqam" (House of Arqam). Arqam was a young man who became a Muslim. His house was in a secluded place in Mecca that also enabled communication with outsiders. In this place, they could pray in congregation and invite anyone willing to listen to the message of Islam. As a result of their activity there, many people accepted Islam. Umar was one of them. For the open invitation to Islam had begun.



**OUR PROPHET  
RECITED  
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# IS ISLAM THE RELIGION OF REASON?

**I was wondering, is Islam the religion of reason? If Islam is the religion of reason, why would such intelligent people not believe in it? Is there a problem with Islam or with their intelligence?**

Let's start answering with reason. Do we have a clear answer as to what exactly reason is? What is reason, is it the power of intellect or the capacity of mind? Let's elaborate a little on this. Is it grasping something immediately, or absorbing and retaining the information over time?

**I am actually confused!**

Well, the issue itself is complicated anyway. Reasoning is often equated with intelligence nowadays, and highly intelligent people are considered to be very logical. Intelligence, however, is defined as the power of a person to find solutions to problems in one's own field. Solving the problem is only possible by deep comprehension and retaining it permanently. Here the mind comes into play, it is where what we have learned is stored.

**So does the mind do all this on its own? Doesn't it get support from anywhere?**

We can answer this by thinking about the development of a child. The child is a smart creature from the moment of birth as long as s/he doesn't have any mental illness or retardation. The first

learning experience of the child is through eyes and ears. That is, children start learning by imitating the things they see and hear. The things that are said do not make sense to the child, and the child does not have the ability to reason. With the development of the mental ability over time, the child can remember the things that hurt them a lot. S/he may have no idea why that things hurt. This is because the power of comparison is not yet developed in the child. The children only reach the stage of using their minds with the development of the power of comparing and differentiating. Up until this time, a great deal of input accumulates in children's minds through what they see and hear, although this is through imitation. This is how the children make the comparison and differentiation. If it is insufficient, they tend to get information from those around them. Exactly at this point external sources come in.

**So, it is not possible for the mind to function alone.**

Of course! Because the mind works with comparing and differentiating methods. Our ancestors called it *qiyas* (reasoning) and *tamyiz* (differentiating). In order to carry out these two operations, there must be some input accumulated in the mind. This is the

very reason that brings out the human need to learn. People collect materials through learning in their minds and then they obtain new information by comparing and contrasting them. They plan the future in the light of this information.

**So, it's impossible to survive without reason!**

Definitely not. That is why Allah created humans with reason and He addressed those with reason. However, the reason that is isolated from all information is impossible to function. So, reason is a mechanism that works based on the information it is equipped with. If the person does not expand and diversify the knowledge gathered in one's mind, then the person will be trapped in a vicious circle with monotonous thinking.

**What about religion?**

A person learns the Creator and his/her duties towards Him (swt) through the religion. As it is not possible to see the Creator, the knowledge about Him is obtained through the way we receive information about the things we don't see. That is learning. We can only obtain this information through the Prophet whom Allah assigned and sent us. The assignment of the Prophet as a human is intended to appeal to both the mind and the senses. This is because the Prophet is not

only a teacher but also a role model and an example.

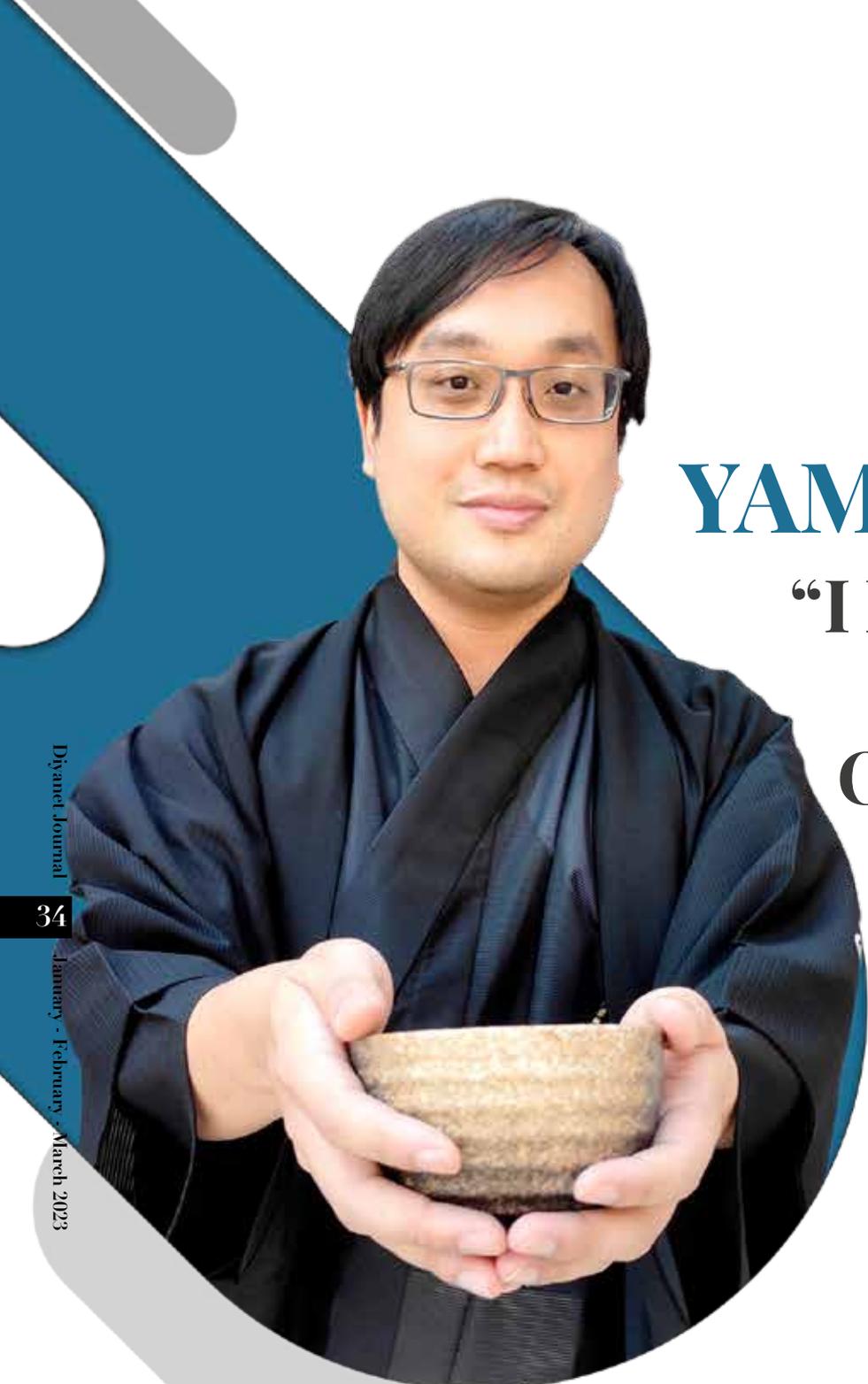
**Yes, the teacher as well. How about going back to the topic, it sounds as if we had disabled the mind?**

The mind can never be disabled. Disabling the mind means a person becomes dysfunctional and enters a vegetative state. That's why no prophet ever intervened in people's minds by coercion. If they had done, the will of humans would have been disabled. Indeed, the work of the mind is comparison and discrimination. At the end of this comparison and discrimination, it makes a choice. Based on this preference, people draw a path and method for themselves. When you eliminate these processes and compel them to a certain direction and method, neither the mind nor the will becomes important. Since Almighty Allah knows the system He has established very well and the people He has created, He has established the duty of prophets in a way that will not harm the system and limit the human mind. As we said before, people need information from outside and this is exactly what the prophets did. They brought some information about the area that they did not know. They guided people about how to use this information and how to determine a path in the future. In this case, people weigh the pros

and cons. If a person does this while ignoring the information the prophets brought, they would be imprisoning themselves in a narrow and barren area by reasoning only with the information in their minds. Indeed, a smart person makes decisions by improving and diversifying one's knowledge. If a person reaches a conclusion by using the knowledge the prophet brought, then the person will be on the right path.

