

# Diy Janet

## Journal

ISSUE 2 | APRIL-MAY-JUNE

## ISLAM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

| Islam, Environment, and Morality

| A Leader of Contemplation: Alija Izetbegović

| Masjid al-Nabawi



# Miniature

Miniature painting is a traditional art form that involves intricate detailing and small sizes, accompanied by unique painting techniques. Miniatures are typically used to visually depict people and events in manuscripts, allowing for a representation of textual content. Unlike other forms of painting, miniatures do not strictly adhere to the rules of light and shade, proportion, and perspective. Rather, they emphasize intricate details in elements such as trees, leaves, flowers, human and animal figures, as well as interiors. The colors used in miniatures are often vivid and bright, diverging from realistic depictions.



Miniature: Saniye BORA

# Editorial

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Humans are living beings who are in interaction with their environment from birth. Created by Allah for a purpose, they have a special place in the world of existence. Allah the Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, has placed all that He has created in the service of humanity and has entrusted them with the responsibility to develop and improve the earth in gratitude for these blessings.

The Holy Qur'an beautifully expresses this interconnectedness with the following words, "It is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. He has subjected the ships for your service, sailing through the sea by His command, and has subjected the rivers for you. He has also subjected for you the sun and the moon, both constantly orbiting, and has subjected the day and night for you." (Ibrahim, 14:32-33) These verses emphasize that human beings are integral to the world of existence. It also highlights that the environment is an area of responsibility and trust for human beings.

Allah the Almighty has explicitly prohibited people to squander the blessings that He has placed at their disposal and entrusted to their care. He has declared that there will be a reckoning for every blessing given to them. Our Prophet (saw) encouraged Muslims to work until their last breath and reminded them of their responsibility towards nature by saying, "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." (Bukhari, Adab al-Mufrad, 168) This statement underscores the utmost significance that Islam attaches to the harmonious relationship between humanity and the environment.

We are delighted to share with you, our valued readers, the latest edition of Diyanet Journal. In this issue, we delve into the profound relationship between Islam and the environment. Within the pages of this edition of Diyanet Journal, we have thoughtfully curated a collection of insightful contributions on the subject of "Islam and the Environment". Prof. Dr. Huriye Martı explores the vital topic of "Islam, Environment, and Ethics" highlighting the profound impact of people's relationship with the environment not only on their life in this world but also on their life in the Hereafter. In our column, "Questions on My Mind", Prof. Dr. Cagfer Karadas presents an engaging paper entitled "Do Religion and Science Conflict?" offering valuable perspectives on this intriguing subject. Moreover, in our "Revert Stories" column, Jenny Molendyk Divleli shares her inspiring journey of embracing Islam, offers advice for those curious about Islam not to hesitate to ask further questions, and speaks of her impactful projects. Finally, in our interview section, we have the privilege of hosting Prof. Dr. Sadettin Okten, who provides valuable insight into the relationship between the environment, humanity, and civilization.

As Diyanet Journal, we present this new issue wholeheartedly to you, our esteemed readers. We sincerely hope that you derive immense joy and knowledge from reading its content.

We hope to see you in our next issue...

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Dumlupınar Bulvarı No: 147/A  
06800 Çankaya/ANKARA  
Tel: +90(312) 295 70 00  
thedyanejournal@diyanet.gov.tr

Type of Publication  
Quarterly, Common, Periodical,  
English

Date of Issue: 23.06.2023

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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# CONTENTS



06.

ISLAM,  
ENVIRONMENT, AND  
MORALITY

| Prof. Dr. Huriye MARTI



10.

FAMILY:  
THE GREATEST  
TREASURE BESTOWED  
UPON THE HUMAN BEING

— 14. THE QUR'AN IS THE WORD  
OF ALLAH AND THERE IS NO  
CONTRADICTION THEREIN

| Dr. Bayram KOSEOGLU

— 16. BISMILLAH ONCE AGAIN  
“IN THE NAME OF ALLAH (SWT)”

| Halil KILIC

— 24. NEWS FROM MUSLIM WORLD

| Elif BAHAR

— 26. INTELLIGENT MACHINES VS.  
CLEVER PEOPLE:  
EXPLORING ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE AS A NEW  
FORM OF LIFE

| Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet DAG

— 34. JENNY MOLENDYK DIVLELI:  
“ALLAH IS THE BEST OF  
PLANNERS.”

| Aysegul AY

— 38. THE BLESSED NAME THAT  
ENCOMPASSES EXISTENCE:  
AR -RAHMAN

| Fatma BAYRAM

18.



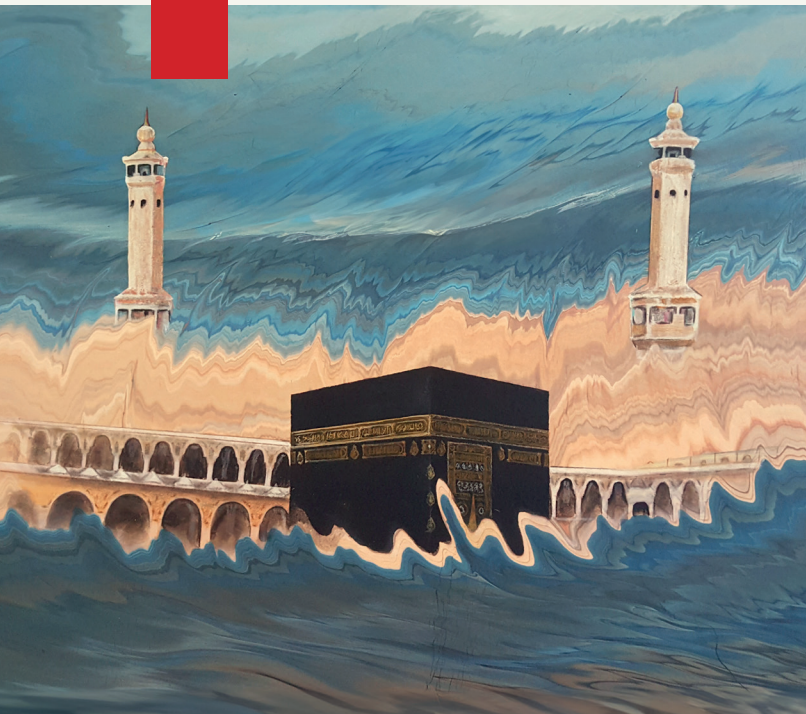
**PROF. DR. SADETTIN OKTEN:**  
“LIFE IS A CHAIN OF ACTIONS.”

| Zeynep Feyza AKKAYA

30.

**THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE  
OPEN INVITATION TO ISLAM**

| Prof. Dr. Casim AVCI



**40. IS THERE A CONFLICT  
BETWEEN RELIGION AND  
SCIENCE?**

| Prof. Dr. Cagfer KARADAS

**43. ISLAM IN AUSTRALIA**

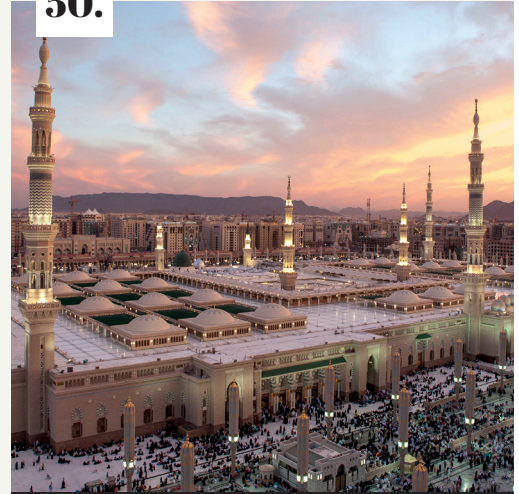
| Bilal AKSOY



**46. A LEADER OF  
CONTEMPLATION: ALIJA  
IZETBEGOVIĆ**

| Koray SERBETCI

50.



**MASJID AL-NABAWI**

| Hilal KOC HANCI

**54. FAQS**

**56. WHAT IS ISLAM**

| Meryem KILIC

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

## HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT RELATIONSHIP

Created as a creature who thinks, speaks, knows, perceives, and produces thanks to the intellect, will, and consciousness bestowed by Allah the Almighty, human beings have been made responsible for the realization of Allah's will on earth, and in this sense, they have been deemed worthy of the title of "caliph". This elevated status positions human beings as distinguished, active, and central beings among all of creation. It bestows upon them significant privileges that shape their relationships with themselves, their Lord, and the external world, aligning with the purpose of their creation.

The Holy Qur'an, which states that everything was created for a meaning based on wisdom and a divine purpose, explains the purpose of human creation in the most

general and clear way; worship and servitude to Allah (Dhariyat, 51:56). In addition, it declares that there is a magnificent measure and balance in the universe, and informs us that nothing has come into existence coincidentally and that everything is subject to Allah's command "be" and His infinite power. This universe, which is equipped for the life and benefit of human beings and placed under their service, points to Allah's oneness, glory, and power on the one hand and to the value He places on human beings on the other.

It is clear that the statement that all that is in the heavens and on earth has been given to the disposal of human beings as a divine blessing (Jathiyah, 45:13) is a statement intended for human beings to benefit from them for a certain period



**Prof. Dr. Ali ERBAS**

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of time. In the face of this magnificent order and the countless blessings, it is incumbent upon human beings to acknowledge Allah as the true owner, to prioritize their love for Him above all else, and to live in accordance with the revelation and the sunnah of the Prophet. As a requirement of servitude and a guarantee of a peaceful and secure life, they should develop the earth in the most beautiful way.

The fundamental indicator that characterizes the loyalty of human beings to the purpose of creation is the way they interact and establish a relationship with the environment. In terms of the Islamic faith, which governs all aspects of human life, the highest and most decisive approach in human-environment relations is the consciousness of trust (*amanah*). The environment with all its elements, including its air, water, soil, and types of other beings, has been entrusted to human beings by Allah the Almighty (*Ahzab*, 33:72). In this respect, humans are obliged to maintain their relations with the environment within this framework and to refrain from any behavior that would be considered a breach of trust.

As an important measure to establish the human-environment balance

within the framework of the consciousness of trust, Islam has established an approach based on values such as justice, equity, piety, and compassion in all circumstances. When we examine the relationship between human beings and other beings from the perspective of the Qur'an and the sunnah, we see that the emphasis on compassion is especially prominent. In this respect, the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw), "Be merciful on those on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from the One Who is above the heavens." (*Tirmidhi, Birr wa's-Sila*, 16) is an important recommendation that places human-environment relations and the ideal world order on a solid foundation.

Undoubtedly, any tendency contrary to this principle will result in devastation on earth and severely undermine human-environment relations. As a matter of fact, today we all observe the adverse consequences of uncompassionate, irresponsible, reckless, and hasty approaches to the environment. Instances such as the pollution of air, water, and soil and the deterioration of the natural structure of the atmosphere, which are manifestations of a global environmental problem felt by everyone, are clear harbingers

of the impending disaster. Therefore, the aforementioned negative picture reveals that it is essential to reconsider human-environment relations in the context of responsibility, trust, good morals, and righteous deeds. Otherwise, we will inevitably face a catastrophic event that could lead to the destruction of humanity itself, ultimately resulting in total annihilation. In the face of this imminent threat, it is crucial to raise awareness and prioritize humanitarian and moral values to safeguard humanity's well-being and foster a world that is more prosperous, cleaner, and more beautiful.

On the other hand, it is impossible to consider human-environment relations without a genuine and firm belief rooted in *tawhid*. This is because a correct view of things (*ashyā'*) and the environment can only be realized through a strong faith and a sound worldview. Belief in the Hereafter holds a significant role in establishing such a consciousness that promotes balanced and moderate human-environment relations. In this context, the hadith of the Messenger of Allah (saw), "When a Muslim plants trees or cultivates the land, and birds or a man or a beast eats out of them, that is a charity

on his behalf." (*Bukhari, Muzara'ah*, 41; *Muslim, Musaqat*, 2 [1552]), serves as an important guideline for approaching the natural environment that human beings can benefit from while also revealing the outcome in the afterlife. Believing in the existence of an afterlife dimension of life enables people to adopt a principled, measured, and consistent stance toward everything that belongs to this world, and it also encourages them to exhibit beneficial, good, and beautiful behaviors.

Our Prophet (saw), who is the epitome of exemplary conduct and is often referred to as the embodiment of "righteous deeds" (*'amal al-salih*) in the Holy Qur'an, defines a virtuous person as someone who benefits others and demonstrates good behavior. He even considers removing a harmful object from the road as an act of "*sadaqah*" (charity). As a result, it is incumbent upon us to examine our lifestyles and our relationship with the environment and align them with the principles of trust, compassion, justice, and good moral conduct as taught by the Qur'an and the sunnah. This is both a requirement of our religious responsibility and a gesture of gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us by the Owner of the world.





# ISLAM, ENVIRONMENT, AND MORALITY

**Prof. Dr. Huriye MARTI**

Vice President of Religious Affairs



**BELIEVERS ARE PEOPLE OF GOOD ETHICS  
WHO DO NOT AIM TO SUBJUGATE OR EXPLOIT  
NATURE BUT TO ADAPT TO ITS VALUES.**

Allah created human beings in an environment, with an environment, and in need of an environment. On the one hand, He (swt) has blessed them with their environment, and on the other hand, He has tested and limited them with this environment. Boundaries determine the character and quality of a relationship. In the relationship between human beings and their environment, there are clear boundaries set by Islam. For the attitude of human beings towards all animate and inanimate beings other than themselves, although they may seem like ordinary and daily relationships, actually has a deep meaning that extends to the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. Therefore, when discussing the relationship between humans and

the environment, it should not be overlooked that we are stepping into a subject that has a divine dimension and that concerns not only this life but also the Hereafter.

Humans, being the most honorable of all creation, are a value in themselves. In front of them, there is a world of existence, all of whose individual members carry “intrinsic value”. They should develop a relationship with this world that respects and supports, not ignores and consumes, in other words, they should be aware of their moral responsibility. Our Lord has woven indispensable bonds between human beings and their environment and has entrusted human beings with the task of recognizing, protecting, and strengthening these bonds.

### **Islamic foundations of environmental ethics**

Environmental ethics argues that all our attitudes, decisions, and behaviors towards the universe, including non-human beings and future generations, should be based on moral foundations. When we look at the ecological crisis in almost every corner of the earth today, we can say that human beings live in disharmony with the delicate balances in the universe and develop a one-sided and exploitative relationship with their environment.

In fact, the ecological crisis is too complicated to be solved by simply preventing irresponsible behavior such as littering or cutting down trees.

In our opinion, it is imperative that we focus on mindset before behavior and bring beliefs and values to the agenda before actions when finding solutions to the environmental crisis.

### **Reflecting on the environment together with Allah**

According to Islam, Allah, who encompasses people in every moment from every direction, is in a sense their ultimate environment: “To Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn you are facing towards Allah.” (Baqarah, 2:115) Allah did not create the natural environment separate and detached from human beings, nor did He create a world of existence that is distant and independent from Him. As it is understood from the verse, “But He is indeed Fully Aware of everything.” (Fussilat, 41:54), He is actively in control of nature at all times. Therefore, the universe is a space that enables communication between human beings and Allah.

Allah points to different details in nature as an indication of His power and challenges humankind by showing him the marvelous order He has created: “Which is harder to create: you or the sky?



## **PURIFICATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS WILL ONLY BE POSSIBLE THROUGH A STRONG AND APPROPRIATE VALUE EDUCATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.**

He built it, raising it high and forming it flawlessly. He dimmed its night and brought forth its daylight. As for the earth, He spread it out as well, bringing forth its water and pastures and setting the mountains firmly upon it— all as a means of sustenance for you and your animals.”

(Nazi'at, 79:27-33)

### **No avoiding the responsibility for the environment**

If we are talking about an environmental ethic that is nourished by the main sources of Islam, tawhid is an indispensable principle. However, the responsibility of people in the face of tawhid is just as important.

Such a responsibility has multiple moral, legal, emotional, and intellectual dimensions. Even if we leave all dimensions aside, it is not difficult to realize that it is in one's own interest to assume responsibility for one's environment. Indeed, the Holy Qur'an insistently reminds us of the countless blessings available for the benefit of human beings, from the seas to the stars, from orchards to animals.

According to the Qur'an, “He also subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all by His grace.” (Jathiyah, 45:13), but this does not mean that the earth was created only for human beings. When we reflect on the verse “He laid out the earth for all beings.” (Rahman, 55:10), we realize that other living creatures have the right to live on the earth as well as humans. At this point, it is incumbent upon the only intelligent and responsible being on earth not to avoid his/her responsibility.