**Should we, then, see all information tools as a whole?**

Exactly. When the means of knowledge are separated from each other, people are left with an incomplete knowledge. So, it is not possible to arrive at a conclusion and achieve a result with the mind alone. Islam appeals to the mind, prioritizing the understanding of the mind. In this respect, reasoning clearly has an undeniable place and importance in Islam. When we say that Islam is a religion of reason, if we mean a religion produced by the mind, that is not true, but if we say that it is a religion that the mind can grasp and approve of, then it is true. People who condemn the mind to a one-sided view and limited knowledge definitely disable the mind. The expressions in the Qur'an such as "Most of them do not reason" are also for such people.



# YAMAMOTO: “I EMBRACED THE FAITH OF ISLAM IN MY HEART FIRST.”

*Born in Okayama, Japan in 1989, Dr. Naoki Qayyim Yamamoto studied Christianity at Doshisha University. Yamamoto, who reverted to Islam 12 years ago, came to Istanbul to research Ottoman mysticism. He currently holds the position of director of the Sakura Center for Japanese Studies at Ibn Haldun University and is also a faculty member at Marmara University Institute of Turkic Studies. He gives lectures on Islamic history and philosophy in Asian civilization as well as Sufism in the Ottoman Empire.*

Interview by: Zeynep Feyza AKKAYA

### Could you tell us about your journey of becoming a Muslim?

My encounter with Islam is an encounter with a master (Sensei). I converted to Islam 13 years ago in Egypt when I was an undergraduate student at a university in Kyoto, Japan. For a homework assignment, I read various works and books on different religious traditions that I found at the university library. I remember one day I came across a book titled “A Brief Introduction to God”. It was a small book that explained the concept of Tawhid in Islam without using any terminology regarding Allah or the Prophet Muhammad (saw). I was so impressed with the book that I investigated the author and discovered the author was, Khawla Kaori, the wife of Professor Hasan, a professor of theology at my university, and contacted him about meeting her. Professor Hasan replied immediately and asked me to meet him at a cafe near the university. As I was waiting in the cafe when Professor Hasan arrived and with sadness broke down crying as soon as he walked through the doors. He said Ustadha Khawla passed away a year ago from an illness. He expressed his persistent sorrow, but said that a young man who had read her book and was

interested in Islam came to him and reminded him of the following hadith.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, “When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: *sadaqah jariyah* (ceaseless charity); a knowledge which is beneficial, or a virtuous descendant who prays for him (for the deceased).”



**TAWHID IS ONE BUT ITS EXPRESSION IS DIVERSE. I HAD AN IMAGE OF MUSLIMS AS PEOPLE LIVING IN THE MIDDLE EAST, SO I WAS SURPRISED AT THE VARIETY OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES THAT EXIST WITHIN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION.**

He said, “I missed her so much. I kept wondering where she had gone and how I could see her. Now her life has become knowledge and she dwells in your heart and will be with me. In her place, I will be your sensei (teacher).”

Later, Professor Hasan introduced me to Muslims from various countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, England, Syria, and Egypt. He taught me that tawhid is one but its expression is diverse. I had an image of Muslims as people living in the Middle East, so I was surprised at the variety of languages and cultures that exist within Islamic civilization.

Then in the summer of my sophomore year, I went to Cairo with Professor Hasan for an Arabic summer program, where he said to me, “Why don’t you take this opportunity and convert to Islam?”

Thinking back, I think the seed of faith had been dwelling in me since I read Ustadha Khawla’s book. I had no resistance to his proposal. While not declaring it openly that day I embraced the faith of Islam in my heart.

**What kind of differences did you experience in your relations with your family or close friends after converting to Islam? What aspect of your life has changed the most since you converted to Islam?**

When I became a Muslim, the Japanese people

around me were very understanding and there were no problems.

Those who sincerely pursue traditional Islamic studies have always guided me. They never judge people, believe in the goodness of people, and sacrifice themselves to help others. The beauty of Islam is that its scholarly traditions guide people. In the end, what matters is education and cultivation.

**Which aspect of Islam has affected you the most?**

I do not like the expectation of someone’s story of being impacted by a certain religion and converting. Human life does not need that kind of Hollywood movie drama. Sometimes people are naturally led to something. Conversion is a start, not a goal. There is no point in focusing on it.

**How did you decide to live in Turkey, what effects did this decision have on your life?**

I came to Turkey to continue my research on Ottoman *tasawwuf* after my PhD.

**How did you decide to work in the field of Sufism?**

Japan has various values and cultures that shaped Japanese society, such as the kimono, tea ceremony, and Buddhist classics. I wanted to study the history and intellectual traditions of Islamic civilization to

consider from a broader perspective how to preserve Japanese culture in the future. In this sense, I thought that Islamic studies and the spiritual traditions of the Ottoman Empire could provide a very useful perspective.

Islamic sciences during the Ottoman Empire were an intellectual system that created a society embracing people of diverse origins, and tasawwuf created the spiritual foundation of such a society. Japan and Turkey have experienced the process of modernization in a variety of different contexts. They have similarities and differences concerning the preservation of traditional culture and intellectual heritage. I am particularly interested in learning about the history and practice of tasawwuf, the spiritual and cultural center of Ottoman society, and its post-modern situation.

I have noticed that tasawwuf has a surprising number of similarities in the practical aspects of Japanese culture, such as the various practices of purifying the heart, called *suluk* in tasawwuf, which were practiced in many lands with various methods. The Mevlevi Sufi order that developed in Anatolia, for example, used cooking and kitchen duties as a spiritual practice. Tariqa masters appoint



## AFTER CONVERTING TO ISLAM, I FOUND MYSELF THINKING, “WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A JAPANESE MUSLIM?”

their disciples to various kitchen-related positions to develop their spirit. The same tradition existed and continues in Japanese Zen Buddhism. At the Eiheiji, a Soto Zen temple in Fukui Prefecture, Japan, the food is prepared by a practitioner appointed to the position of Tenzo. It is a process that helps

suppress one’s ego and cultivate a spirit of service to others.

**You have visited many countries. What can you say about the various interpretations of Islamic civilization in different countries?**

I was rather surprised by the fact that there is little knowledge of East Asia within the Muslim community. Islam is a universal religion, but the Muslim community is oblivious to the fact that its universal teachings are manifested with local particularities. For example, in his work “On the Five Colors of Islam” (Aux cinq couleurs de l’islam), orientalist convert Vincent Mansour-Monteil divides Islamic civilization into five categories. These are different Islamic traditions manifested in Turkey, Africa, Malay, Arab and Indo-Persian regions. But I think there is an important gap in those categories.

For instance, I am a Japanese Muslim convert. Then, according to this theory, where is an East Asian person standing? Is there no such thing as a Sino-Islamic culture, or is this something that has just begun to flourish? In fact, the Sino-Islamic civilization can be one of the oldest cultures in the Islamic tradition, since there are [accounts] that one of the Companions reached China. Unless

we know Chinese Islamic history, we cannot fully grasp the tradition of Islamic civilization.

And after converting to Islam, I found myself thinking, “What does it mean to be a Japanese Muslim?”, “Am I going to be a Muslim like a Turkish, an Arab, or a Malay?” I also wondered if accepting Islam meant abandoning my past as a Japanese and my Japanese culture. After reading different sources, it was the Sino-Islamic books which surprised me the most because these books were as if they were written by a Muslim Samurai! Afterwards, I felt that if we could revive this valuable heritage, it would be easier for us to build Japanese-Islamic culture.

Therefore, learning Sino-Islamic culture is necessary not only to fill the academic gap, but also to develop a correct method (*usul*) for Japanese Muslims. An interesting point about Islamic civilization is that Islamic ideals acquired linguistic expressions suitable for their context in various regions. For example, in the Malay region, shadow plays were used by Sufi saints as a means of teaching Islamic history and thought to the people. Many manuscripts written in various languages of the Malay region such as Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese also remain. The vision of Islam is



universal, but the method of experiencing Islam is diverse. If this is the case, then there should be a method for Japanese people to experience Islam. I would like to learn about the history of Islam in East Asia as a key to understanding such a method.

**What can you tell us about your tea ceremony project that is currently underway?**

It is said that the tea ceremony is the art of compassion for others and the process of accepting one's imperfections. This is precisely the philosophy described in the spiritual ascent process (*maqamat*) of tasawwuf.

I first noticed the similarities between the tea ceremony and



**THINKING  
BACK, I THINK  
THE SEED  
OF FAITH  
HAD BEEN  
DWELLING IN  
ME.**

Ottoman Sufi culture when I was learning about the culinary culture of the Mevlevi Order mentioned above. The spirituality that elevates the act of serving food and drinks to others to a sophisticated culture and expresses it as a symbol of overcoming the ego and altruism is a common theme between Japanese culture and Ottoman Sufi culture.

In the Sufi training lodges in Anatolia, you can see calligraphy with the Ottoman Turkish word *hiç* on the wall. *Hiç* means nothingness. It represents man's insignificance and powerlessness compared to God, but also the state of mind of a Sufi who has eliminated his selfishness and cultivated a heart of devotion to others. The Sufis of Anatolia were

not training to become something but to teach their spirit to become nothing.

The Wabi-Sabi of the tea ceremony has a similar vision. In the tea ceremony, a deep black tea bowl with no decoration is preferred as a symbol of the heart embodying nothingness. Sen no Rikyu, the great master of the Japanese tea ceremony, described the black color of a tea bowl as "the color of embracing eternity". It refers to a heart that is not distracted by a false world or ego, but is focused on the invisible reality behind it.

The black color of a tea bowl for tea ceremony is the state of *hiç* that the Sufi aims for.

# ISM AL-JAMI': ALLAH

Fatma BAYRAM

The most comprehensive name of the Supreme Being, who created all existence out of nothing and upon whom the continuation and development of everything depends... This name has never been given as a name to any other being than Him in any period of history (Maryam, 19:65).

Although much has been said about the origin of the word "Allah," it is not derived from the opinion of the majority. Against the claim that the name "Allah" derives from "al-ilah", Muhammed Hamdi Yazır rejects this opinion by stating that this name comes before all other names and attributes.

The existence of Allah is spontaneous and necessary; it is the main reason behind everything that exists. Since He is the only real being, the absolute reference point of our understandings is Him. If we try to understand something without taking Him into account, we

will have to attribute it to something that is not real. In this situation, our knowledge and wisdom will be a collection of disparate thoughts with disconnected ends that cannot reach *tawhid*. Our destination will be meaninglessness.

From Him we come, and to Him we go. Any work that does not begin by mentioning His name will fail to achieve the desired results. As we begin to look at our existence with Him in mind, our approach to every detail of life will change. We are no longer what we used to be. This change is also reflected in our daily language. We always remember Him as we express our joy, sadness, surprise, fear, and disappointment (Hasbunallah, Awwal Allah, Mashallah, Inshallah, La hawla wa la quwwata illa Billah, Alhamdulillah, Astaghfirullah...) While this language reflects the faith in us, it also reinforces our faith.



**ACCORDING TO THE QUR'AN, IN ORDER TO BE A "BELIEVER", IT IS NECESSARY TO BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF ALLAH AS WELL AS "NOT ASCRIBING A QUALITY THAT BELONGS ONLY TO ALLAH TO ANYONE OTHER THAN HIM".**

As the essence of Allah comes before all names and attributes, the name "Allah" is "Ism al-Jami" preceded by other names and attributes. Those who say "Allah" have called Him by all his names and have taken refuge in all known and unknown names. We see this predominance of the name "Allah" in the following prayer of our Prophet: "O Allah! I ask You by Your pure, good, and blessed Name which is most beloved by You, which if You are called thereby You answer, and if You are asked thereby You give, if You are asked for mercy thereby You bestow mercy, and if You are asked for relief (from distress) thereby You grant relief." (Ibn Majah, Du'a, 9)

However, there is the "Allah" in our minds, and there is the real "Allah" (Saffat, 37:180). There is only one way to know Him properly. It is paying attention to how He describes Himself. The



first step to understanding Allah is to understand the Qur'an (Baqarah, 2:255; Hashr, 59:22-24).

According to the Qur'an, in order to be a "believer", it is necessary to believe in the existence of Allah as well as "not ascribing a quality that belongs only to Allah to anyone other than Him" (Isra, 17:42). Those who know their Lord by all of his names know that the expression "There is no god but Allah" means that there

is no one "all-knowing," "omnipotent," "all-hearing and all-seeing," and "all-sustaining" other than Allah.

Sufis see existence as the manifestation of the names of Allah. According to them, every human being is the owner of a name. The servants in whom the name "Allah" resonates are those in whom good morals are embodied as a whole due to the comprehensiveness of this name. Sufism calls

them "insan al-kamil" (the person who has reached perfection), and psychology calls them "self-actualized people". These are people who have succeeded in transforming the contradiction of opposites into the unity of tawhid and have attained complete peace (Fajr, 89:27).

People who desire the perception of this name should reduce their deficiencies and increase their virtues as much as possible. This is possible

with complete faith in Allah, obedience, and self-control. It is impossible to discuss development without mentioning the triad of belief, worship, and morality. This development is indispensable for us to get closer to Him because Allah, Who is transcendent from this realm, needs to get closer to us in order to establish a relationship with us, and we also need to develop ourselves.

# ISLAM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Abdullah BAYRAK

*"...And our duty is only to deliver 'the message' clearly."*

(Ya-Sin, 36:17)

Islam has spread throughout the world thanks to pioneers who saw it as their responsibility to convey the message. One of the best examples of this preaching movement is the Muslim community in the United Kingdom.

Although the British first encountered Islam in earlier centuries, it was not until the second half

of the 19th century that the first settled Muslim communities emerged in the country.

The first Muslims to settle in the British Isles were the sailors from Yemen, Aden, Gujarat, and Somalia who arrived in populated ports like London, Cardiff, Liverpool, South Shields, Bristol, and Hull. These groups were the first to represent Islam in the country. Muslims have been present in these early settlements ever since, gathering for rituals like worship, weddings, and funerals.