### **Remembering that we are successors on earth**

The responsible side of environmental ethics leads us to the concept of “successorship”. As the verse “Remember when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a successive human authority on earth.” (Baqarah, 2:30) reveals, the successorship of human beings is a process that

begins with creation. A successor means an intelligent, responsible, powerful, and honorable being who will build the earth in accordance with Allah’s will. Being a successor is not the luxury of being the master of the earth and claiming unlimited rights over it. On the contrary, being a successor is the name of a struggle for the preservation of the balance, in other words, it is the divine test for human beings: “He is the One Who has placed you as successors on earth and elevated some of you in rank over others, so He may test you with what He has given you.” (An’am, 6:165)

**Having a sense of trust in environmental stewardship**

The Qur’an defines the honored successor of the earth as “the one who bears the trust”: “Indeed, We offered the trust to

the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they all declined to bear it, being fearful of it. But humanity assumed it, for they are truly wrongful to themselves and ignorant of the consequences.” (Ahzab, 33:72) The word “trust” carries a meaning that rejects the idea of “ownership”. Therefore, it is meaningless to develop a relationship of property between human beings and the environment. It is clear Who is the Owner of the environment and so it is clear Who is the Creator and Manager of the environment. Human beings are only the stewards of the environment. They should keep in mind that one day they will answer to the Owner of the trust for the trust that is given to them. The warning of the Owner of the property is clear: “Do not spread corruption in the land after it has been

set in order.” (A’raf, 7:56)

**Having love and compassion for the environment**

Allah, who is the Most Merciful (Baqarah, 2:143, 207; Tawbah, 9:117), demands that humans be equally merciful towards all beings. This demand is expressed so strongly by the Messenger of Allah (saw) that human mercy is mentioned as a precondition for Allah’s mercy: “Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully.” (Bukhari, Adab, 18)

Having compassion for the other inhabitants of the environment, accepting them as members of the family of the universe, and integrating with them, “tolerating the created because of the Creator” reflects the virtue dimension of environmental ethics. It is a prophetic teaching to be

kind to many beings other than human beings, hoping only for the pleasure of Allah.

**Regarding the environment as a wisdom and a lesson**

People who regard the universe as a lesson first realize that not only they but also many other creatures, glorify Allah. “The seven heavens, the earth, and all those in them glorify Him. There is not a single thing that does not glorify His praises—but you simply cannot comprehend their glorification. He is indeed Most Forbearing, All-Forgiving.” (Isra, 17:44) Of course, such a state of glorification and submission cannot be comprehended with the five senses. However, knowing that living beings are in a relationship with Allah, even if they do not hear or see Him clearly, will profoundly affect the way people view the environment.

In short, a polluted environment is the work of polluted consciousness. Purification of consciousness will only be possible through a strong and appropriate value education about the environment. Believers are people of good ethics who do not aim to subjugate or exploit nature but to adapt to its values. The key to solving environmental problems lies in the hands of these people!





# FAMILY: The Greatest Treasure Bestowed upon the Human Being

Allah's Messenger came to the house of his daughter, Fatima (ra). He looked for her husband 'Ali (ra). The merciful Prophet must have immediately sensed that something was wrong because he did not ask his daughter, "Where is 'Ali?" or "Where is your husband?" In the same tone of voice that Aaron had used when he said, "Son of my mother" (Ta-Ha, 20:94) to his brother Moses who had returned from Mt. Sinai and was angry and disappointed by what he had seen, the Prophet (saw) asked Fatima, "Where is the son of your uncle?"

Fatima just had a quarrel with her husband. Now, 'Ali (ra) was greatly in love with his wife and he had once described Fatima's concerns to the Prophet. Well, they had gone together to Allah's Messenger, but Fatima (ra) could not bring herself to speak to her father due to shyness. 'Ali immediately stepped in on her behalf and said, "O Allah's Messenger! Allow me to convey what she is unable to express. Your daughter Fatima's hands

have become coarse from grinding wheat in the mill. Her neck is scratched by the bucket rope as she draws water from the well using a goat skin. Her skirt becomes dusty while she diligently sweeps and cleans her house, and her clothes are covered with soot because of the fire of the food pan." (Bukhari, Fadh'a'il Ashab al-Nabi, 9)

So, her father questioned her and she replied, "We had a disagreement. He got angry at me and left. He did not take an afternoon nap with me." Upon hearing this, Allah's Messenger (saw) instructed people to search for 'Ali. 'Ali (ra) must have also felt remorseful. "Ali is in the mosque," they said, "lying down and sleeping in one corner of the mosque." When the Messenger of Allah (saw) arrived at the mosque, he saw that 'Ali's clothes were about to come off of his back and his back was covered with dust (Bukhari, Salat, 58). The Messenger of Allah (saw) approached him and, while cleaning the dust from him, said teasingly, "Get up Abu Turab (lit. father

of dust, that is, "Dusty") (Muslim, Fadh'a'il al-Sahaba, 38). Since then 'Ali (ra) has been called by this nickname.

With the loving and merciful hand of the Prophet (saw), anxiety turned to tranquility and cheerfulness. Allah's Messenger, who was a peacemaker without taking sides, and who brought the couple together without causing harm, embraced them with love and dissolved the resentment that had arisen in a moment of anger, with mercy. He reminded 'Ali and Fatima (ra) once again that they were a family, emphasizing their loving bond.

All the prophets were deeply involved in their families. For instance, Prophet Abraham gathered his family, and guests around his blessed table with fatherly affection and he called his father Azar to the message of Allah's unity before anyone else demonstrating his commitment to family (An'am, 6:74). Prophet Joseph forgave his brothers



**THE FAMILY IS ONE OF THE GREATEST BLESSINGS OF ALLAH. IT IS THE PLACE WHERE LOVE, HAPPINESS, AND PLEASURE GAIN VALUE BY BEING SHARED.**

despite all they had done to him (Yusuf, 12:92). Prophet Jacob's struggled with, and shed tears for his sons, Joseph and Benjamin (Yusuf, 12:84, 87), and Noah's pleaded for his son (Hud, 11:42). Do these stories not exemplify the inexplicable hidden power of family ties?

Where does the power of being a family come from?

Our Prophet (saw), who said that Allah the Exalted stated, "I am Allah, and I am ar-Rahman (the Compassionate One). I created the (mother's) rahim (womb) and named it after My name. So whoever guards his kinship ties, I will guard him, and whoever severs his kinship ties, I will sever my tie with him," (Tirmidhi, Birr, 9) seems to indicate the spiritual power behind this tie. This power is from the grace of Allah the Merciful. The more one lives in accordance with the pleasure of Allah, the stronger this bond becomes. Or vice versa for the weaker family, for the further the shadow of Allah's mercy recedes, life becomes devoid of vitality and fulfillment.

The Arabic word "usra" signifies family. It is the place where parents raise their children under the wings of compassion, guiding them to distinguish right from wrong, and a pair of warm hands hold the tiny palms of the child tightly. Etymologically "usra"

carries the connotation of "armor" (Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-'Arab, IV, 19). Indeed, this is a fitting term for the family because it serves as a protective armor. Like armor, it envelops people with material provisions shielding them from external negativities. Simultaneously, it establishes rules and boundaries that shape the character and development of the child.

Our Prophet's hadith, "O company of youth! Whoever among you can afford, he should marry, because it is the best thing to make him lower his gaze (from what is forbidden) and to guard his dignity," (Bukhari, Nikah, 3) clearly indicates to us that marriage guards one's honor and respectability, and gives protection for a virtuous life.

Being a family means coming together to form a complete and interconnected unit. In the vocabulary of the Holy Qur'an, the concept of being a family is described by spouses being referred to as garments for each other (Baqarah, 2:187). Being a spouse entails acknowledging one's own imperfections and finding completion through one's partner. It involves taking steps towards personal growth and striving for perfection while providing careful protection and support to one's partner, akin to covering them

with a gentle cloth. The family is one of the greatest blessings of Allah. It is the place where love, happiness, and pleasure gain value by being shared.

The family is a stone thrown into the sea of mercy. It is just like the ripples that are formed on the surface of the water when we throw a stone in it; growing in circles like embracing the whole universe... A person draws the first circle with his wife and children; later on, this circle is surrounded by larger circles with grandparents, siblings, aunts, and uncles. Many individuals come together and experience the joy of being connected through the blessings of marriage, forming a network of kinship and familial bonds. The Messenger of Allah (saw) makes the following statement about the relationship of relatives: "Learn enough about your lineage to facilitate keeping your ties of kinship. For indeed keeping the ties of kinship encourages affection among the relatives, increases the wealth, and increases the lifespan." (Tirmidhi, Birr, 49) The important thing is that people should first take care of the needs of their own families. Our beloved Prophet's statement, "If a man spends on his family (with the hope of reward from Allah) then it is an act of charity for him," (Bukhari, Iman, 41) encourages the



**WITHIN OUR FAMILY, WE ACQUIRE THE TASTE FOR PRAYER; DISCOVER THE MEANING OF BEING A SIBLING, THE DIGNITY OF BEING A PARENT, AND THE SECURITY OF BEING A CHILD.**



believers to give priority to the maintenance of his family and meet its needs. He should first spend what he earns on himself and his family. Then, he should meet the needs of his relatives and, after that, others if he has the resources (Muslim, Zakat, 41). In this respect, parents should behave in a manner appropriate to their responsibilities and should not neglect their children. Our Prophet states that “It is sufficient sin for a man that he neglects those whom he maintains.” (Abu Dawud, Zakat, 41)

Everyone in the family makes a contribution to the home according to their ability. Children are their parents’ helpers. Spouses look after each other. Parents protect their children. If there are elders in the family, they are respected. As experienced mothers or fathers, the



**IN THE FAMILY,  
WE REAP THE  
MEANING  
OF OUR  
EXISTENCE,  
OUR  
SURROUNDINGS,  
AND THE  
ENTIRE  
UNIVERSE.**

There is no room for selfishness in the family. It is a place of continuous mutual help. Al-Aswad (ra) relates the following: “I asked ‘A’isha (ra), the wife of the Messenger of Allah (saw), ‘What did our Prophet (saw) used to do at home?’ ‘A’isha (ra) stated, ‘Allah’s Messenger used to be interested in the matters of his family, that is, he used to be at the service of his family. And when prayer time came, he used to leave for prayer.’” (Bukhari, Adhan, 44) Our Prophet (saw) was an exemplary spouse who never hesitated to assist his wife. He himself expressed this sentiment in the following words: “The most benevolent among you is the one who is benevolent to his family. I am the most benevolent to my family among you.” (Ibn Majah, Nikah, 50) The family is the place where loyalty is intertwined with

self-sacrifice, faith with kindness, knowledge with wisdom, and love with respect.

Our family serves as our warm home, where the foundation of ethics, reason, and sensibilities that shape our lives are established. It is where our spirits are nourished with moral values. Within our family, we acquire the taste for prayer; discover the meaning of being a sibling, the dignity of being a parent, and the security of being a child. In the family, we reap the meaning of our existence, our surroundings, and the entire universe. It is within the family that we learn the virtue of sharing, sustaining our lives, overcoming challenges, and experiencing happiness together. Our families are a part of the family of humankind and through our families we

# THE QUR'AN IS THE WORD OF ALLAH AND THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION THEREIN

**Dr. Bayram KOSEOGLU**

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

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ  
لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have certainly found in it many inconsistencies.”

(Nisa, 4:82)

Allah the Almighty has created humankind out of nothing and made them responsible beings by equipping them with features such as reason and will. In order for them to fulfill this responsibility, He sent prophets and taught people the difference between right and wrong through the revelation He sent to the prophets. The Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (saw), stands as the final link in the chain of revelation.

Throughout history, there have always been believers among the communities of the prophets, as well as those who opposed them and denied the revelation they received from Allah. From Prophet Noah to Prophet Abraham and from Prophet Hud to Prophet Lut this took place, and this was also true for the people of Prophet Muhammad (saw). They took a similar attitude of denying his prophethood and refused to accept the fact that the Qur'an revealed to him was the word of Allah. One of the main arguments put forward by the polytheists who opposed the Prophet (saw) and the new religion was that the Qur'an was not the word of Allah, but a human utterance invented by the Prophet (saw).

In response to these assertions of the polytheists, Allah (swt) openly challenged the polytheists and refuted their claims. In fact, Allah (swt) issued a challenge to the most powerful poets and intellectuals of the time, asking them to produce a book similar to the Qur'an, even with collective assistance (Osman Keskioglu, Nuzulunden Gunumuzde Kur'an-ı Kerim Bilgileri, Publications of TDF, p. 185). Allah states, “Say, O Prophet, ‘If all humans and jinn were to come together to produce the equivalent of this Quran, they could not produce its equal, no matter how they supported each other.’” (Isra, 17:88) This was a declaration that the disbelievers were incapable of replicating the miraculous nature of the Qur'an.

Once it became evident that the polytheists were unable to produce a book similar to the Qur'an, they were further challenged to bring at least ten surahs similar to the Qur'an: “Or do they say, ‘He has fabricated this Quran! Say, O Prophet, ‘Produce ten fabricated surahs like it and seek help from whoever you can—other than Allah—if what you say is true! But if your helpers fail you, then know that it has been revealed with the knowledge of Allah, and that there is no god worthy



of worship except Him! Will you not then submit to Allah?" (Hud, 11:13-14)

After issuing the challenge to bring ten surahs similar to the Qur'an, Allah further confronted His interlocutors to produce only one surah, but insisting that they would be unable to do so. In doing so, Allah put forth the manifest evidence that the Qur'an is the word of Allah. He states: "And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a surah like it and call your helpers other than Allah, if what you say is true. But if you are unable to do so—and you will never be able to do so—then fear the Fire fueled with people and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers."

(Baqarah, 2:23-24)

In the face of the challenge set forth by Allah the Almighty to the polytheists, even the highly eloquent Arab poets, during a period when poetry and literature were at their zenith, remained speechless. Thus their claims that the Qur'an was not the word of Allah were dismissed (Ismail Cerrahoglu, *Tefsir Usulu*, Publications of TDF, p. 164).

Allah the Almighty has made it clear that He has sent down the Qur'an as a sound and perfect book

and will not allow any corruption in it (Kahf, 18:1-2). Undoubtedly the Qur'an is a scripture of the greatest blessing bestowed upon all of humankind that guides people from darkness to light, from misguidance to guidance, teaches them faith and Islam, elucidates Allah's commands and prohibitions, imparts religious rulings, and clarifies the rewards and punishments necessary for their well-being in this world and the Hereafter. The Qur'an is a book that has no crookedness, inaccuracy, or contradiction (Kur'an



**ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAS SENT DOWN THE QUR'AN AS A SOUND AND PERFECT BOOK AND WILL NOT ALLOW ANY CORRUPTION IN IT.**

Yolu, vol. 3, p. 536). In order for people to understand this fact, Allah the Almighty asks them to examine and reflect on the Qur'an and states that if the Qur'an was a book not revealed by Allah, it would contain many inconsistencies and contradictions (Nisa, 4:82). Except for some prejudiced and baseless claims, no acceptable, realistic, or scientific evidence has been presented throughout history that there are any errors, flaws, deficiencies, or contradictions in it.

The Qur'an was revealed in parts in different times and places over a period of twenty-three years. Its content covers a wide range of topics, from the creation of human beings and living and non-living beings to scientific truths about the universe, from moral virtues to rules about the individual and society, from the stories of societies and prophets who lived in the past to the Day of Judgment and the Hereafter. Nevertheless, there is no inconsistency, contradiction, or discrepancy in its style and unique expressive power, nor in the subjects it addresses, the judgments it makes, and the information it provides. This conclusion, which anyone who thinks rationally can reach by studying the Qur'an, is an irrefutable

proof that it is from Allah. Therefore, those who deny that it is the word of Allah and seek flaws and errors in it are based on ingrained prejudices and human weaknesses rather than evidence and knowledge (Kur'an Yolu, vol. 2 pp. 102-103). For there is no flaw or contradiction in the Qur'an for those who reflect upon it (Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf*, 1/540).

Therefore, it is obvious that the claims that there are errors, omissions, or contradictions in the Qur'an, both in the past and today, have no scientific value and reality. This is because the Qur'an was revealed from Allah, the All-Knowing (Ghafir, 40:2). It is Allah who neither falters nor forgets anything (Taha, 20:52). It is incumbent upon Muslims to adopt an attitude that seeks to derive benefit from the guidance and wisdom of the Qur'an, which is a source of mercy and healing. Instead of wasting our lives searching for faults, errors, and contradictions in the Qur'an, it is essential to embrace this truth and refrain from following misguided false trends and fashionable arguments. The Qur'an is a book in which there is no doubt and a guide for those mindful of Allah (Baqarah, 2:2).

# BISMILLAH ONCE AGAIN

## “IN THE NAME OF ALLAH (SWT)”

Halil KILIC

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

One of the first words every Muslim parent teaches their children is “Bismillah”. This short sentence, known as “basmala”, does not contain a verb form but is flexible enough to accommodate different verbs based on the individual’s actions. In this sense, the basmala can be considered a divine motto for Muslims, who recite it in various situations such as before going to bed, upon waking, while eating, drinking, going to work, or getting in the car. Essentially, it is recited at all times and in all places. This simple sentence is akin to a treasure chest, holding numerous hidden treasures. Let us gain a better understanding of the basmala by exploring and delving into these treasures.