The founding of the Woking Institute for Oriental Studies in 1884 was one of the most significant steps in the recognition and growth of Islam in the United Kingdom. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, an orientalist of Hungarian descent, founded this institute in the town of Woking, south of London, to accurately introduce Eastern languages and religions.

After Leitner's death in 1899, activities slowed down for a while. However, the activities were restored when Lord Headley, who

accepted Islam while in India came to Woking in 1912.

Despite continuing its operations into the 1960s, the Woking Institute for Oriental Studies lost its former prominence as other institutions, like the East London Mosque and the London Central Mosque, were established. In spite of this, it became known in history as a significant organization that contributed to the acceptance and growth of Islam in the British Isles.



Following the Second World War, an influx of workers led to the development of the United Kingdom's primary Muslim population. In order to fill the labor shortage in the United Kingdom, people from nations like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh moved to industrial cities, establishing the Muslim communities there.

Turkish Cypriots, who began to emigrate in the 1950s, are another group of Muslim immigrants. Those coming from countries such as Malaysia, West Africa, Morocco, Yemen, and Iran due to political or economic reasons also added to the Muslim minority.

The number of Muslims of British origin is increasing day by day. In the United Kingdom, which has a population of 67 million people, there are about 3.9 million Muslims, according to unofficial statistics.

### **Islamic Institutions and Organizations in the United Kingdom**

One of the first activities of Muslims who settled in the country was to build mosques. The total number in the United Kingdom is estimated to be around 1,750.

About fifty of these places of worship are new structures designed in the style of mosques, with the majority being old structures that were later



converted into mosques. Some of these are the Central, East London, Suleymaniye, Valide Sultan, Sheikh Nazim, and Aziziye mosques in London and the central mosques in other cities.

The most famous mosque in England is undoubtedly the Cambridge Central Mosque, the first environmentally friendly mosque in Europe, which attracts attention with its design. Named "the epitome of solidarity against discrimination" by the President of the Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, this mosque is one of the masterpieces of woodworking and has been awarded many awards in this field. The Cambridge Central Mosque, which has a capacity of 1,300 people, reflects the cultural wealth of the country in the best way.

Islamic organizations, Muslim states, and individuals contributed to the construction of these



**ISLAM HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD THANKS TO PIONEERS WHO SAW IT AS THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE.**

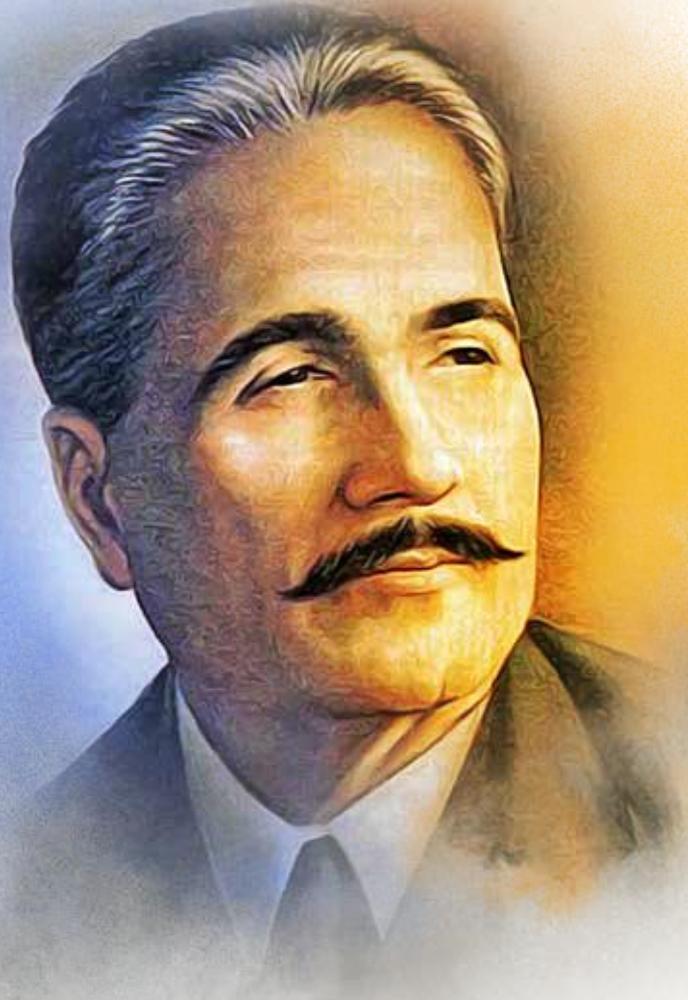
mosques, most of which are used for both worship and social activities.

There are more than 1,000 religious organizations in the United Kingdom, some local, some nationwide, and some at the international level. The Union of Muslim Organizations, the United Kingdom Islamic Mission, the Muslim World League, the Islamic Foundation, and the United Kingdom Council of Mosques are some of them.

The Presidency of Religious Affairs of Türkiye, which pioneers activities carried out in the name of Islam in many parts of the world, serves all Muslims in such areas as worship, religious guidance, and religious education through the British-Turkish Diyanet Foundation, which was established to support the services of the Turkish Religious Services Consultancy and Diyanet in the United Kingdom.

# BETWEEN THE EAST AND WEST: MUHAMMAD IQBAL

Koray SERBETCI



On November 8, 1877, a boy was born in the city of Sialkot, near the Kashmir border of the Punjab state. His name was Mohammed Iqbal. Iqbal would become a person whom Muslims living in the land of his birth would see as a pioneer.

In order to understand what happened in the 19th and 20th centuries and the life and struggle of Muhammad Iqbal, it is necessary to go back even further in history. To better understand not only Iqbal but also concepts relating to India and Indian Muslims.

The arrival of Muslim conquerors to this land, originally called “Bharat,” now known as India, coincides with an early period. However, the person who laid the foundations for the existence of a Muslim community and Indo-Islamic culture in India, which have survived to the present day, is the Ghaznavid ruler Sultan Mahmud. With his 17 campaigns, this zealous Turkish ruler brought the adhan, which has continued to be recited in India for nearly a thousand years since.

But those who carried Indo-Islamic culture to the fore are the grandchildren of another Turkish ruler, Timur. The Turkish ruler Babur, who knew how to hold a sword and a pen,

laid the foundations of a fair administration that ruled over a myriad of languages, belief systems and ethnic backgrounds in this region. Under Muslim Turkish rulers, people of different religions, languages, and races lived in peace.

### **Political and Economic Problems in India**

From the 17th century on, the British laid their hands on the Indian trade, and by opening a place in the port of Surat, they had a way to conquer India from there in the future. Strangely enough, in India, where the British settled for trading activities, the Mughals had transformed from a strong structure that provided justice to a state where the princes fought each other for the throne.

The nation was divided into two as a result of the throne wars that broke out once more in 1707. The capture of Delhi by the Iranian ruler, who wanted to take advantage of this, and then the Afghan ruler’s invasion of India, led to political chaos. The British started to control India after defeating the Mughal armies at the Battle of Buxar in 1764. With the 1766 Treaty of Allahabad, British dominance increased. The British—who put down the Indian Rebellion led by Muslim Indians in 1857 wanting to end British domination—overthrew the final Mughal Emperor



**IN SHORT,  
THE MUSLIM  
SOCIETY IS A  
SOCIETY BASED  
ON FREEDOM,  
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THAT SEES  
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MUHAMMAD  
(SAW) AS  
ITS PERFECT  
EXAMPLE  
AND TAKES  
THE BELIEF OF  
TAWHID AS ITS  
CENTER.**

Bahadur Shah II in 1858, ending the Turkish-Islamic rule in India and giving the British Empire control.

So when Muhammad Iqbal was born in India in 1877, it was under British colonization.

### **Muhammad Iqbal’s self-construction**

Iqbal’s father was a Sufi. Both his father, Nur Muhammed, and his mother, Imam Bibi, were significantly influential in the development of his piety. After receiving his basic education in Sialkot, he took philosophy and law courses at the Government College in Lahore in 1895. The influence of two key figures on Iqbal during his formative years would also determine the path he would take as a poet and thinker. These people are Mevlana Mir Hasan, and the other is his Western teacher, Thomas Arnold. Arnold noticed Iqbal’s talent and had him attend Cambridge University.

In Cambridge, Iqbal met renowned Hegelian philosopher McTaggart and psychologist James Ward. Under the supervision of these important teachers, he studied philosophy. Meanwhile, he established close ties with a number of prominent orientalist. After completing his studies at Cambridge in 1907, he traveled to Munich, where he earned a doctorate in

philosophy with his work “The Development of Metaphysics in Persia,” which he completed under the direction of Fritz Hommel.

Iqbal returned to Lahore and spent two years teaching English and philosophy at Oriental and Government colleges. Although he mostly made a living as a lawyer, he was looking for answers to issues facing Muslim societies.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there were generally two tendencies in colonized Muslim countries: The first trend was the view that it was impossible for Muslim nations to stand against Western civilization with their own identities but that they could exist by becoming unconditionally Westernized. The intellectuals who followed this path were expressing their belief that every political and cultural concession should be made to the West. The second trend was a defensive approach. Those who argued that the West was the cause of all the troubles in the Islamic lands tended to reject anything that would come from the West. They believed that this was the only way to be protected from the harmful effects.

Neither of these views could repair the damage caused by modernism

and colonialism, which Muslims were faced with. Muhammad Iqbal correctly assessed the situation and proposed a new path for both the Indo-Islamic community and all Muslims worldwide.

First of all, Iqbal had reached a brand new synthesis as a Muslim intellectual who both received religious education and studied philosophy in the West. He evaluated together the mystical view of the renowned sufi Rumi, the views of great Muslim jurists, and the thoughts of Western philosophers such as Hegel, Bergson, and Nietzsche. Thus, his method of thought integrated Eastern and Western influences without compromising the basic principles of Islam.

#### **Suggestions for solutions to the problems of Muslims**

Iqbal conveyed the synthesis of his ideas formed through his intensive education during the analysis of practical events. The starting point of his thought process was to be aware of the problems faced by Muslims who were dealing with modernism and colonialism. Because only Muslims who were aware of this could respond to the West in both the political and social spheres.

However, Iqbal thought that both his Muslim-Indian community and other Muslim societies were unsuccessful in this regard. Because there was a severe pacifism among Muslims in those days. That was the biggest source of problems. Iqbal placed the blame for this complacency on the Muslims themselves. The Muslims had not been able to fulfill the duty given to

them by Allah to be His caliph (Khalifatullah fil-Ardh-Allah’s deputy) on earth. Therefore, they lacked the dynamism to respond to the West. The reason for the current situation was not only the power of the West but also the lack of awareness of Muslims in the political arena, their falling into sectarian fights, and their lack of action. So what should Muslims do? What took Iqbal beyond the role of beloved poet with his passionate poems that inspired millions and also made him the spiritual father of Pakistan was the model he offered to Muslims.

#### **What should the ideal Muslim society be like?**

According to Iqbal, the ideal Islamic society, namely the Ummah, is a community consisting of individuals with the same consciousness. The only role model in this society is the Prophet Muhammad (saw). In short, the Muslim society is a society based on freedom, equality, and fraternity that sees the Prophet Muhammad (saw) as its perfect example and takes the belief of tawhid as its center. As a role model, the Prophet Muhammad (saw), both as a prophet and a statesman, showed Muslims what needed to be done in his life.

The ideal society he described was not a



**HE THOUGHT THAT THE WAY FOR MUSLIMS TO ESTABLISH SUCH AN IDEAL SOCIETY AND TO REVIVE THE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION WAS THROUGH A SOLID EDUCATION.**

stagnant ideology but a model that was firmly entrenched in the basic principles of the Qur'an and sunnah al-saniyyah but could also be adapted to the changes and advances of the time.

This is a unique society. Because the ideal Islamic society, which is based on absolute equality, actually contains the core values of democracy. But this was not the understanding of democracy modeled by the West, which had its origins in ancient Greece. This was a unique understanding of democracy that came from the essence of Islam.

For Iqbal, democracy was the best form of government in terms of allowing the individual to emerge. With this feature, it was much better than the aristocracy, which prevented individuality. When he looked at Muslim Indian society, he saw sectarianism and the caste system, which he thought were worse than in Hindu society. For this reason, Muslims' preference for democracy would enable them to rise again. However, emphasizing that democracy is not only a pragmatic form of government, Iqbal argued that the roots of this system are in Islam itself. In fact, according to Iqbal, the model of the small Muslim society, operating largely on the basis of equality and unity, had manifested itself in the

early years of Islam, during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and his companions.

However, Iqbal saw education as the most important foundation for establishing this order. He thought that the way for Muslims to establish such an ideal society and to revive the Islamic civilization was through a solid education. Democracy was a vision that only Muslims educated enough to know what they were voting for could survive. Thus, through education, a strong-willed and conscious Muslim model would emerge. Iqbal, with the influence of the German philosopher Nietzsche, cared about the concept of *Übermensch* (the superior man). Of course, his intention here was to emphasize conscious and strong-willed people, not race. This corresponded to the Sufis' concept of "al-insan al-kamil". Iqbal, who named this model "merd-i Hüda" in his own language, especially focused on Rumi's concept of "al-insan al-kamil".

#### **The road to the founding of Pakistan**

Muhammed Iqbal was not just a theorist. He took part in daily politics without compromising his principles. He joined the National Freedom League in Lahore in 1924 and was elected to the



## **MUHAMMAD IQBAL CORRECTLY ASSESSED THE SITUATION AND PROPOSED A NEW PATH FOR BOTH THE INDO-ISLAMIC COMMUNITY AND ALL MUSLIMS WORLDWIDE.**