### **Basmala is the essence and declaration of Tawhid**

The word “Bismillah” is a declaration that Allah the Almighty (swt) is the Creator, the absolute owner, and the only deity to be worshipped. Prophet Sulaiman exemplified this when he sent an invitation letter to the people of Saba, who worshipped the sun. The letter began with the phrase “In the name of Allah, the most Merciful and the most Beneficent” (Naml, 27:30). The fact that the first sentence of the announcement begins with basmala is remarkable in terms of showing that basmala is the declaration of Tawhid. Moreover, commencing any work or action with the name of Allah signifies an acceptance of His true authority and an acknowledgment that every event and

occurrence takes place within His knowledge and will.

### **Basmala signifies the understanding that the only being we should seek help from is Allah (swt) and that He is always with us.**

For one of the meanings of the letter “Bâ” in basmala is “help”. Therefore, every time a person says “bismillah”, he/she seeks help from Allah and acknowledges that he/she can only carry out his/her work with the support and grace of Allah the Almighty (swt). This notion is further emphasized by the verse, “My success is only by Allah” (Hud 11:88), which clearly shows that success cannot be achieved without the support and grace of Allah the Almighty (swt). In this regard, every utterance of “bismillah” represent an individual recognizing

their own helplessness, and seeking refuge in Allah (swt) who is self-sufficient and the One who does not need anything. In fact, one of the other meanings of the letter “Bâ” is “togetherness”. Therefore, when a Muslim begins any endeavor by saying “bismillah”, he/she is conscious of the fact that Allah (swt) is with him/her and that He sees and watches over him/her. In addition, he/she is aware that he will be held accountable for every step he/she takes and every word that he/she utters.

### **Basmala signifies seeking and receiving permission from Allah, the owner of everything, when starting any endeavor**

Just as a student asks for permission from the teacher before speaking in the class or leaving the classroom, a Muslim seeks

“كُلُّ كَلَامٍ أَوْ أَمْرٍ ذِي بَالٍ لَا يُفْتَحُ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَهُوَ أَبْتَرُ، أَوْ قَالَ أَقْطَعُ”

Prophet Muhammad (saw) commands:

“Every important matter that does not begin with mentioning the name of Allah, is considered incomplete.”

(Ibn Hanbal, XIV, 329 [Hadith no: 8712])

permission from Allah (swt) when commencing a task by saying “bismillah”. This is evident in the act of sacrifice, where Muslims utter “Bismillahi Allahu Akbar”. For the animal we sacrifice carries life and it is Allah (swt) who gives life to it. By saying bismillah during the act of sacrifice means that we acknowledge that we cannot take a life given by Allah (swt), even for worship, without His permission.

**Basmala is the construction of the identity of Muslims and declaration of being a servant to Allah (swt)**

A person who repeatedly says “bismillah” declares that he/she does not lead a misguided life, and she/he acknowledges that he/she and all that exists has an Owner. Moreover, by saying hundreds of

times “in the name of Allah” he/she affirms this to him/herself and all of humanity. Consequently, regardless of the intensity of their daily tasks, Muslims make a conscious effort to remember their identity and strive to live in accordance with their Muslim values. Furthermore, this attitude signifies their individual declaration that “I serve none but Allah (swt).”

**Basmala is a powerful word that turns ordinary action into acts of worship**

The acts of worship that servants are obliged to do are limited. Apart from these, there is a wide range of permissible activities such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and leisure time. Engaging in these activities does not result in additional rewards or sins. Nevertheless, when a Muslim initiates an action

by saying “In the name of Allah,” they infuse it with purpose and elevate it from being an ordinary act to an act of worship.



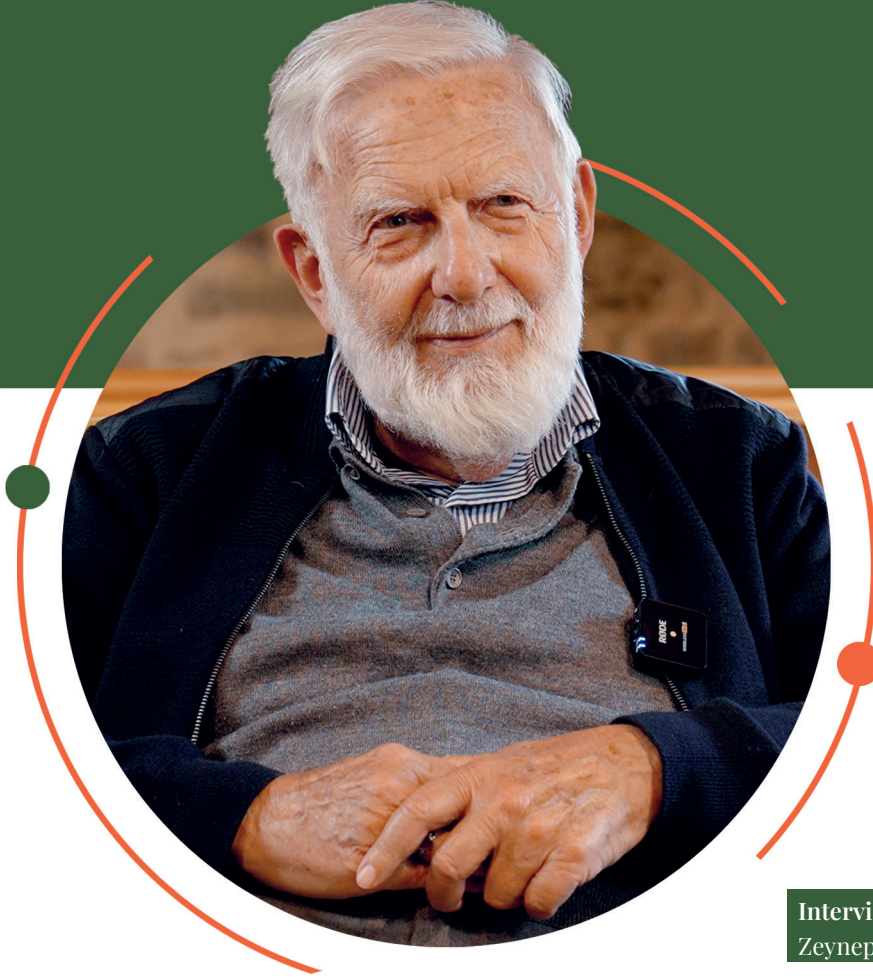
**THIS SIMPLE SENTENCE IS AKIN TO A TREASURE CHEST, HOLDING NUMEROUS HIDDEN TREASURES.**

**The Basmala is an expression that embodies a mercy-oriented view of life**

The full form of Basmala is “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim”, which means, “In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful”. A Muslim who keeps saying bismillah, in fact, embraces mercy by alluding to two names of Allah (swt) (Gracious and Merciful) that express His mercy. In this context, the basmala serves as a reminder for all living creatures, especially human beings, to lead a life centered around mercy and compassion.

We pray that Allah the Almighty (swt) makes the Basmala a key that unlocks the path to goodness and blocks us from evil and may our recitation of the Basmala serve as a guiding light, leading us toward righteousness and protecting us from wrongdoing! (Ameen)

# Prof. Dr. Sadettin Okten: “Life is a chain of actions.”



Interview by:  
Zeynep Feyza Akkaya

*Sadettin Okten was born on September 1, 1942, in Istanbul. He graduated from Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Civil Engineering, with a Master's degree in Civil Engineering in 1964. In 1969, he was appointed as an assistant at the Reinforced Concrete Professorship in the Faculty of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University. Between 1971 and 1973, he resided in the USA as a guest doctoral student and successfully obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1977. He also earned a scholarship and completed his master's degree in the USA. During the academic year 1979-1980, he conducted scientific research in Belgium. In 1982, he attained the position of associate professor, and in 1985, he joined Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. By 1989, he became a professor. Prof. Dr. Sadettin Okten is renowned for his speeches and studies on cities and civilizations, especially Islamic civilization. He has delivered lectures on the History of Science, the History of Building Technology, Urban Culture, and Urban Aesthetics at various universities. Additionally, he possesses a special interest in the history and philosophy of science, culture, civilization, and art. Presently, alongside his professional endeavors, he continues to work in the field of culture and art.*

**Allah (swt) states in the Holy Qur'an, "As for the sky, He raised it 'high', and set the balance 'of justice' so that you do not defraud the scales." (Rahman, 55/7-8), indicating that everything in the universe was created in balance. Considering human beings, the environment, and many other living beings in ecological balance, what is the value of being a living creature?**

When we examine this question from different perspectives, various answers emerge. I define the issue of different mindsets as a concept of civilization, that is, how you position yourself and the whole existence around you when you look at life according to a system of values. Life is a chain of actions. How you act according to this positioning is important. From this point of view, we see two basic phenomena. One is modernity, and the other is the conception of Islamic civilization. Modernity regards life in terms of dominance. Because modernity is based on rationality, it operates on that basis. On the other hand, if we consider certain Islamic concepts, the mind is subordinate to the nafs. Consequently, modernity is rational in a sense and brings up the actions of the human ego. This has been the case since ancient

times. It is also the same in modern times, and a very typical example of this is Machiavelli.

According to the Islamic conception of civilization, service plays a fundamental role. Human beings, unlike other living beings, possess the unique character of being able to alter nature. While other creatures cannot change nature and live in harmony with it, human beings have been granted the ability to modify it. Human beings were given this ability. Yet, every blessing given by Allah the Almighty comes with a responsibility, so when people contemplate the environment, and if they think about how they can use their ability to change the environment, then they may be able to use that ability with greater care. But which people are we speaking about? We are talking about people who live according to Islam. Those who possess a mindset aligned with the principles of Islam and have faith in Allah, as well as those who believe in the teachings of the Prophet, understand that the environment has been entrusted to them. To use a modern term, ecological balance means to act without disturbing the flow of life together with the other elements in life. That flow is the one set forth by divine decree. Human beings are



**HUMAN BEINGS, UNLIKE OTHER LIVING BEINGS, POSSESS THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF BEING ABLE TO ALTER NATURE. WHILE OTHER CREATURES CANNOT CHANGE NATURE AND LIVE IN HARMONY WITH IT, HUMAN BEINGS HAVE BEEN GRANTED THE ABILITY TO MODIFY IT.**

obliged to follow that flow. It would not be incorrect to assert that modernity initially deceives itself with such terms. We can state that modernity captivates individuals who lack an understanding of the profound nature of these concepts and remain oblivious to their intellectual and emotional dimensions, steering them in an alternative direction.

In other words, the people of Islam regard life in terms of service, and they know that this environment entrusted to them is the result of divine decree, and they see beauty in it. They know that only they have the ability to change it. No other creature can alter the environment like human beings. When the environment undergoes significant changes, other creatures may face adverse consequences, even death. However, human beings possess the ability to adapt and continue their lives amidst environmental changes.

**When we look at present-day situations, we observe that human beings have been subjected to rapid change as well as technological developments. How do you think people's mental transformation and their perspective on the universe have affected their relationship with the environment?**

My students also ask me this question, and I say, “What has gotten faster? Did the rhythm of nature change? Did the speed of the earth’s rotation around the sun change? Did 365 days become 350 days?” They respond with a no. “So, does the earth revolve faster around itself, or have 24 hours become shorter?” They reply in the negative to that question as well. “What about your heartbeat and your breathing? Has it accelerated?” Once again, they respond with a “no”. I go on like this, and finally, I ask what has changed and they finally say technology. It is at this juncture that I pause and encourage them to delve into the history of civilization.

There have been three major changes in the history of civilization. These are serious changes; one of them is the transition from a mobile, gathering, and hunting society to a settled society, marking the transition to agriculture. The second is the transition to industrialization. The third is the current transition we are experiencing, which is the shift toward informatics. In fact, the things that seem to be changing very fast are the small steps of informatics. In many ways, we are living in a dream-like world. This is the dream world of modernity, which entices and captivates individuals. Therefore,

among the things that do not change very much and are extremely rare are important works that sustain and maintain life. I invite distinguished minds to contemplate such works, to connect with them, and to offer commentaries and interpretations of them.

Of course, there is also the dimension of consumption at play. When the masses are led to believe in this rapid pace of change, they tend to perceive the objects they use as transient likely to become obsolete in a short period. There is a tendency therefore to define one’s existence through material possessions. However, I hold the belief that it is not in alignment with human dignity for people to define their existence through objects. I believe that people should define their existence through art, knowledge, and, undoubtedly, morality. This is also reflective of my personal relationship with the environment.

**Islam declares that the life and the world bestowed upon human beings are a creation of Allah the Almighty and a trust (amanah) from Him to us. Human beings are responsible for improving the world, not destroying it. How should people’s relationship with the environment be in the context of the concepts of trust and right?**



**WHEN THE MASSES ARE LED TO BELIEVE IN THIS RAPID PACE OF CHANGE, THEY TEND TO PERCEIVE THE OBJECTS THEY USE AS TRANSIENT LIKELY TO BECOME OBSOLETE IN A SHORT PERIOD.**

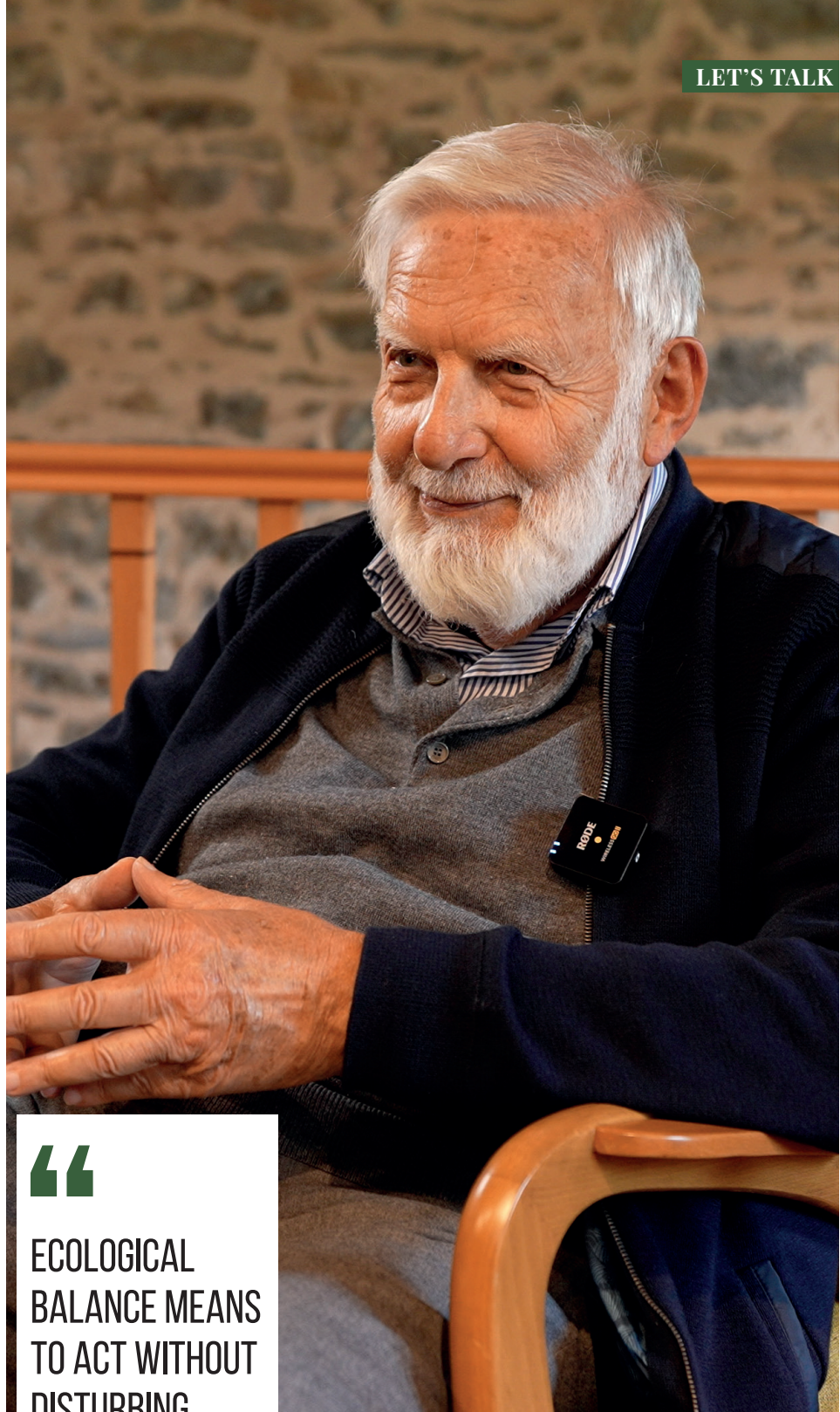
We are mortal beings that undergo the natural progression of life; we are born, we grow older, we reach middle age, we grow old, and we die. However, our departure from this world does not leave it empty. We have benefited from this world; we have used it, and we know that it has been given to our disposal. So can we leave it better than we found it? Can we at least leave it as we found it? This is already a reality that Islamic principles set forth and it does not need to be specified. Modernity does not do this, as is evident in global warming and other environmental issues. Despite all this, as Muslims, we strive to leave our environment, the area entrusted to us, as clean and pristine as possible. Muslims are obliged to leave the environment more beautiful, cleaner, and more habitable than how they found it. This is the principle that emerges when we consider it from an Islamic point of view. Let me also state here that people do not live alone; they live collectively. Therefore, Muslims are obliged to observe the rights of others in their relationship with the environment.