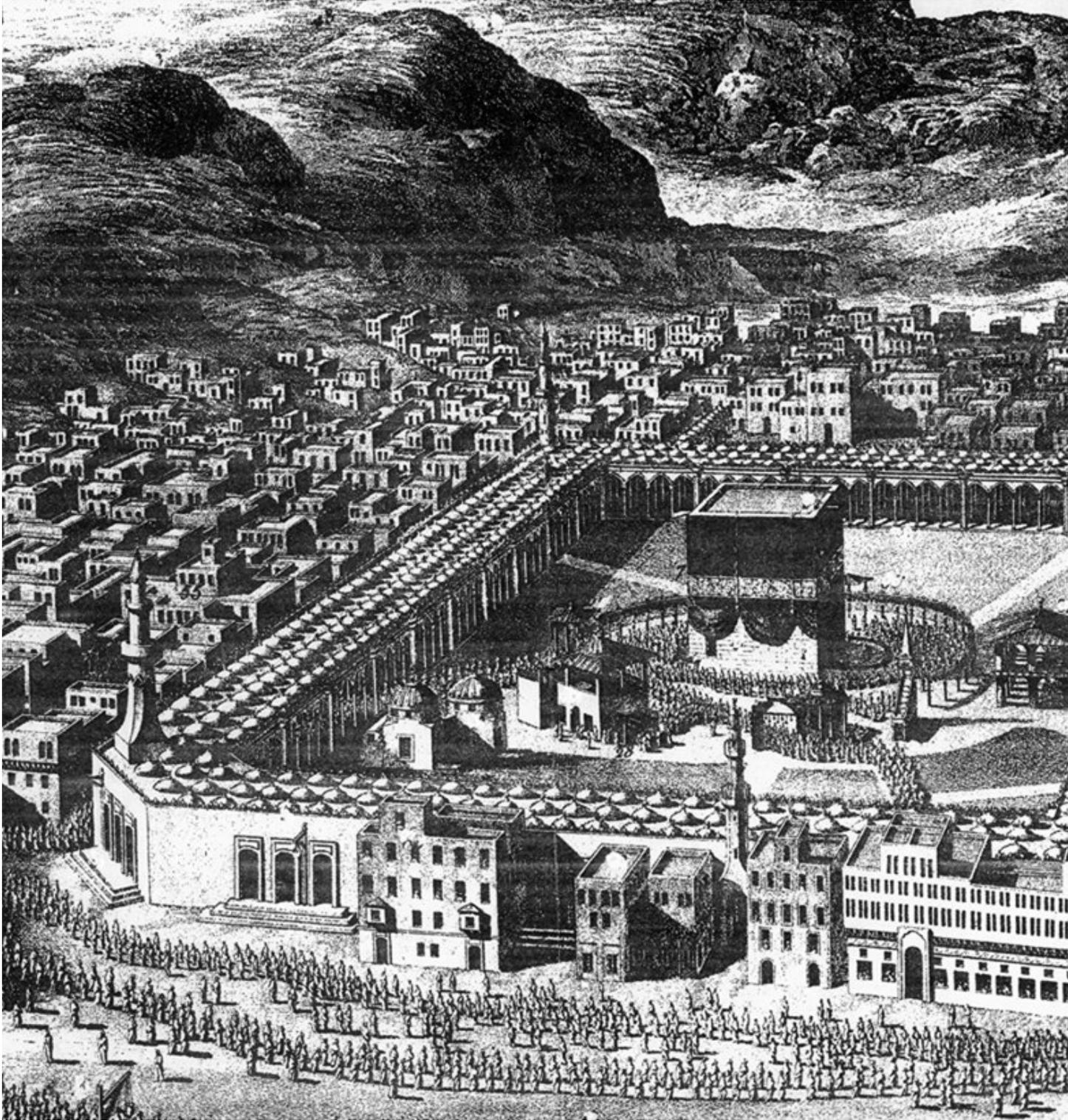
Punjab Legislative Council in 1926. He became an active member, talking about land incomes and taxes and advocating compulsory education and better health care for the villages.

The idea of Islamic unity, which is clearly seen in Iqbal's writings, goes hand

in hand with his national liberation activities. But Iqbal had a road map. The Islamic nation would come after anti-colonialism, the liberation of India from being a British colony, and giving the Muslim Indian society an independent state. According to him, the Islamic nation is a community of Islamic countries that has achieved political and cultural independence and has strengthened its internal structure.

As part of his political activities, Iqbal was elected president of the Islamic Union in 1930 and put forward his dream of Pakistan in his presidential speech. He attended the second and third roundtable meetings on the future of Pakistan held in London in 1931 and 1932, respectively. Thus, Muhammad Iqbal joined the politics of his country and guided his people with the responsibility of a Muslim intellectual. His thought on the subject was: "Politics is to work, and to invite to dignity and honor."

Muhammed Iqbal passed away on April 21, 1938 and did not live to see Pakistan gain its independence on August 14, 1947. However, with the poems he wrote, he had a great influence on the establishment of Pakistan, with his ideas suggesting that Muslims should be conscious and eager.



# MASJID AL-HARAM

Kaan H. SULEYMANOGLU



*An engraving of the al-Masjid al-Haram*

Masjids are at the center of Islamic civilization. As the safe havens of peace and tranquility on earth, masjids are the places where Muslims come together to worship Allah, talk amongst themselves, keep each other informed, and consult on social issues.

Fourteen centuries ago, Allah revealed the Qur'an, the last book of salvation, to mankind through His servant and messenger, Prophet Muhammad (saw). People of all classes, ages, and backgrounds came together under the roof of the same faith, sharing the same feelings and thoughts. The sincere unity of the believers, shaped with the guidance of revelation, created a brand new model of humanity and society. At the center of this social structure are the masjids, each of which is a spiritual candle.

Throughout history, Muslims have built their cities centered on masjids; they have positioned their houses, educational institutions, marketplaces, and common areas of use around the masjids. The fact that the masjid is at the center of life is not only a physical condition but also a civilizational system that includes the worldview. Islamic sciences, Islamic arts, and Islamic architecture were



**THE FACT THAT THE QUR'AN STATES THAT ONLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN ALLAH AND THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND WHO PERFORM THEIR PRAYERS PROPERLY, PAY THEIR ZAKAT, AND FEAR NONE BUT ALLAH SHALL REPAIR THE MASJIDS OF ALLAH HAS MADE MUSLIMS THROUGHOUT HISTORY COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER IN BUILDING NEW MASJIDS AND RECONSTRUCTING EXISTING ONES.**

largely manifested in this masjid-centered social life; they developed by blending with different cultures and societies and led to the emergence of magnificent examples of cities, masjids, and madrasas in Mecca, Madinah, Qurtubah (Córdoba), Baghdad, Istanbul, and Samarqand.

#### **The First Masjid on Earth**

The masjid is at the center of Islamic civilization, and at the center of all masjids in the world is Masjid al-Haram, described in the Qur'an as "the first masjid on earth". Allah the Almighty also refers to it as "a blessed sanctuary and a guide for all people" (Al-i 'Imran, 3:96). All the masjids in the world are like its branches. In addition, the Messenger of Allah, while answering questions, said that the first masjid built on earth was Masjid al-Haram and the second masjid was Masjid al-Aqsa in al-Quds (Bukhari, "Anbiya", 40; Muslim, "Masajid", 1-2).

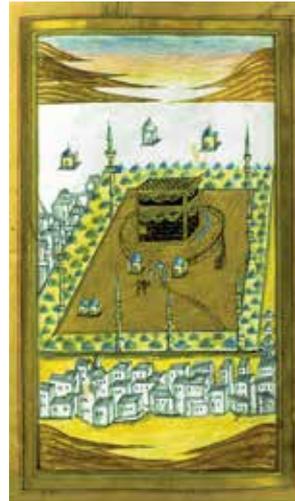
The Masjid al-Haram is a sanctuary in the city of Mecca, located in today's Saudi Arabia, which contains the Ka'bah, an immensely meaningful and sacred structure for Muslims. Wherever Muslims are in the world, they perform prayers by facing towards the Ka'bah, the Bayt Allah, which means "the house

of Allah". Today, the Ka'bah is the symbol of Islam and Hajj all over the world with its cube-shaped structure, measuring 10 by 12 meters at its base, and its black cover that has been carefully woven and renewed for centuries.

The Holy Qur'an states that the location of the Ka'bah was shown to Prophet Ibrahim by Allah, and that he and his son Isma'il raised the foundations of the Ka'bah (Hajj, 22:26; Baqarah, 2:127). Stones brought from the mountains surrounding Mecca were used in its construction, and the stone that Prophet Ibrahim put under his feet to build the walls during the construction has survived to this day as Maqam Ibrahim. Also located in the Masjid Al-Haram in the eastern corner of the Ka'bah, Hajar al-Aswad, which means "the black stone", is considered sacred for Muslims as a stone believed to have been sent down from Heaven. The Zamzam Well, located directly opposite Hajar al-Aswad, about twenty meters away, is also located inside the masjid. Zamzam is the name of the water that was offered to Hajar, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim, by Allah when she was desperate to quench the thirst of her infant son Isma'il.

### Muslims Competed for Service

All acts of misbehavior are forbidden in the Masjid Al-Haram, with the Ka'bah in the middle of its courtyard. Whoever enters it should be safe (Al-i 'Imran, 3:97). The inviolability and sanctity of this area were also a prevailing belief among the pre-Islamic Arabs. Indeed, the city of Mecca was a religious center even before Islam. People from all over Arabia would come to Mecca for pilgrimage. However, this ancient place of worship was diverted from its original purpose, and the idolatrous traditions and pagan beliefs of the Arabs of *Jahiliyyah* drove it away from *tawhid* (monotheism) and its position as the center of tawhid. What was built as a sanctuary for people to connect with their Lord had become a place where people fell into the trap of polytheism (*shirk*). Although the polytheists tried to forbid Muslims from worshipping in this ancient masjid in the early years of Islam, after the conquest of Mecca in the 8th year of Hijrah, Masjid al-Haram regained its original identity and became the center of monotheism again after being cleansed of idols. In his famous conquest speech, the Prophet (saw) said that the polytheists who took



Portrayal of the Ka'bah in *Dala'ilu'l-khayrat*

refuge in the Ka'bah would be safe, preserving the long-standing identity of the masjid.

### Masjid al-Haram at the time of the Messenger of Allah

At the time of the advent of Islam, the Arabs lived a predominantly nomadic life, so architecture was not advanced yet; places of worship and similar structures were built in the simplest forms.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (saw) and Abu Bakr, the Masjid al-Haram consisted of an empty area around the Ka'bah. As the number of Muslims increased, this area was insufficient to meet the needs of the community, so 'Umar expanded the area in the year 638 by demolishing the houses near the masjid, surrounding it with a wall of medium height, and placing torches on these walls for illumination. Nine years after this expansion, 'Uthman raised the walls of the masjid a little higher, enlarged the area even more, and built a single row of wooden porticoes surrounding the courtyard. In the following years, these activities continued, and the masjid was covered with marble columns and decorated ceilings during the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman periods.



**THE SINCERE  
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HUMANITY  
AND SOCIETY.**

The fact that the Qur'an states that only those who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment and who perform their prayers properly, pay their zakat, and fear none but Allah shall repair the masjids of Allah (Tawbah, 9:18) has made Muslims throughout history compete with each other in building new masjids and reconstructing existing ones. As a matter of fact, when a portico of the Masjid al-Haram collapsed in 1572, the Ottoman Sultan Selim II commissioned Architect Sinan, the wisest architect in the empire, to completely renovate the masjid, sparing no expense in this endeavor. The Great Architect Sinan dismantled the wooden ceiling of the masjid and replaced it with white-washed domes with gold alams (finials), decorated the interior of the domes, repaired the minarets, and renovated the 19 gates of the Masjid al-Haram, which were subject to constant flooding, by raising the thresholds.

In the following years,



*Portrayal of the Miniature of the Ka'bah*



**THE MASJID IS AT THE CENTER OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION, AND AT THE CENTER OF ALL MASJIDS IN THE WORLD IS MASJID AL-HARAM, DESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN AS "THE FIRST MASJID ON EARTH".**

Muslims continued to expand and renovate Masjid Al-Haram. Not much of the physical structure of the masjid from that period has survived. The current physical structure of the masjid bears the signature of the Saudis to a great extent. The historical parts that still survive were inherited from the Ottomans who served the holy city for centuries.

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) said of the Masjid al-Haram, "No (religious) journey is to be undertaken except to (pray in) the three masjids" and that the prayers performed here are considered more virtuous than those performed in other masjids (Bukhari, "Fadl al-salah fi masjid Makkah wa'l-Madinah", 1; Muslim, "Hajj", 415, 505-513). Both for this reason and because it is a place of Hajj, Masjid al-Haram is one of the places of worship visited by millions of Muslims every year. With its 9 minarets, 99 gates, 190,000 square meters of building area, 61,000 square meters of roof space, and 88,000 square meters of prayer space outside the masjid, Masjid al-Haram has an area of approximately 350,000 square meters, and with the use of the surrounding streets, it is large enough for 1 million people to perform prayers at the same time.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAM



## What are the proofs about the fact that the Qur'an is protected and authentic?

The Qur'an is the last divine message that the Almighty Creator has sent down to all people until the Day of Judgment. He did not only send down these supreme words, but also took it under His protection. This fact is explained in the Holy Qur'an, "We have, without doubt, sent down the Message (i.e., Qur'an); and we will assuredly guard it (from corruption)." (Hijr, 15:9) This divine declaration is the greatest guarantee for Muslims about its protection. Indeed, history is the living witness to this. When the Holy Qur'an started to be revealed, it was both written down and memorized by Companions, constantly recited in prayers, and moreover, was reflected in their lives by being applied and manifested in the beliefs and deeds of Muslims. Following the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, the separate written pieces of the Qur'an were collected and a *Mushaf* was compiled during the rule of Abu Bakr. Subsequently, there was an increase in Islamic conquests in the period of the third Caliph Uthman, who convened a commission and the copies of Qur'an reproduced by this commission were sent to Mecca, Kufa, Basra, Damascus, Bahrain, and Yemen. Muslims prepared many copies of the Qur'an based on these first copies and this divine book has reached our era without any change.

## How many verses are there in the Holy Qur'an?

The Arabic word *ayah* is the term used for the verses in the Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an has reached us without any changes since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Yet, when the Holy Qur'an was punctuated, some small differences were made in division and numeration of verses. For example, a phrase which is accepted as one by some scholars is considered as two verses by other scholars. Thus, minor differences emerged in the numbering of the verses. Although there is a common belief among the public that the number of verses in the Qur'an is 6,666, the correct number is 6,236.

## What is the importance of dhikr and how should one make dua?

The lexical meaning of dua is “to call, address, demand, and ask for help”. In Islamic terminology, it is man’s turning to Allah with his whole being and presenting his material and spiritual wishes to Him. As it is based on a human’s submitting his state to Allah and supplicating to Him, dua is a connection between Allah and a servant. Dua always bears the meaning of honoring (glorifying Allah) and of demanding something along with this honoring. Dua is dhikr and worship at the same time. Therefore, two elements, one of which is dhikr and respect and the other is demand, are always included in dua.