**The destruction of humanity and ecology brought about by the rapid rise of technology and advancement is**

**becoming more and more inextricable and complex, spreading like a disease. What do you think is the prescription for remedying this ailment?**

The rapid pace of technological change may appear extensive, but it is important to recognize that no living creature or human being can act beyond the laws of nature. Therefore, we should mentally set the boundaries for these rapid and overwhelming developments. The minds behind these advancements, the innovators, and those who market them are all servants of Allah, even if they may not realize it. They carry out their work with the abilities bestowed upon them by Him. If Allah commands against something or deems it nonexistent, it cannot occur. By confining this rapid reality to a small realm, Muslims can maintain a sense of perspective.

Human beings are driven and captives of pleasures, and these pleasures are, at the lowest level, bodily pleasures. All animals have them. However, when one does not allow their mind to be dominated by bodily desires, they can engage in scientific pursuits, delve into philosophy, experience the joys of the intellect, and engage in contemplation. When



**ECOLOGICAL  
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TO ACT WITHOUT  
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such a door opens in your life, bodily pleasures will not be so important to you. Moreover, beyond that, there are emotional pleasures. If you make art, you enter the world of emotions, and that

world opens such doors for you that bodily pleasures become very insignificant and tasteless in that emotional journey you make. When we consider the art of our age, bodily pleasures have



unfortunately captured both the mind and the emotions. Therefore, the current art of modernity is the art of bodily pleasures.

Therefore, seeking an alternative space, world, or universe beyond the rapid pace of technology, means striving to delve into the potential of reason and experience its joys. For instance, by solving mathematical problems, we can derive immense satisfaction from simple geometry puzzles, thus becoming aware of our mental existence. Language provides us with endless avenues for exploration, and the depth of human analysis is truly remarkable.



**WHAT HAS  
GOTTEN FASTER?  
DID THE RHYTHM  
OF NATURE  
CHANGE? DID  
THE SPEED OF  
THE EARTH'S  
ROTATION  
AROUND THE SUN  
CHANGE? DID 365  
DAYS BECOME  
350 DAYS?**

Philosophical inquiries offer profound insights as well. Additionally, there exists the realm of art, which necessitates some level of talent. However, even the study of art history and aesthetics imparts knowledge. Through these pursuits, we come to appreciate our existence. Everyone possesses instinctive bodily pleasures, but it is essential to realize that you are not bound to that realm. An immense potential awaits you, and a universe may unfold for you. While bodily pleasures will always accompany you, do not allow yourself to be enslaved by them. This is when you transcend

the allure of bodily pleasures presented by technology. In other words, you are not constructing your essence with tools, vehicles, or instruments; your being resides within you. You exist through your knowledge, contemplation, and art. From a professional point of view, how should the relationship between the city and the environment be in the Islamic civilization?

This is the main focus of the courses I lecture at the university where I work. Allow me to outline a brief framework. Human beings exist through their actions and deeds. And what is their reference in

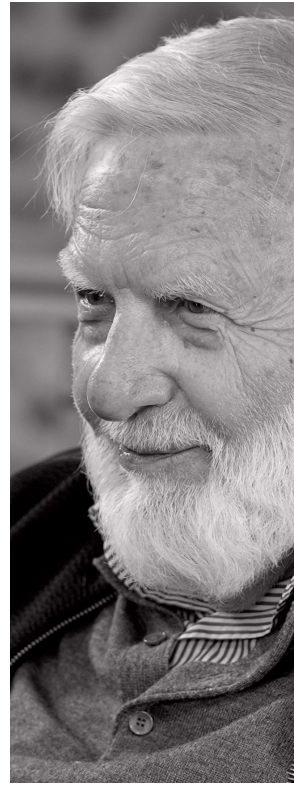


doing these actions? They perform these actions according to the system of values they hold. When we observe all human beings, both at the individual and societal level, they all have a belief, whether you call it presuppositions or faith. According to those presuppositions, an ideal world exists in our minds and emotions. We do our actions in the physical world based on these underlying assumptions.

A very typical example of this is the greeting. The way you greet a person reveals your identity. There is no need to elaborate. Your attitude is revealed even in the routine things you do every moment. There are two basic qualities of our existence while performing these actions. One of them is a function, for example, drinking water; when we are thirsty, we fulfill our body's needs. There is also a symbol and an emotional dimension to this; when we drink water, if we say Alhamdulillah, we add a symbol to it. We call this symbolic dimension adab (decency). In all our actions, we need to show grace, delicacy, and dignity, first to ourselves and then to the environment; this is what we call adab. Well, cities do not exist in nature; we build cities. We construct their physical structure, streets, avenues, houses,



**WE ARE MORTAL BEINGS THAT UNDERGO THE NATURAL PROGRESSION OF LIFE; WE ARE BORN, WE GROW OLDER, WE REACH MIDDLE AGE, WE GROW OLD, AND WE DIE. HOWEVER, OUR DEPARTURE FROM THIS WORLD DOES NOT LEAVE IT EMPTY.**



temples, and monuments. Why do not we think about adab here? We think about adab when we drink water, but why don't we think about adab when we build a city? Therefore, the first principle of building a city is adab. We need to pay attention to it when building a city. Do we? We did in our ancient cities, but in our modern cities, it is a bit of a mess.

The second is the principle of wahdat (oneness). When we build a city, we follow the laws of nature. What we build the city with is material, and Allah created it (the material). We can intervene a little with the material. Similarly, we build a city with the mind Allah has given us. But Allah the Almighty

has also laid down some social laws. Rights, justice, inheritance, parental relations, trade laws, and so on. While building a city, we need to look at whether we are breaking a social law or not. Thus, we have two basic principles: adab and wahdat. We have to abide by them.

**How do you think we can create sensitivity and social awareness about climate and environmental change caused by global warming?**

I think that at least I should not do it. I mean, I should not consume, and I should not waste even if others do. I think I should allocate as much of my means as I can to service. I say I should not do something and I say I should be aware of it as much as possible. This is because many people do it without realizing it. As you become aware and realize that environmental pollution is a result of your greedy consumption, you feel a sense of shame in terms of being a human. You say I should not be doing this because my intellect and my emotions carry me to another higher dimension. You understand that environmental pollution is the projection of an instinctive action onto the outside world. Therefore, I hope through this we will realize our humanity and not do it.

## The Sarajevo Halal Fair: Promoting Halal Products and Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Sarajevo Halal Fair, organized for the third time this year in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, opened its doors to visitors. Representatives from the entire halal supply chain attended the fair.

Husein Kavazovic, the President of the Islamic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina, delivered a speech at the fair's opening. He emphasized the significant impact of the fair both in terms of its economic and religious implications. Kavazovic stated, "Halal ensures a happy life in the hereafter. Halal is a trust entrusted to human beings and is a religious obligation and a legal right." Pointing out that the halal industry is one of the fastest-growing industries today, Kavazovic noted the increasing demand for halal products not only among Muslims but also among non-Muslims.

Damir Alihodzic, the Director of the Agency for Halal Quality Certification of Bosnia and Herzegovina, stated that the halal concept is attracting attention in many parts of the world and that the fair plays a key role in raising awareness of the halal industry. Dino Selimovic, the Forum Director, mentioned that active participation in the forum reflects the curiosity and interest surrounding the halal sector. The fair saw the participation of 66 companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina, regional countries, and various parts of the world.

Elif BAHAR

## Transforming Books and Documents Collected from Pilgrims into a Library

The books and documents collected from pilgrims in the town, which was once a popular destination for pilgrimage groups en route to Mecca, have been transformed into the Chinguetti Desert Libraries in Mauritania.

Chinguetti, an ancient desert town situated on the western edge of the Sahara in Mauritania, houses thousands of years' worth of Arabic manuscripts that have been preserved for generations.

The town, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage list, used to attract pilgrims on their way to Mecca, and the books and documents collected from these pilgrims eventually led to the establishment of several libraries over time.

While there were once up to 30 libraries, only a few have withstood the challenges posed by the desert sands, hot and windy weather, termites, and other desert pests.

Presently, the inhabitants of the region, known as the "Guardians of the Book" persist in caring for these exceptionally rare works and endeavor to pass them down to forthcoming generations. Abdullah Habott, a Mauritanian "Guardian of the Book" diligently safeguards his family's library, which encompasses a multitude of manuscripts, including the Holy Quran, hadith, and fiqh books. His unwavering commitment will ensure the preservation of these invaluable literary treasures for years to come.



## Thousands Gather at the Diyanet Center of America for the DCA Festival

The Diyanet Center of America (DCA) recently hosted its 15th annual DCA Festival, a vibrant celebration of Islamic culture, at its premises in Maryland's DMV region. The festival, which took place on June 3rd and 4th, witnessed the participation of approximately 3,000 people. This biannual event has become a highly anticipated gathering for the local Muslim community over the past seven years.

The DCA Festival brings together Muslims residing in the Maryland DMV



area, providing them with an opportunity to celebrate their cultural heritage. Alongside the local community, various vendors set up booths, showcasing and offering a wide range of cultural products and activities. Moreover, many non-profit organizations join the festival in order to present their initiatives, projects, and programs, raising awareness about their causes.

Among the guests who visited the Festival, there were also certain official delegations, such as Mr.

Malik Aziz the Chief of Police of Prince George's County, and Mr. Calvin S. Hawkins II the At-Large Council Member of Prince George's County. Both distinguished visitors had the opportunity to explore the event and gain invaluable information about the DCA's biannual Festival. They also met with Prof. Bilal Kuspinar, Chairperson of DCA, who briefed them about the significance of the Festival and its impact on the local community.

The 15th Festival of the Diyanet Center of America was attended and celebrated by about 3000 people from various backgrounds. Needless to say, during this two-day splendid event, all participants, including males and females of all ages, had an unforgettable joyous experience, cherishing their shared tawhidi-based values within the diversity of their rich Islamic culture.



## The Transformation of THY Cabin Crew Members' Bags into Boots for Children



As part of Turkish Airlines' "Transformation to the Future" project, ten thousand pairs of children's boots have been produced using cabin crew bags. These boots will be distributed among 100 schools. Within the scope of the "Transformation to the Future" project, boots were designed for children out of used bags, which are indispensable accessories for cabin crew members, that had reached their product validity date. Within the scope of the project, a total of 7,500 bags were transformed into 10,000 pairs of boots.

THY General Manager Bilal Eksi expressed the company's strong commitment to recycling and sustainability in its operations. He stated, "We are happy to contribute to the Zero Waste Day through the Transformation to the Future Project. In this context, we optimize all our operations with sustainable efforts and strive to protect our world for future generations."

# INTELLIGENT MACHINES VS. CLEVER PEOPLE: EXPLORING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A NEW FORM OF LIFE

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet DAG**

Uludag University Faculty of Theology



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the product of science and engineering that enables machines, particularly computers, to exhibit intelligence through sophisticated programs. AI claims to possess advanced cognitive functions akin to human intelligence, including perception, learning, concepts and pattern recognition, thinking, reasoning,

problem-solving, judgment, comparison, communication, and decision-making. It incorporates elements such as deep learning and machine learning. AI is an artificial operating system that not only operates on a cognitive level plane but also aims to showcase autonomous behaviors through its intersection with robotics applications.

The origins of AI can be traced back to J. McCarthy, who, while serving as a soldier in World War II, sought to decipher German codes using his mathematical knowledge. McCarthy believed that computers could learn to think like humans if specific programs were developed. After completing his military service, during which

he had these ideas, he decided to put these ideas into practice once he had graduated from university and completed his postgraduate studies. This young academic organized the world's first AI Conference in 1956. Following this landmark event, both the quantity and quality of AI research have increased significantly.

According to R. Campa, AI applications emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as a result of the evolution of the industrial revolution. AI is defined and positioned by the processes of “automation, computerization, and robotization”, and is considered one of the most powerful tools of the Transhumanism movement. AI, which seeks to make machines intelligent, is regarded as the fourth great invention after the three important inventions of “steam, electricity, and computers.” Industrialization, driven by steam and electricity, was surpassed by computerization, leading to a process of high technologicalization. In the 1990s, AI, as an extension of cognitive science and cybernetics, further advanced this technologicalization and brought about the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), which can be seen as a cybernetic revolution.

4IR’s most influential and scientific application-based AI studies were first conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Subsequently, these studies have received support from capital-intensive companies ranging from Google to Samsung. The expansion of AI research across various fields will bring about both transformative advancements and



challenges in social, cultural, legal, and economic fields.

AI, as a material-based entity (a thinking object) is already integrated into our lives through the internet, smartphones, robotics, and AI applications. It is considered a catalyst for the transition from homo-sapiens to robo-sapiens. There are discussions that robotic studies with AI, which are said to have a social visibility rate of approximately 35 percent in the future, will surpass human intelligence and dominate humans. It is

anticipated that robots with AI applications, which are also used in industry, medicine, the military, and entertainment fields, will be used in many different fields, such as diagnosing and treating diseases.

It is argued that AI can yield positive outcomes but also introduce new challenges. AI is considered one of the stages of high technology, which today is now perceived as a dimension at least as dangerous as nuclear weapon technologies. The advent of AI autonomous technology,

characterized by human-like thinking, interaction, and operating systems, is believed to potentially give rise to serious issues.

While AI brings numerous benefits to sectors such as service and healthcare, concerns are raised about its use as a means of power acquisition or manipulation. With the use of AI in military technology, the 21st century may witness more violent wars than the 20th century. Military technologies based on high-tech AI applications could give rise to a century of warfare with industrial and autonomous systems, surpassing the violence witnessed in the previous century. The development of military autonomous systems and AI applications might be one of the most perilous advancements of the 21st century. As various entities increase the existing ruthlessness of certain states, uncontrolled robot warriors may escalate guerrilla warfare and terrorism. With the potential of autonomous war machines devoid of mercy and compassion, warfare could resemble video games.

The state of technological ownership or superiority may not only lead to an imbalance of victors and losers in warfare but also contribute to the existence of states or nations with significant

economic and social class disparities. The existing gap between societies and countries with individuals possessing enhanced genes and empowered minds utilizing AI applications and those lacking such capabilities may continue to widen. In fact, terms like “developed-undeveloped” or “primitive-modern” countries are likely to become more pronounced and tangible.

While AI receives considerable attention due to its association with mathematics and applied fields, the transhumanism movement is regarded as a more impactful and transformative approach. AI is merely one of the sub-technologies that form the foundation of transhumanism, which is based on NBIC (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science).

### **Paradigm shift in education**

Education will be profoundly impacted by transhumanism, which aims to enhance not only the physical but also the mental capabilities of human beings. The existence of technology and its impact on education over the last 50 years or so have changed the content, purpose, and practice of education. In the era of trans-post humanism era, this technological

impact on education is expected to intensify further. It is predicted that knowledge levels will increase not only through AI applications but also through advancements in human genes and brains. This process will change the content and structure of education.

The use of AI in education encompasses three key themes: adaptive learning, personalized learning styles, and the integration of expert systems and intelligent tutoring systems. AI is recognized as a vital component for the future of educational processes.

Transhumanism, which aims to overcome biological limits with the help of technology and seeks to improve human capabilities through the use of technologies, aims to take control not only of the environment but also of the body and mind. Transhumanism challenges the classical philosophical distinction between body and soul, person and personality. It promises a brand new human race and new types of intelligence by creating new types of intelligence or machine-merged human beings through singularity (human-machine unity), AI, nanotechnology, and cybernetic applications. Within the framework of transhumanist thinking, wherein the

transformation of human beings through technology and education is regarded as an ethically imperative category of action, education itself needs to be redesigned.

Considering the ever-increasing impact and reality of technology, the post-transhumanist process, which will also affect the education process, seems inevitable. The main task of education has been defined as the shaping of human beings through the means of education. Genetic studies, pharmacological

interventions, and disparities in mental capacities, or rather, the advantages resulting from augmenting the brain with additional neurons, will contribute to class distinctions among students. These differences will extend to military, political, and economic spheres, potentially leading to disparities and advantages not only between developed and underdeveloped countries but also between individuals within these categories. This process will bring forth numerous advantages as well as drawbacks.

It is crucial to learn how to effectively utilize AI in education and prepare educators to employ AI-based systems in teaching and learning processes. In this context, inclusive approaches should be developed, encompassing not only an understanding of how these studies are conducted but also the dissemination of this knowledge to benefit humanity as a whole. It is important to consider how we can actively participate in and harness the opportunities presented by this process, while also contemplating its advantages and disadvantages. In particular, philosophers and educators should conduct comprehensive and in-depth studies on the impact of this process on education.



**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS THE PRODUCT OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING THAT ENABLES MACHINES, PARTICULARLY COMPUTERS, TO EXHIBIT INTELLIGENCE THROUGH SOPHISTICATED PROGRAMS.**

# THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE OPEN INVITATION TO ISLAM

Prof. Dr. Casim AVCI

From the fourth year of the prophethood onwards, our Prophet (saw) openly began inviting the people of Mecca to embrace Islam. The period of the secret invitation came to an end with the revelation of the verse, "O Muhammad! Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists." (Hijr, 15:94). Prophet Muhammad

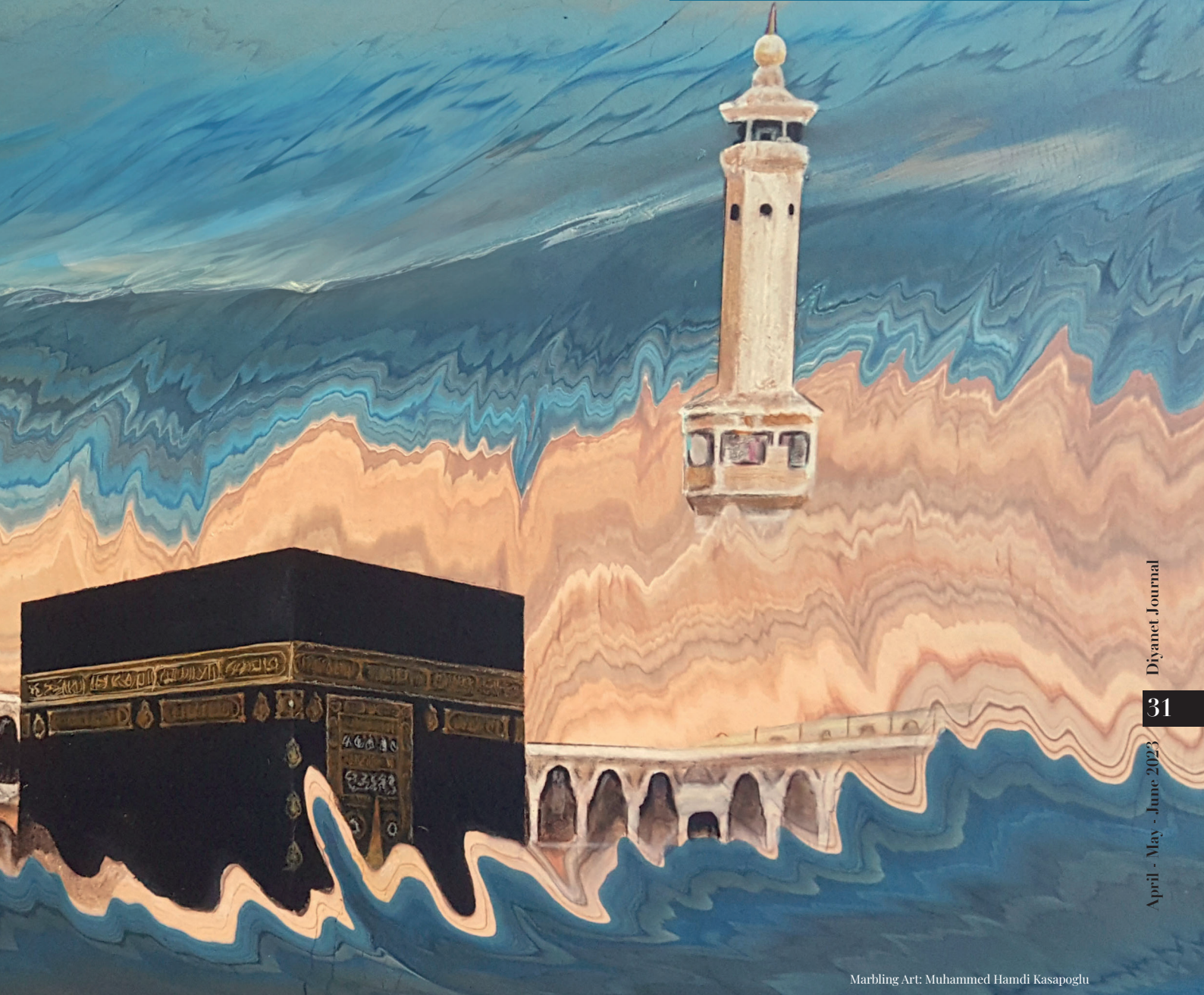
initiated the open invitation by first focusing on his close relatives, in accordance with the verse, "And warn, (O Muhammad), your closest kindred." (Shu'ara, 26:214) To fulfill this command, he arranged a feast for his relatives, consisting of about 40-50 people.

Following the feast, the Prophet invited them to

Islam through a speech. However, his uncle Abu Lahab interrupted his speech, expressing disdain, and said, "I have never seen anyone bring anything worse to his tribe than what you have." Upon hearing these words, the gathering dispersed, and our Prophet, who was distressed about the event, held another meeting a

few days later and gave them a speech again. In this speech, after declaring that Allah is one, that He is inimitable, and that the Prophet believes and trusts in Him, he assured his guests that he would never deceive or lie to them. With these introductory remarks, the Prophet continued his speech with the following words:





Marbling Art: Muhammed Hamdi Kasapoglu

“I am a Messenger whom He has sent to you and all people. I swear by Allah that you will die just as you fall asleep, and you will be raised just as you wake up from sleep. You will be held accountable for your actions, and you will be rewarded or punished accordingly for your good and bad deeds. Both paradise and hell are

everlasting. You are the first to whom I deliver this warning.”

Abu Talib, the Prophet’s uncle, expressed his admiration for these words and pledged his support to the Prophet as long as he would live. However, he mentioned his inability to abandon his ancestral religion. On the other hand, his other uncle, Abu

Lahab, remained firm in his opposition to the Prophet. So our Prophet (saw) made the decision to openly invite the entire city of Mecca to Islam. Shortly after, our Prophet (saw) ascended to the top of the hill of al-Safa in order to extend the invitation further. From there, he called out to the people of Mecca, saying, “O people

of Quraysh! Would you believe me if I said to you that behind this hill there is an enemy army?”

They replied in unison: “Yes, we would believe you, for we have never known you to lie.” Thereupon, our Prophet told them: “Then know that I am warning you of a great punishment that you will suffer unless you believe

in Allah and worship Him appropriately. He has commanded me to invite my close family to Islam. My assistance will be of no benefit to you in this world or the Hereafter unless you accept 'La ilaha illallah' (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah).

His uncle, Abu Lahab, who was present among those who heard the Prophet's declaration once again opposed the Prophet with harsh and unscrupulous words and attempted to hinder his meeting with the people of Mecca, seeking to prevent him from explaining Islam.

#### **Reasons why the polytheists of Mecca opposed the invitation**

The notables of Quraysh did not object to our Prophet's invitation to Islam at first. But everything started to change when the Prophet (saw) recited verses criticizing idolatry and announced, after his open invitation to Islam, that idolaters would face the consequences of Hell. This message was seen as a significant threat, leading to a hostile attitude among the idolaters who sought to actively hinder the spread of Islam. There were various reasons behind their opposition.

#### **Religious reasons**

The Arabs were deeply attached to the traditions of their ancestors, and

idolatry was among these deeply ingrained traditions that they unquestionably accepted. When Prophet Muhammad called them to worship the One and Only God, they reacted by saying, "Are you asking us to abandon the religion of our ancestors? We will not forsake the religion of our fathers." Islam, on the other hand, rejected all forms of idol worship and commanded that only Allah be worshiped. Furthermore, the moral standards of the Quraysh, the tribe of the Prophet, were far from the ethical principles advocated by Islam. Islam did not condone many of the vices and negative practices that were prevalent in society. Islam, which called upon individuals and society to belief on the basis of one Allah, declared war on any and all systemic and social injustice.

Islam indeed challenged the prevailing notion of superiority based on wealth, lineage, or social status. It prohibited harmful practices and vices such as arrogance, gambling, adultery, drinking, and lying. Islam completely overturned the standards of people's superiority over each other. In Islam, true superiority could only be attained through worship of Allah (taqwa). Islam proclaimed that there was no distinction between a slave and a wealthy person

in the sight of Allah. Both were regarded as equals, with their worth determined solely by their piety and submission to Allah. It seemed almost impossible for the notables of the Meccan polytheists to accept this understanding of equality.

#### **Political and economic reasons**

It was very difficult for individuals in Arab society, who attached great importance to tribal ties, to embrace a new religion. Doing so meant risking social ostracism, isolation, and being abandoned by their tribe, leaving them without any protection. Moreover, the tribes that made up the Arab society wanted their leaders to be wealthy and influential.

However, when Muhammad was born his father had already passed on, and during his early childhood, his mother also passed on, making him an orphan. Moreover, he did not possess any wealth either. Abu Jahl, one of the leading enemies of Islam, expressed his stance towards the Prophet by the following statement, "We can compete with the Hashimites. Whatever they do, we can do the same. But now they say, 'A prophet has come to us, to whom revelation was sent'. How can our tribe produce a prophet of such kind? By Allah, we will never accept this prophethood."



**HE CALLED OUT TO THE PEOPLE OF MECCA, SAYING, "O PEOPLE OF QURAYSH! WOULD YOU BELIEVE ME IF I SAID TO YOU THAT BEHIND THIS HILL THERE IS AN ENEMY ARMY?"**

Yet, the call of Islam, initiated by our Prophet began to transform hearts. However, the wealthy and powerful elites in Mecca were primarily concerned with their property and status rather than matters of the heart. They desired the preservation of the existing economic and idolatrous order without any alteration.

Another significant factor was the influx of people from various regions across the Arabian Peninsula to Mecca, which served as a prominent hub for trade and religious activities. The polytheists held great reverence for the multitude of idols housed in the Ka'bah. Additionally, the Meccans profited by selling these idols to outsiders. The polytheists of Mecca were concerned that the advent of Islam would diminish the economic prosperity they derived from these idols. Naturally, this was a scenario they vehemently opposed. Consequently, they commenced devising and implementing strategies to halt the advancement of Islam.

#### **Efforts to hinder the invitation of Prophet Muhammad**

The number of believers in our Prophet began to grow, prompting the Quraysh to employ tactics to impede this progress. They resorted to contempt, insults, and even violence

to achieve their goal. In addition to these actions, the Quraysh made peculiar requests of Prophet Muhammad. For example, they asked our Prophet to make rivers flow through Mecca, to resurrect their deceased ancestors, bestow upon them grand palaces and treasures, and even inflict punishment upon themselves. In response to these bizarre demands, the Prophet conveyed that everything would come to pass according to the will of Allah, emphasizing, "I am merely a prophet chosen by Allah from among the people."

#### **Mockery and slander**

When the number of believers in Islam conveyed by Prophet Muhammad (saw), who lived his entire life with utmost sincerity, began to increase, the Quraysh polytheists resorted to a new tactic of mockery. They started labeling him as a soothsayer, a madman, and even a poet. Furthermore, they sought to undermine and refute Islam and the Qur'an by claiming that the Qur'an was a fictitious work, invented by the Prophet Muhammad or that he learned it from a Christian source. In a nutshell, they wanted to undermine Islam by claiming that the Qur'an is not the word of Allah. Undoubtedly, this campaign of slander and

falsehood deeply affected our Prophet. However, Allah reassured him and those who believed in him through the revelation of verses that challenged the polytheists until the Day of Judgement. Allah addressed the Prophet with the following verses, "Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists. Indeed, We are sufficient for you against the mockers who make (equal) with Allah another deity. But they are going to know." (Hijr, 15:94-96), and "Or do they say, 'He invented it?' Say, 'Then bring ten surahs like it that have been invented and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah, if you should be truthful.' And if they do not respond to you - then know that it [the Qur'an] was revealed with the knowledge of Allah and that there is no deity except Him. Then, would you [not] be Muslims?" (Hud, 11:13-14) Despite the pain caused by these slanders and lies, the Prophet found solace in the support and guidance of Allah.

#### **The proposal of an agreement between the polytheists and the Prophet**

When Prophet Muhammad persevered in inviting people to Islam despite facing all kinds of ridicule and insults, the polytheists

sought to discourage him by proposing an agreement with him. The person to come to him with the proposition was Utbah. He approached the Prophet and said, "If your aim is wealth, let us give you property. If you seek rank and reputation, we will make you our leader", and he went even further and said, "If you are suffering from a mental illness, we will provide treatment for you."

After Utbah had spoken these words, our Prophet recited the first verses of Surah Fussilat (41:1-6) and affirmed that he was a prophet appointed by Allah. Realizing that their worldly offers could not sway Prophet Muhammad from his mission, they made a new offer. This was a rather strange proposition, for they said, "O Muhammad! Let us worship what you worship. And you can worship the idols that we worship". In response to this inappropriate proposition of the polytheists, Surah al-Kafirun was revealed:

"Say, 'O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshipers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshiper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshipers of what I worship. For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.'" (Kafirun, 109:1-6)

# JENNY MOLENDYK DIVLELI

“ALLAH IS THE BEST OF  
PLANNERS.”



### Can you tell us briefly about yourself?

I am a Canadian Muslim convert who has been living in Istanbul for the last 11 years. I was raised in a Christian family, and the Christian faith was a big part of my life until I was about 18 years old. When I was in university my parents divorced and that, along with new life experiences caused me to move away from the faith. I studied American Sign Language Interpretation and Linguistics at university. I only started looking into Islam because I thought that maybe one day I may interpret for Muslims. Of course, Allah had different plans and in 2006 I became Muslim. Later that year I got married and my husband and I now have five children. We have been living in Türkiye since 2012. When I first moved here, I spent most of my time homeschooling my children and developing an Islamic-based curriculum. As they started to grow, I also began teaching English. For a while, I had my own English course location and taught children's play-based English classes and classes for youth and women. Eventually, I closed the company and have been working in the public education system as an English teacher at Imam Hatip High Schools for

the last 6 years. Three years ago, I also made the decision to have a presence on social media. I wanted to take a more active role in the lives of youth and share some of my experiences with them. I also began sharing some



**I DECIDED I WOULD BEGIN TO READ AND LEARN ABOUT ISLAM FOR THE SAKE OF MY CAREER. I NEVER HAD ANY INTENTION OF BECOMING MUSLIM, BUT WE PLAN AND ALLAH PLANS, AND ALLAH IS THE BEST OF PLANNERS.**

of the activities I was doing at home with my children. Soon after, I began writing children's books. This year, I also published my first book for teens/adults.

### What were your thoughts on Islam before embracing Islam?

My knowledge about Islam was very limited prior to my accepting Islam. It was after the terror attacks of 2001 in New York so everything on the news about Muslims and Islam was negative. I didn't give it much thought in my day-to-day life because I didn't know any Muslims or interact with them on a daily basis, but subconsciously it shaped my perspective in a negative way. I couldn't tell you that Muslims were the people who practiced Islam, but for some reason, I had judgments about Muslims. One of the first questions I ever asked when I first began looking into Islam was "Could Muslim women sit in the front seat of cars?" I have no idea where this question came from, but somewhere, somehow, I had a perception that Muslim women were oppressed. I think if I had lived in a bigger city, I may have paid more attention to Islam and other religions and cultures in general, but most of the people I knew were white Christians and I didn't

interact with Muslims, or even see them on a regular basis.

### How did you hear about Islam for the first time?

The first time I heard about Islam was from a student that was volunteering in the same program I was in at my local university. Each week he would take his glasses off and place them on the table and leave our meetings without telling anyone where he was going. I watched this for a couple of weeks until eventually I got curious and I asked where he was going. He explained he was Muslim and was going to pray. This subtle action, fulfilling his fardh prayers without excuse or fear in a non-Muslim group and country sparked my curiosity. Allah used that moment to open a door. Having no prior knowledge of Islam meant that we began to have more conversations about Islam on different occasions. I was shocked at how similar our religions were and that I had no previous knowledge of Islam. I couldn't believe we shared the same prophets and so many similar beliefs about their lives. I decided I would begin to read and learn about Islam for the sake of my career. I never had any intention of becoming Muslim, but we plan and Allah plans, and Allah is the Best of Planners.



**What kind of differences did you experience in your relations with your family or close circle after converting to Islam?**

After I accepted Islam there was certainly a period of adjustment for my family. My father, who was a police officer, was quite upset and it certainly changed our relationship for many years. He was also the most religious in our family. Between his history of being in the police force as well as his strong religious beliefs, he could not make sense of my choice. We struggled to communicate and my interactions with him were very limited for many years. My mother was



**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER AND IT IS TIME THAT WE USED OUR VOICES TO SPEAK TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM INSTEAD OF LETTING OTHERS SPEAK FOR US.**

more concerned for my well-being as a woman. She had watched a movie years prior called “Not Without My Daughter” and she was worried my life would follow the plot of the movie. Basically, a foreigner marries a Muslim and they have a great life until they move to his country and then she becomes a captive in her own home. I did my best to reassure her, and she began to research herself. Over the years she has still had concerns about the choices I make, but she is doing her best to be supportive. As for my friends, some of them remained close while some directly told

me that they would not continue our friendship. Other friends just slowly faded away because I no longer went to the same places or had the same interests. Navigating the situation with friends was challenging. They didn’t understand my choice and religion is a private topic in Canadian culture so it felt uncomfortable to talk about it openly, but it was obvious I had changed my faith, so at times it felt like the elephant in the room. But just like with most things, it took time. Those who were important to me and sincere in my life stuck around, and those who weren’t faded out of my life. But of course, there

were certainly moments of trial and loneliness.