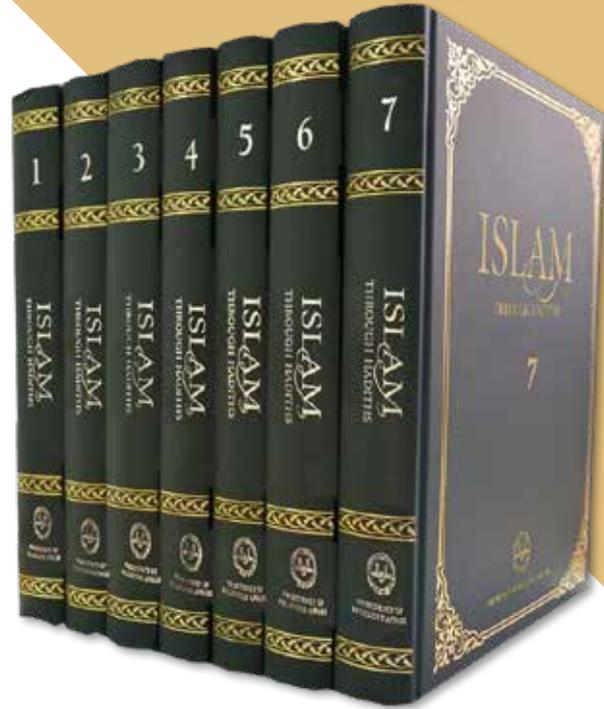
For this reason, Prophet Muhammad (saw) said, “Dua is the essence of worship.” (Tirmidhi, Da’awat, 2) For the same reason, ritual prayer, which is the most important act of worship, is expressed with the word dua (*salat*) (An’am, 6:52; Kahf, 18:28). In another verse it is stated, “Say (to the rejecters): “My Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him: But ye have indeed rejected (Him) and soon will come the inevitable (punishment).” (Furqan, 25:77), expressing that humans can only gain value by means of turning to Allah. It is emphasized in the Holy Qur’an persistently to submit duas only to Allah and not to make dua and perform worship to anyone other than Allah, for idols or other creatures to which superior qualities are attached (Shu’ara, 26:213; Qasas, 28:88).

## What is the nature of verses of dua that take place in the Qur’an?

There are a lot of verses related to dua in the Holy Qur’an. Around 200 verses are directly about dua. Moreover, there are a great number of verses which express a worshipper’s turning to Allah and one’s demands from Him and are related to dua in a broad sense. People are commanded to make dua to Allah in some of the verses related to this subject and the procedure, custom, and effects of dua are explained (Baqarah 2:186; Nisa 4:32; A’raf, 7:29, 55, 180; Yusuf, 12:86; Mu’min, 40:60). It is stated in some verses that duas made without complying with its conditions will not be accepted (Baqarah, 2:200; Yunus, 10:12, 22, 106). The majority of the verses in this group tell about the plea of those who do not recognize Allah and His commandments when they are alive on earth but will be sorry when they face their bitter fate in the Hereafter and beg to be sent to the world again. More than 100 verses include the duas of prophets and other faithful people or communities. Some surahs and verses serve as dua texts. Surah al-Fatiha is a good example of this. The dua in the 201st verse of Surah al-Baqarah, which means, “O our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and defend us from the torment of the fire!” is the dua recited most after Fatiha. Anas ibn Malik said that Prophet Muhammad (saw) recited this most while making dua (Bukhari, Da’awat, 55) and advised people to recite it (Muslim, Dhikr, 23). It is seen in verses 8–9, 16, 53, 191–194 of Surah Al-i ‘Imran and in verse 74 of Surah al-Furqan. These are recited with the intention of dua. Verses 35–41 of Surah Ibrahim—which include the dua of Prophet Ibrahim, especially verse 41, which means, “O Lord! Cover (us) with thy forgiveness—me, my parents, and (all) believers on the day that the reckoning will be established!”—are the verses of dua that are recited often. Dua of the Prophet Musa in Surah Ta-Ha (Ta-Ha, 20:25–35) is one of the examples of dua in the Holy Qur’an, with its short, vivid, harmonious, and effective verses. The dua in these verses is made with expressions of, “O My Lord! Expand me my breast; ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech so they may understand what I say.”

# ISLAM THROUGH HADITHS

Dr. Rukiye AYDOĞDU DEMİR



*Islam through Hadiths* is a work that aims to convey the hadiths and sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) to modern-day people from authentic sources in the appropriate language and style. In this respect, the work presents the exemplary attitudes and behaviors of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and messages that are relevant in every age, in very plain and understandable language, focusing on topics that take into account the problems and needs of the age we live in.

*Islam through Hadiths* has a unique style in terms of writing technique and content. It consists of a

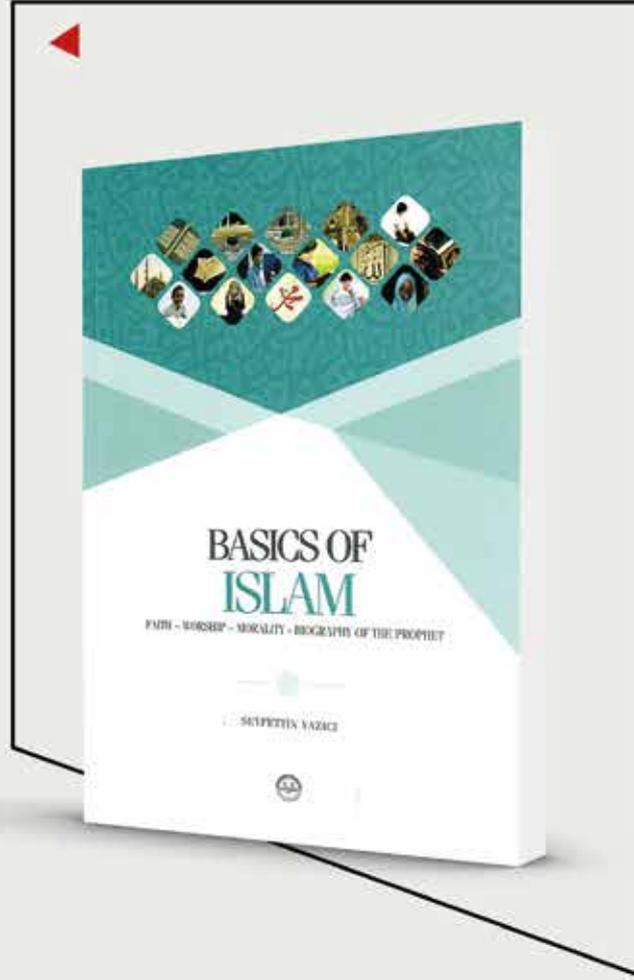
preface, an introduction, and eight main parts: 1. Allah, The Universe, Man, and Religion 2. Knowledge 3. Faith 4. Worship 5. Morality 6. Social Life 7. History and Civilization 8. Eternal Life: The Hereafter. There are around 350 subject headings under these main sections. There are highlighted hadiths under each subject heading that are chosen from reliable sources, cover the subject, encapsulate the main idea, and can be memorized.

*Islam through Hadiths* is a focused work, not a broad compilation of hadiths on various subjects. In the work, the hadiths are presented under a certain

topic by interpreting them within a certain style of writing and editing. The subjects are handled from a holistic perspective in light of the related narrations, especially verses of the Qur'an. A style that can be expressed as the interpretation of hadiths with hadiths has been adopted. However, since the work generally aims to convey knowledge of the hadith to the reader, technical knowledge, problems, and academic discussions in the field of hadith are not included in the texts.

*Islam through Hadiths*—which is the product of a collective effort that reflects Türkiye's

experience in the field of hadith—differs from previously published works in this field in terms of scope, participation, background, content, and style, and fills an important gap as an outstanding source of hadith. It is presented to our esteemed readers by the Presidency of Religious Affairs as an original and reference work for those who want to know the Messenger of Allah (saw) in the light of his words, explore his wisdom, and carry his exemplary life to the present day.



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some of what you cherish. And whatever you give is  
certainly well known to Allah.**

(Al-i 'Imran, 3:92)