### **What is your advice to people who are curious about Islam?**

I would definitely tell those who are curious about Islam to not be afraid to ask questions. Allah's first command to our beloved Prophet (saw) was to read. Knowledge is power; read books, seek knowledge, go to a mosque, pick up the Quran, meet and befriend Muslims... Knowledge is power and we overcome our fears when we understand each other. The media and news outlets love to talk about Islam and Muslims, but if you are sincere in learning about Muslims, go to the source. Read our texts, meet our community, and see the beauty of Islam. When people look into Islam sincerely, Allah shows them the Truth.

### **What kind of projects are you doing right now?**

In the last year, I had the opportunity to be a part of some really exciting projects. Through social media, I started an al-Asma al-Husna video series that then turned into challenges between different schools. These days I am working on developing that series into other projects as well as working on a new series. I have also been very busy visiting schools and

interacting with the youth. I recently released my book "Islam'm Rengi" (The Colour of Islam), which is about my journey in Islam, and have been talking to the youth about the content of the book. I also have a couple of children's books that I am working on. My biggest dream is always to one day open a youth center. I would love to see a safe space for teens that is relevant to them and presents Islam in a way that increases the love of Allah and the Prophet (saw). Inshallah, Allah will open a way for this one day.

### **What is your message to our readers?**

My message to anyone reading this is never to stop learning. Knowledge

is power and it is time that we used our voices to speak truth about Islam instead of letting others speak for us. We are on the path of truth and we don't need to be ashamed to live Islam in public. To be effective in presenting our knowledge we also have to live with good manners. In many ways, this is just as or more important than having deep knowledge. For conversations to happen, we need to be approachable. Allah tells us in the Quran that if the Prophet (saw) had been stern in his manner, people would not have accepted him or his message. When we live following the best example of humankind (saw) with the best intention, then we should live with confidence that we are on the best path. I also want to remind everyone, including myself, that struggles are a part of life. Often, we feel like giving up when things get difficult. In fact, He tells us in the Quran that there will be challenges and we will be tested. Tests don't mean that we are not loved by Allah. The best of humankind, our beloved Prophet (saw) had some of the greatest tests known to humankind, yet he was the most loved by Allah. In moments of trial and difficulty, that is when we need to come closer to Allah and remember He is always there waiting.



**WE  
OVERCOME  
OUR FEARS  
WHEN WE  
UNDERSTAND  
EACH OTHER.**

*Jenny Molendyk Dicleli was born in Canada, the second child of a police officer and a nurse. She was raised in a conservative Christian family. Molendyk studied Linguistics and American Sign Language Interpretation and Linguistics at the University of Manitoba and Red River College. As a result of her research on Islam, she embraced Islam in 2006. She married Sami Dicleli, whom she met during the process, and the couple settled in Turkey in 2012. While teaching the English language, she also shares both educational and informative posts for children through her social media accounts. In her Turkish and English posts, she both touches on general topics and introduces Islam and the life of Prophet Muhammad (saw).*

# The Blessed Name that Encompasses Existence

## AR-RAHMAN

**Fatma BAYRAM**

If we want to situate our existence in the universe properly, we must have accurate knowledge about Allah. However, humans, in their own capacity, find it impossible to fully understand Allah. Therefore, Allah Himself has revealed knowledge about Himself. All the divine books have been sent for the purpose of explaining Allah and our relationship with Him.

According to the Qur'an, the foundation of the relationship between Allah and existence is His attributes of ar-Rahman (the Most Merciful) and ar-Rahim (the Most Compassionate). In other words, the primary aspect of His relationship with existence is mercy (An'am, 6:12, 54; Ghafir, 40:7). This is evident in the significance of the basmalah, which encapsulates His merciful nature and serves as the key to all goodness. The principle that Allah's mercy surpasses His wrath is a fundamental

concept in Islamic thought. It is rooted in the understanding that mercy stems from the true essence of al-Haqq (the Ultimate Reality), whereas wrath is a secondary quality that arises from the actions of the created beings (A'raf, 7:156). Consequently, Allah's mercy reaches His servants prior to His wrath.

The initial manifestation of His mercy is evident in our emergence from nothing into existence. The very fact of existence itself is a blessing and the source of all other blessings. Every inherent blessing bestowed upon all things during their initial creation is also a result of mercy. Therefore, there is no being that remains untouched by the mercy of Allah. All imaginable peace and all hope stems from His attributes of ar-Rahman (the Most Merciful). Since hopelessness is something that destroys a person, in

the Qur'an, despairing of Allah's mercy is considered heresy and equated with disbelief (Yusuf, 12:87; Hijr, 15:56; Ankabut, 29:23; Zumar, 39:53).

The name "ar-Rahman" is never used in the Qur'an for anyone other than Allah, and it is always used as one of His attributes. This is evident from instances where "ar-Rahman" is used interchangeably with the name "Allah" in the Qur'an, such as Isra, 17:110; Maryam, 19:69, 78, 90, 91, 96, Furqan 25:60, Taha 20:5, 108 and Ra'd 13:30. Therefore, there is consensus among scholars that the name "ar-Rahman" cannot be attributed to any creature.

As mercy is one of the essential attributes of Allah, He sent His last Prophet to be a mercy to the worlds (Anbiya, 21:107) and described the "Book" revealed to him as a mercy for humankind (Yunus 10:57; Isra, 17:82, Naml 27:76-77, Qasas 28:86, Luqman 31:3, Jathiyah 45:20). In hundreds



**THOSE WHO TRULY COMPREHEND THIS SUBLIME NAME OF OUR LORD EXHIBIT MERCY TOWARDS ALL CREATURES CREATED BY ALLAH, WITHOUT ANY DISCRIMINATION.**





of verses, the Qur'an expresses the material and spiritual blessings bestowed upon humanity through the concept of mercy. Additionally, harmony and peace within family life are connected to feelings of love and compassion (Rum, 30:21).


Yet, "Rahmah" should not be confused with human "mercy". Allah's mercy is boundless in quantity and surpasses all conceivable forms of mercy in quality.

The question of how to reconcile the infinite mercy attributed to Allah with the presence of hardships in the world, such as illness, oppression, and poverty, has been a subject of discussion. This issue has been addressed by acknowledging that there is inherent good even in things that are disliked and considered evil (Baqarah, 2:216) and that if evil is completely eliminated, the good it contains, which would be in favor of human

beings in the long run, will also be eliminated. Allah is the epitome of mercy (Mu'minun 23:109, 118), but it is beyond our capacity to comprehend all the intricacies of His decrees.

Those who truly comprehend this sublime name of our Lord exhibit mercy towards all creatures created by Allah, without any discrimination. According to al-Ghazali, guidance provided to us through

the name "ar-Rahman" entails compassionately and kindly admonishing those whose hearts are veiled, showing compassion towards sinners, considering every sin committed in the world as a hardship, and striving to eradicate it. This is because every act of disobedience distances the one who commits it from Allah, and the one who is alienated from Allah is the one most worthy of mercy.



# IS THERE A CONFLICT BETWEEN RELIGION AND SCIENCE?

**QUESTIONS ON MY MIND**

Prof. Dr. Cagfer KARADAS

Sir, there is a question that has been weighing on my mind lately, which is whether there is a conflict between religion and science. Do religion and science truly conflict with each other? What kinds of differences exist between religion and science? Is it possible to consider them as independent and separate from each other? Does the presence of one confine the other to a limited domain? Can one be substituted for the other?

Modern times have emerged as a period characterized by clear demarcations and a prevailing sense of competition among various aspects of life. In fact, Allah the Almighty has interconnected everything, establishing a deep interdependence where each entity fulfills the needs of another. He, in His infinite wisdom, holds ultimate authority to whom all needs are conveyed. No being in the universe is exempt from having needs. Ultimately, everything relies on Allah the Almighty, while He Himself remains independent and free from any need. That being said, modern times have witnessed attempts to assign a particular position to God or expand the realm of human influence while constraining the role of God. God, the ultimate authority, who fulfills all

needs, has been largely ignored, and the idea that everything belongs to human beings and that human beings can meet all needs has become prevalent. Indeed, this deviation from recognizing the ultimate authority of God and placing excessive confidence in human capabilities can be described as going off the rails. It is indeed a valid question to consider how a human being or even a group of human beings, who is dependent on everything including various resources such as air and water, can fulfill the needs of everything. The underlying truth behind this notion is often driven by human ambition and a desire for dominion over all aspects of existence. Environmental massacre, the extinction of species, and the condemnation of the vast majority of humanity to hunger and poverty triggering waves of communities to forcefully migrate sum up the current global state of affairs. Initially, the idea of resorting to military action, involving guns and bloodshed, emerged as a means to address this migration. Unfortunately, this was the conclusion reached by individuals who had chosen to ignore Allah and overstep their bounds. The consequence of such a misguided perspective is the infliction of violence and the disruption of

natural equilibrium. Alas, this situation brings about a deep sense of sorrow and lamentation.

**Sir! We initially began our conversation with the religion–science conflict, and it appears that our discussion has diverged onto different subjects!**

Oh, I was just getting there. Certain inventions and human advancements have driven human beings away from Allah. These inventions and human advancements, particularly the invention of the machine, have tempted human beings to assume god-like attributes. This progression has occurred so rapidly that human beings have begun to perceive the universe as a vast machine, positioning themselves at its center. The fascination with their own knowledge and the immense power derived from machines overwhelmed them, leading them to perceive themselves as independent of God. Eventually, they even proclaimed, “God is dead,” as they felt the need to replace the God they had metaphorically killed in their minds. Consequently, they replaced God with themselves, mirroring the stories of Pharaoh and Haman. After all, Pharaoh claimed to be god based on his power, while Haman boasted of his knowledge. The outcomes of their actions are well-known. As we witness the

state of modern society, it becomes evident that we are experiencing the ramifications of the same dynamics.

**Oh, sir! It feels a bit awkward for me but I have to intervene. You initially mentioned the conflict between science and religion. Let us refocus our discussion on that topic.**

All right, let us continue our discussion on the conflict between science

and religion. Modern humans have attempted to make a religion out of the science they produced themselves. Initially, they assigned a position to God known as deism. Then they retired God, even suggesting that the retired God could die. So they pronounced Him dead. This pronouncement was made almost as a jest, but the underlying idea was that modern human beings believed they could replace God with their own scientific achievements.

Nevertheless, the desire of modern humans to replace God and create a human entity according to their own wishes proved to be an unattainable goal. As the famous Turkish poet Necip Fazıl said that they wanted to create a human being in such an image but it was destined to fail. Despite the advancement in knowledge and science, the concept of God did not disappear from people’s minds as they had assumed. Large masses continued to hold their belief in God, while at the same time, some people sought to exert control over others using the power of science. However, as these people began to disrupt the delicate environmental balance on Earth, suspicion started to arise. Finally, their own disregard for the consequences led to a deterioration of their own false construct.



**RELIGION AND SCIENCE ARE TWO DISTINCT SEPARATE STRUCTURES BUT THEY CAN MUTUALLY SUPPORT EACH OTHER. EACH EXISTS FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY.**

The conflict they had hoped to incite between religion and science eventually turned against them. However, we must acknowledge that they did achieve one thing: the creation of a generation of youth characterized by selfishness, wastefulness, and a lack of purpose. It is worth noting that some individuals recognized the compatibility and mutual support between science and religion, but unfortunately, their voices went unheard.

Yet, there are those who persist in fuelling this conflict between science and religion. Who knows, maybe the apocalypse will take place this way. It is ironic to observe that in the early nineteenth century, deists and atheists dismissed the possibility of an apocalypse, yet many of them have now become staunch environmentalists, emphasizing the importance of preserving our planet. One cannot help but question their previous indifference: Where have they been all this time? What were they thinking?

**Oh, sir! So do you mean there is no conflict between science and religion?**

That is precisely what I am saying. There is no inherent conflict between religion and science. The conflict is between those who attempt to produce

religion out of science and those who see religion as science. It would be ideal if each pursued its own path without conflicting with the other. If it was instilled in people the understanding that science serves the worldly welfare of humans, and religion serves the social order, morality, and spiritual aspect of human beings. Moreover, if people embraced the understanding that building a meaningful life in this world is also building a foundation for the afterlife, how beautiful the world would be!

**Sir! Is it really possible to have such a world?**

Let's just wish, intend, and be determined! Why



**EVERYTHING RELIES ON ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY, WHILE HE HIMSELF REMAINS INDEPENDENT AND FREE FROM ANY NEED.**

not? All the prophets and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon them, were sent and assigned to establish such a beautiful order. Let's not forget that the world is founded on two realities: conflict and solidarity. The order is to find a balance between these two. This is exactly the task of the prophets. Actually, the beloved Prophet (saw) taught us a lesson related to this through an example about grafting dates.

**How, sir?**

After he migrated to Medina, the Prophet (saw) observed the people of Medina grafting palm-dates trees. So he said to them: "I do not find it to be of any use.", so they abandoned this practice. However, that year the yield dwindled. When they informed the Prophet, he said, "I am a human being, so when I command you about a thing pertaining to Allah, accept it, and when I command you about a thing out of my personal opinion, keep it in mind that I am a human being. You have better knowledge (of a technical skill) in the affairs of the world."

(Muslim, Fadh'a'il, 38)

**Sir, how should we interpret this?**

What we need to understand is that human beings have limitations in their power and abilities. Allah the Almighty did

not let the Prophet (saw) say this in vain: "Say, 'I am only a man like you, to whom has been revealed that your god is one God'..." (Kahf, 18:110) It is not possible for someone to grasp everything, to reach everywhere, and to intervene in every incidence. This is beyond human power. Only Allah the Almighty can do this. The Prophet (saw) was sent only to guide people to the right path and to warn them about the wrong ones. So, people should talk about what they know and understand.

Religion and science are two distinct separate structures but they can mutually support each other. Each exists for the good of humanity. However, the balance of conflict and solidarity between them should be carefully observed. The beloved Prophet, peace be upon him, pointed out exactly this balance through the narrative of the grafting of dates. A balance based on wisdom and justice. Preserving this balance requires observing wisdom and justice in our actions and decisions. Allah the Almighty has generously granted human beings the opportunity to navigate this balance. As long as we remain mindful of the Giver and do not forget our reliance on Him, we can uphold this delicate equilibrium between religion and science.

# ISLAM IN AUSTRALIA

**Bilal AKSOY**

Attache of Religious Services of Sydney

## Overview

Australia is one of the countries in the world where Islam is on the rise. Islam has been recognized as the second-largest religion in the country since 2016. Muslims, whose population has been steadily increasing in the

country, have started to be noticed in the general life and politics of the country.

## The first contact with Islam

Some sources indicate that the encounter between the new continent of Australia and Islam occurred in the 1500s or 1700s. Indonesian

Makassan traders, who traded in fish, pearls, and sea cucumbers, traveled to and from the continent, settling in areas such as Darwin, the Broome region in the north of the country, and Thursday Island. This commercial activity in the northern part of the continent also





led to cultural interactions. Even today, traces of Islam can be observed in the language and religious rituals of the Aboriginal people in the region.

The Makassan Muslim traders were reportedly the first foreign people with whom the indigenous people of Australia, known as Aborigines, had contact. Studies suggest that Aboriginal people encountered people from outside the continent long before Captain James Cook, who first explored the continent in 1770. Researchers have described the indigenous people's relationship with Muslims as a success, emphasizing that Muslim traders contributed to the establishment of Islam as a permanent element in Australia through trade, cultural exchanges, and intermarriage with the indigenous people, without aiming for colonization.

However, following the discovery of Australia by European explorers in 1770, the country's natural and underground resources began to be transported to Europe. To address the challenges of transporting cargo from inland mines to port areas, the idea of using camel caravans was adopted. Camel drivers and camels were brought from Afghanistan in 1860. The first Muslim camel drivers to arrive in the country

were Dost Muhammad and his two friends from Kashmir, accompanied by 24 camels. Subsequently, camels and camel drivers were also brought from the Ottoman Empire, India, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan, and they all became known as Afghans. The common characteristic of this newly recruited population was that they were all Muslims. Muslim laborers working in the transportation of ores from mines and the installation of telegraph lines gradually began to settle in suitable places along the way. In 1861, Muslims built the first mosque in the town of Marree in South Australia, at the crossroads of the mines. In addition to being a place of worship, it was also a meeting and socialization point. Later, small mosques were built in the towns and cities of Broken Hill, Darwin, Brisbane, Perth, Broome, Port Hedland, Farina, Oodradatta, Bridsville, Alice Springs, and Coolgardie.

The commercial relations between Muslims and the local population took on a new shape over time through marriages, and the Muslim population, who had come as temporary workers, began to settle down. In 1888-1889, the children and grandchildren of Afghan laborers built "Australia's oldest and largest mosque,

still in use for worship today” in Adelaide, the capital of the State of South Australia. In 1903, four minarets were added to this mosque. Today, worship is still performed in this mosque.

By the early 1900s, the Muslim population in Australia had reached 6,011. The last quarter of the 19th century witnessed the rapid spread of Islam in Australia, and mosques and masjids emerged throughout the country, ensuring the continued presence of Islam.

Muslims, who first officially settled in Australia as workers in the 1860s, are today making their presence felt in politics, government agencies, municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals, social centers, commerce, construction, agriculture, in short, in all areas of life, as administrators, managers, educators, experts, and employers.

#### **Islamic organizations in Australia**

Before the 1950s, Muslims were mostly active in their own mosques and masjids, but after the 1950s, they began to join forces and establish larger organizations. In 1953, the first Islamic association was established by Muslim Australians of Albanian origin in the town of Mareeba near

the city of Cairns. A house was purchased and converted into a masjid, and a mosque was built in the same place in 1960. Again, Muslim Australians of Albanian descent established an Islamic association and a mosque in Shepparton in 1958. This mosque is also known as the first mosque in the state of Victoria.



**THE SYNERGY CREATED THROUGH COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL AID ACTIVITIES HAS GARNERED APPRECIATION FROM THE MUSLIM AND TURKISH COMMUNITIES, AS WELL AS FROM ALL AUSTRALIANS.**

It is known that there are more than 1000 mosques, masjids, and organizations in Australia. In and around the city of Sydney alone, there are around 300 places operating under the names of mosques, masjids, youth centers, Islamic centers, prayer rooms, and so forth.

In 1964, the Australian Federation of Islamic Societies (AFIS) was established in order to gather the associations and Islamic centers spread across the country under a single roof; in 1976, the name was changed to the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). AFIC, which has long been recognized by the Australian government as the umbrella organization of all Muslims, has played a major role in the organization of Islamic services in the country and has pioneered the opening of private schools that will provide religious education and training over time.

Another umbrella organization that has made a name in the country is the Australian National Imams Council (ANIC). Established in 2006, ANIC has become one of the largest umbrella organizations in the country in recent years, accrediting around 200 mosques and masjids around 250 imams and religious officials, and 16 Islamic schools.

Currently, there are approximately 25 mosques in Australia, primarily located in Sydney and Melbourne, that are inaugurated for worship by the Turkish community. In 2013, under the leadership of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, eight mosques administered by Turkish-Islamic Associations in the states of New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland (QLD) were brought together under the roof of the Diyanet Foundation of Australia. Apart from these, there are three other mosques. The Australian Diyanet Association also provides services in the city of Melbourne. In addition to local support such as scholarships for students, food support, daily meals for the homeless and orphans, and meeting the needs of religious places, both Diyanet organizations have also extended a helping hand to New Zealand and neighboring island countries around Australia and worked in cooperation with the Muslims of the region. The synergy created through community involvement and social aid activities has garnered appreciation from the Muslim and Turkish communities, as well as from all Australians. This positive engagement will continue in the future.

# A LEADER OF CONTEMPLATION: ALIJA IZETBEGOVIĆ

Koray SERBETCI





### Who is Alija Izetbegović?

Bosnian Muslim leader and thinker Alija Izetbegović was born on August 8, 1925, in Šamac. Just two years later, his family relocated to Sarajevo. Alija Izetbegović grew up in a religious family. He received such a good level of religious education and deep religious understanding that even as a child he attended morning prayers in the mosque.

Alija Izetbegović's dedication to his religious beliefs continued into his youth. During World War II, he joined the Young Muslims (Mladi Muslimani), an organization whose main purpose was to ensure that the Muslim community in the Balkans, which had been left without external support after the Ottoman State, could stand on its own feet again. However, the communist government established in post-war Yugoslavia viewed the Young Muslim organization as illegal and intolerable. As a result, in 1946 Alija Izetbegović was sentenced to three years in prison for his membership in this organization. After being released from prison, Alija Izetbegović began studying law in Sarajevo and at the same time continued his political activities in secret. He placed particular emphasis on the intellectual reconstruction

of the Muslim community. His book, 'The Islamic Declaration', written in the 1960s, was a product of these efforts. In 1980, following the death of Yugoslav President Tito, a power struggle emerged for the Presidency of the Federation. A compromise was reached stipulating that the Presidency of the Federation would rotate annually among the leaders of each of the six federal states. This led to a relative softening of the totalitarian regime in the country. However, this arrangement was short-lived.

In the meantime, taking advantage of the more lenient atmosphere, Alija Izetbegović, in 1983, published his work entitled 'Islamic Manifesto'. Consequently, the totalitarian Yugoslav regime which could not tolerate this opposition accused Izetbegović of hostility to the state, sentencing him to fourteen years in prison. Eventually, his sentence was reduced to eleven years, and he was granted an amnesty in 1988 resulting in his release.

#### The leader Alija Izetbegović

At the time of Alija Izetbegović's release from prison, the political landscape was undergoing significant changes with the collapse of the socialist Eastern Bloc. It was during this period that Izetbegović

founded the Party of Democratic Action. The party won the general elections held in Bosnia on December 5, 1990, and Alija Izetbegović became the President of the Republic of Bosnia, which was a constituent part of the Yugoslav Federation.



**THROUGH ALL HIS WRITINGS AND EXPERIENCES, HE HAD A PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING OF BOTH WESTERN AND EASTERN CIVILIZATIONS AND HAD THE DEPTH, SINCERITY, AND UNIVERSALITY TO POINT OUT TO THE PEOPLE OF MODERN TIMES WHERE THEY SHOULD STAND.**

However, as the Eastern Bloc disintegrated, the totalitarian regime in Yugoslavia also began to dissolve. Yet, this dissolution did not lead to a peaceful and democratic transition. Instead, the republics that made up the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began to declare their independence one after another, and the country was plunged into a civil war. Amidst this turbulent environment, the parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which wanted to liberate itself from Serbian domination and assert its national will, held a referendum on independence on March 1, 1992. When the referendum resulted in favor of independence, the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina officially declared its independence. However, the response from the Yugoslavian army, under the control of the Serbs and the Bosnian Serb militants armed by them, was brutal. They initiated a violent war against the Muslim population in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Perhaps the greatest fortune of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina in this difficult period was that they endured it under the leadership of Alija Izetbegović, a strong-willed and reflective leader.



### A leader who guided his people

The Bosnian Muslims found themselves in a significantly disadvantaged military position against the Serb and Croat groups in the face of the organized attack that began immediately after Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence. As a result, the Serbs swiftly occupied numerous cities and towns in Bosnia during the initial stages of the offensive.

Alija Izetbegović, who led his people in the Bosnian War that lasted from 1992 to 1995, not only fought for an independent Bosnia as a political leader, both on the front line and at the diplomatic table, but also as a thinker, where he put into practice what he wrote in his books. In this brutal war, he taught his people that they should fight for their freedom as Muslims, emphasizing

that they should do so without deviating from the principles of morality as Muslims, no matter what they experienced.

While Alija Izetbegović infused and empowered his people with a strong determination through the words “I vow to Allah, whose strength is above all, we will not be slaves”, he also instilled in them a consciousness that guided them to carry out their struggle for freedom within the bounds of humanitarian and moral principles, despite their immense suffering and pain.

The war, during which Bosnian Muslims endured immense suffering, ended with the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995. As a result of the war, two hundred thousand people lost their lives, and more than one million people became refugees.

### Alija Izetbegović as a thinker

As mentioned earlier, Alija Izetbegović was not only a political leader but also one of the most important Muslim thinkers of the 20th century. He demonstrated to the entire Muslim world, especially the Balkan Muslims, how to speak out against the Western concepts of the modern era by adhering to the sources of Islam.

Alija Izetbegović’s approach as a Muslim thinker is to present Islam both as a religion and as a civilization that offers a superior balance between the two extremes to which the world is drifting. This idea is based on the Qur’an’s own description of the Islamic community as “the community that follows the middle path (ummatan wasatan)”. According to Alija Izetbegović, Islam, as a religion representing the middle path, gives equal weight to both worlds.

In this line of understanding, Alija Izetbegović finds the salvation of Muslims in adhering to this principle of balance brought by Islam. According to him, Muslims must take care of their material and spiritual needs in order to achieve salvation in both worlds.

Hence, Izetbegović is not only a thinker who acknowledges the crises faced by Muslims in the



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face of the impositions of the modern world but also proposes solutions. According to him, the thinkers of this civilization, who guide Muslims, have adopted either a conservative or a modernist approach and have swung to the two extremes of the spectrum, which is an error. This cannot take Muslims out of the crises of the modern age for Islam in its essence is a religion that already represents the

middle ground between these extremes. According to him, it will be a group of Islam-conscious and enlightened people who adopt this middle path approach of the Holy Qur'an that will lead the Muslim society out of this crisis and shape its future.

Alija Izetbegović, who continued his work in this line, focused on universal problems such as existence, freedom, God, life, love, death,

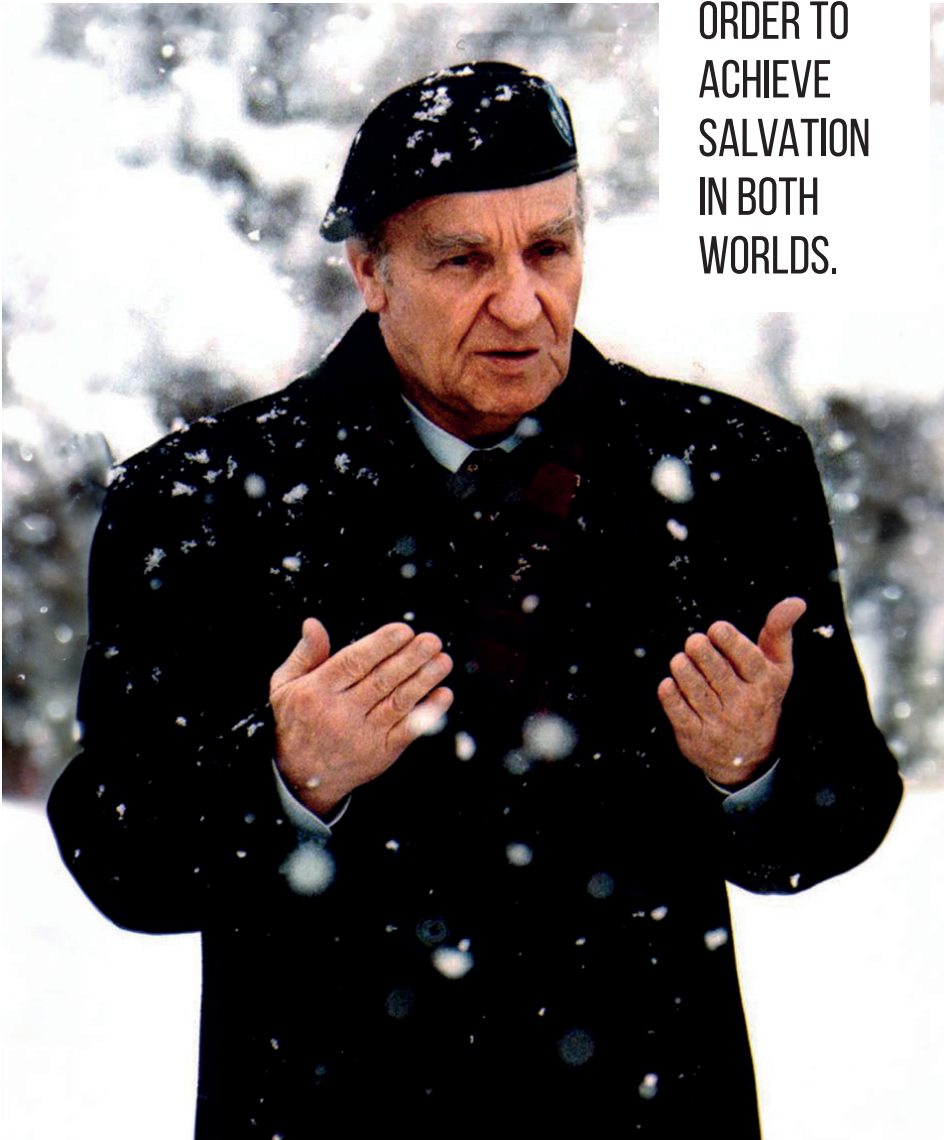


**ACCORDING TO HIM, MUSLIMS MUST TAKE CARE OF THEIR MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SALVATION IN BOTH WORLDS.**

religion, and politics, and as a Muslim thinker, he provided a universal expansion of ideas that reached not only Muslims but also all human beings.

But above all, Izetbegović's legacy to Muslims as a thinker is not only these philosophical approaches and intellectual endeavors in his books. Equally important is the fact that he was able to combine his ideas with his actions and transform his thoughts into moral actions. This is a very precious legacy for the Muslim world.

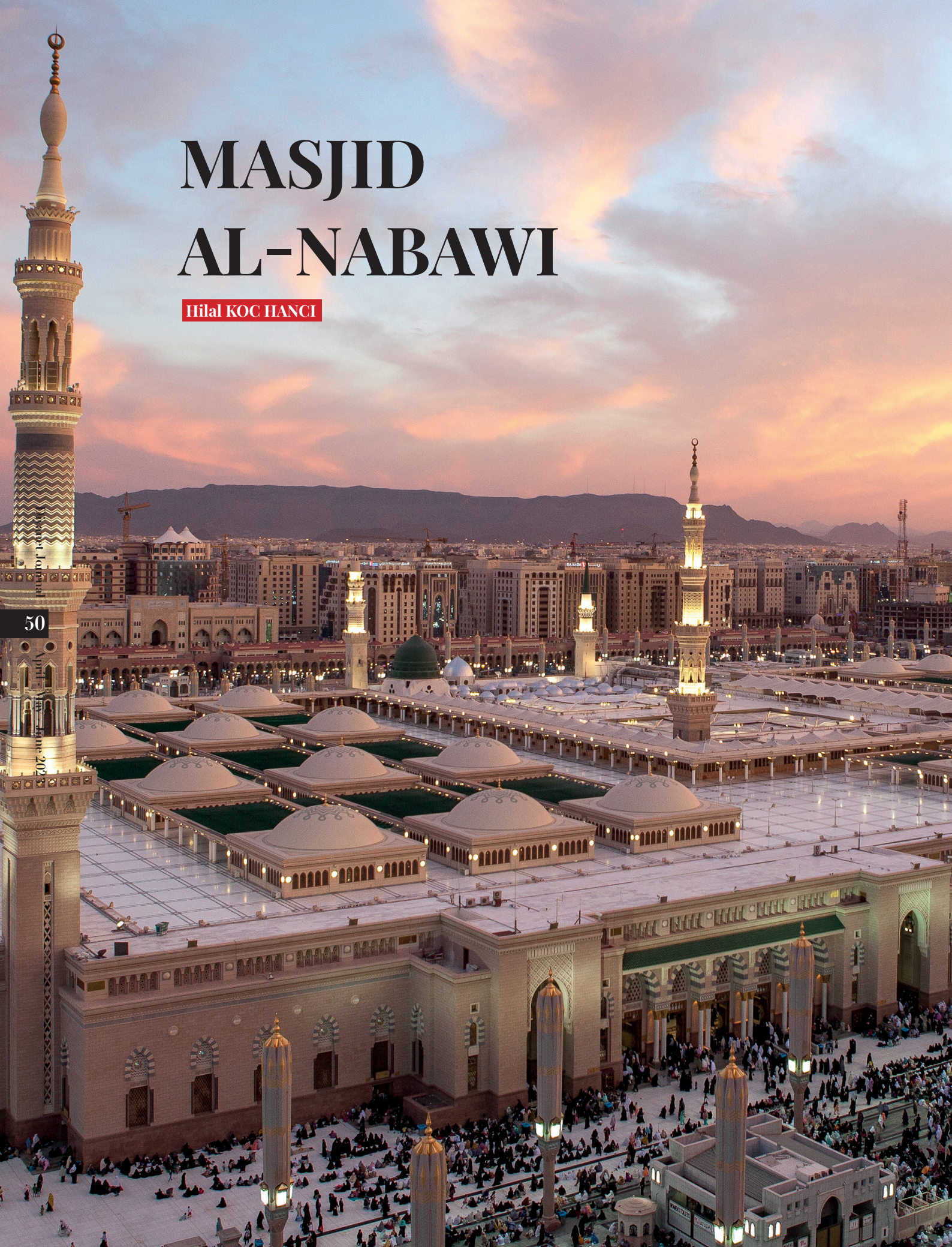
As a political leader and thinker, Alija Izetbegović was conscious of the religion he believed in and the civilization to which he belonged. For this reason, he maintained a dual perspective, rooted in his own civilization while exploring the horizons from east to west. In doing so, he left important insights into the approach that the Muslim world should take to face the modern world. He was a figure who was not afraid to open up to different horizons while preserving and emphasizing his Muslim identity. Through all his writings and experiences, he had a profound understanding of both Western and Eastern civilizations and had the depth, sincerity, and universality to point out to the people of modern times where they should stand.



# MASJID AL-NABAWI

Hilal KOC HANCI

50





Muslims, regardless of their race, language, or age, come together in mosques, instilled with the security that the belief of tawhid brings to their hearts. Muslims who come together for prayer, experience the peace of belonging to a community that shares common values, feelings, and thoughts within the walls of the mosques. Mosques, which gather and unite believers are central to the Islamic concept of urban life. It must be acknowledged that the decisions taken by Prophet Muhammad (saw) upon his arrival in Medina, as well as the activities he carried out, had a significant impact on this matter.

When the Prophet Muhammad (saw) began openly conveying the message, the polytheists in Mecca subjected the believers to unspeakable oppression and torture. As the hardships increased day by day, Muslims sought a safe haven. Consequently, the land of Abyssinia became the first refuge for those persecuted for their faith. In the subsequent years, the escalating intensity of oppression and persecution made it imperative for the Prophet (saw) to look for a land that would provide sanctuary for all Muslims. In 622, as a result of the agreement

made with the Muslims from Yathrib, this search came to an end, and those who had suffered various forms of persecution in Mecca gradually left the city and settled in Yathrib. This town, named “City of the Prophet” after the Prophet’s migration, henceforth became known as Medina.

Mecca was the home of the Ka’bah, the first mosque on earth, whose foundations were laid by Prophet Ibrahim and his son, Prophet Ismail. Despite the diverse customs and practices of the idolatrous Arabs during the Age of Ignorance, the Ka’bah retained its special significance in the hearts of those who embraced Islam. In Medina, there was no designated place where Muslims could gather for worship. As soon as the Prophet (saw) arrived in Medina, he and his companions decided to build a mosque in a suitable location. In order to not offend those who invited him to be their guest in Medina, the Prophet sent his camel Qaswa with the words, “My Lord! Grant me a blessed landing, for You are the best of hosts”. He became a guest of Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, who owned the house closest to where Qaswa sat down. According to the narration, the land where Qaswa sat



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down and where dates were dried was bought from two orphan boys, Sahl and Suhayl, for 10 dinars to build a mosque. Thus, the foundation of the “mosque founded on righteousness from the first day” (Tawbah, 9:108) was established on that land. The Masjid al-Nabawi, in which Prophet Muhammad (saw) himself participated in its construction, was built in a simple and modest manner, with its pillars made of date palm stumps, its roof made of date palm branches, and its walls made of stones. Initially, this simple mosque did not have a pulpit (minbar) or a niche (mihrab), and the Prophet delivered his sermons while standing on a tree stump. As the number of Muslims increased in the following years, the mosque underwent its first expansion upon their return from Khaybar. In the 7th year of the Hijrah, the first minbar with three steps was built since the congregation could not see the Prophet and hear his voice. During the reign of Uthman, the mosque was expanded on three sides, except for the qiblah side, and it was transformed into a square plan measuring approximately 2500 square meters. The largest expansion and reconstruction in the history of the mosque,

which continued in various periods of history, was carried out between 1984 and 1994.

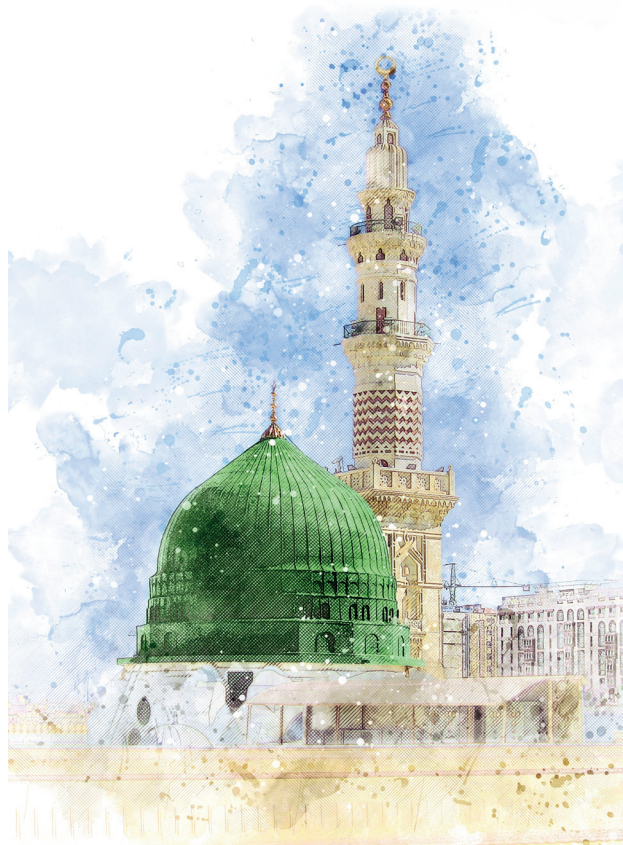
In the mosque, whose qiblah was oriented towards Al-Quds by the Prophet and which had three gates, two rooms were initially built on the southern part of the eastern wall. Later, the number of rooms in this area increased to nine. The room where the Prophet passed on in Aisha’s quarter and was subsequently buried became known as the hujra al-saadah. During the expansion projects carried out during the reigns of Umar and Uthman, the hujra al-saadah and the other rooms were preserved as they had been at the time of the Prophet. In the expansion during the reign of al-Walid,



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further rooms besides the hujra al-saadah were added to the mosque. The dome built over the hujra al-saadah during the reign of Sultan Qaitbay was called “qubbat al-hujra”, and during the reign of Mahmud II, this dome was renovated, covered with lead, and painted green. The current dome, which has become the symbol of Masjid al-Nabawi, is known as “Qubbat al-Khadra” due to its color.

When the construction of Masjid al-Nabawi was underway, a shade was built at the entrance on the south side of the mosque to provide shelter for the destitute and poor companions. When the Ka’bah became the qiblah, this shade was moved to the north of the mosque and subsequently incorporated into Masjid al-Nabawi. The community of scholars who stayed in this area, most of whom were immigrants, is known as “Ashab al-Suffah” in Islamic history. The fact that the Ashab al-Suffah spent most of their time listening to the Messenger of Allah, memorizing the verses that were revealed, learning the principles of Islam, and making scholarly discussions led them to hold a distinguished place among the Ansar and Muhajir. Additionally, the companions who grew up





District of Medina

in the suffah went to the regions where they were needed and carried out the task of spreading Islam.

During the time of the Prophet, the Mosque of the Prophet garnered attention for its simplicity. However, equally important to its simplicity was its administrative, military, judicial, and scholarly identity. While in Mecca, the Prophet's relationship with Muslims was primarily shaped within the framework of his prophethood. However, with the Hijrah, the Prophet's relationship with both Muslims and other residents of Medina took on a different

dimension. In addition to his role as a prophet, the Prophet Muhammad also played a prominent role in society as a head of state, army commander, and judge. As the Prophet Muhammad spent most of his time in the mosque, it became not only a place of worship where preaching and guidance activities were carried out but also an assembly where ambassadors from other tribes were hosted, a headquarter where expeditions were planned, and a madrasah where scholarly discussions were held. In this respect, the mosque has been the center of science and



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culture of Medina, that is, the State of Islam, since the day it was built, and it has maintained this characteristic throughout history.

In the city planning of Medina, the mosque was placed at the center, and other Muslim cities established over time were built following the example of Medina. It should not be forgotten that the civilizational visions of societies are hidden in the silhouette of the city they inhabit. In this regard, the placement of the mosque at the heart of the city symbolizes the commitment of Muslim cities to the concept of tawhid.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ISLAM



**Yunus YUKSEL**

The Head of the Department of Printed Publications

## What is a mosque?

Mosques are the branches of the Ka'bah in Mecca, which was the first house of worship established to worship Allah on earth. Mosques are often regarded as symbols of peace and security by believers. The mosque is the center of both social and religious life and it unites life, truth, and civilization under its roof. Mosques are not only places of prayer but also sacred social spaces where all Muslims, from the youngest to the oldest, gather to share their joys and sorrows and seek solutions to their problems. A mosque serves as an educational center where people of all ages and walks of life come together. It is a place where preschool children have the opportunity to learn about and develop their love for Allah through playful activities, and where young people acquire knowledge of the Qur'an and basic Islamic knowledge. It is also a blessed place where Muslim women engage in social activities, as well as preaching and guidance. Mosques are spaces where love and sorrow are shared over a cup of tea, where peace, harmony, and brotherhood are truly experienced. They also serve as centers of cultural arts. Mosques are places that gather people without prejudice fostering unity, solidarity, and purifying hearts. They are the places where we spiritually reconstruct and build ourselves by offering our servitude to Allah. Finally, mosques are buildings physically constructed by Muslims and they hold great importance in shaping the spiritual lives of Muslims.

## Who is an imam?

The term "imam" refers to someone who is in charge, who is followed, and who is a leader. As a religious term, an imam is a person who stands in front of the congregation and leads them in prayer. An imam must be a Muslim, possess intelligence, have reached puberty, and be male. He must have sufficient knowledge of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) to appropriately lead the prayer and be able to recite the Qur'an from memory. With his morals and behaviors, the imam serves as an exemplary and leading figure within his congregation. The imam guides his community in religious, social, cultural, and educational matters, imparting knowledge and wisdom. The imam stands in front of the congregation serving as the prayer leader, teacher, and the khatib (the person delivering the sermon) at the pulpit. As an imam he conducts prayers, as a teacher he instructs his congregation, and as a khatib, he informs them about religion by delivering his sermon from the pulpit.

## Who is a muazzin?

The muazzin is an individual who informs the Muslims that it is time to pray the ritual daily prayer by reciting the adhan (call for prayer). It is preferable for muazzins to have a beautiful and powerful voice, accompanied by knowledge and wisdom.



## What is the adhan and what's the message given by this symbol of Islam?

At the beginning during Prophet Muhammad's (saw) time in Medina, there was no means of informing the Muslims of the prayer times and reminding them to pray in the congregation. The companions held varying opinions on the matter. After much deliberation, Prophet Muhammad (saw) acknowledged and approved a dream experienced by one of his Companions, and Jibril (Gabriel), the angel of revelation, conveyed to Prophet Muhammad (saw) the words that would be included in the adhan. Since then, Muslims have been called to the daily ritual prayer through the adhan, which has remained unchanged. The adhan is a call to worship Allah and stands as one of the most important symbols of Islam.

The aim of the adhan, a voluble call to believers during prayer times, is to invite people to have a direct contact with Allah. It announces the arrival of the time of the prayer, serving as the most beautiful expression of gratitude to Allah. The adhan announces to the people that the time for prayer has come. It also announces Allah's magnificence, that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) is His Messenger, and that prayer is the gateway to salvation. A mosque is a place of worship, regardless of its other aspects. When the muazzin recites the adhan from the minaret, Muslims' hearts quiver indicating that it is time to worship the One and Only Allah and that the souls of the Muslims are filled with the excitement of an encounter with the Creator.

## What is a mihrab?

In mosques, the mihrab is positioned at the center and indicates the direction of the Ka'bah. It is the place where the imam leads the congregation in prayer. The congregation stands behind the imam, who is positioned at the mihrab, and follows his lead in prayer.

## What is a minbar?

The minbar (pulpit) is an elevated platform located to the right of the mihrab, where the imam ascends to address the congregation. The imam-khatib (preacher) delivers the sermon to the congregation while standing on the pulpit on Fridays and Eid days. During Friday sermons, the imam addresses the believers, on religious topics, aimed at providing guidance, promoting harmony in relationships, and enlightening them on a wide range of subjects that can enhance their lives.

## What is a lectern?

The lectern is located on the left side of the mihrab in the mosque. It is the place where the imam-khatib delivers sermons to the congregation.

## What does a minaret signify, and what is its function?

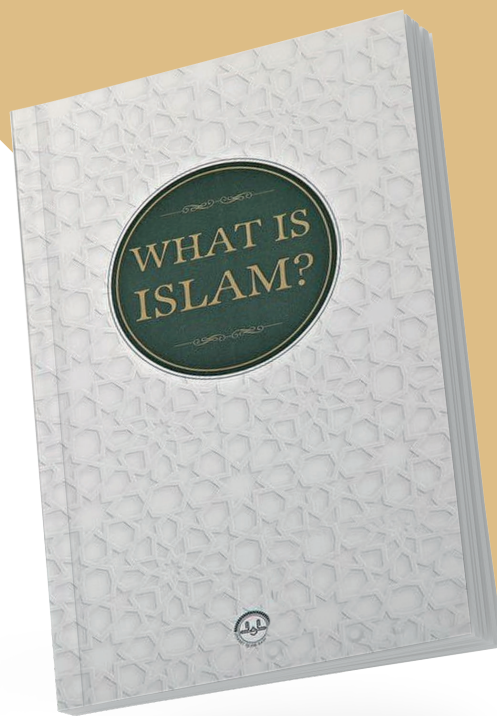
Minarets are architectural structures that rise high to the sky, typically in a cylindrical style, and are often located near mosques. They serve as platforms from which the call to prayer is recited five times a day. In earlier times, when there were no loudspeakers, minarets were constructed to amplify the sound of the call to prayer, ensuring it would reach a wider area. Additionally, the minaret has long been recognized as a symbol of Islam, representing tawhid (the belief in the oneness of Allah) and serving as an enduring feature of Islamic architecture from the past to the present.

# WHAT IS ISLAM?

Meryem KILIC

Having accurate information and sufficient knowledge about religion is incumbent upon all Muslims. The first and most important duty of a Muslim is to have faith in Allah and observe the religious commandments. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that the dissemination of knowledge is grounded on authentic sources about the religion of Islam. To this end, the book, "What is Islam" aims to explain Islam accurately and has been meticulously prepared by addressing the three basic principles of the religion of Islam. These three basic principles of Islam are faith, worship, and morality. Furthermore, this book encompasses a total of 37 different topics within the aforementioned main sections. These topics provide a comprehensive exploration of various aspects of Islam, ensuring a thorough understanding of the religion.

The first section of the book focuses on the principles of belief. It emphasizes that Islam literally means peace, serenity, and submission and that it is a person's own personal choice and aspiration to turn to Allah. It highlights that this choice should be made willingly without any coercion, with sincere devotion, and unconditional acceptance of Allah's commands and prohibitions. The book aims to demonstrate how Islam guides individuals in developing good relationships with Allah, fellow human beings, and the natural world, encompassing both living and non-living elements. Within this section, the book covers the belief in Allah, angels, divine books, prophets, the hereafter, and predestination. This part also includes a description of the final book, the Qur'an, and the last Prophet of Islam.

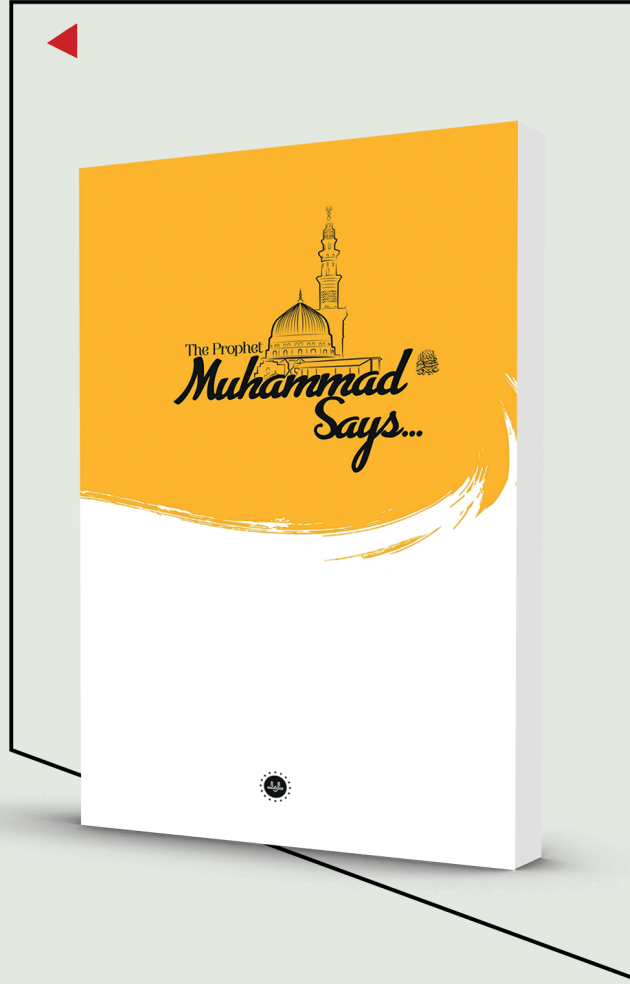


The second section of the book outlines the fundamental acts of worship prescribed by Islam. These are basically performing the salah (prayer), observing fasting (sawm) during the month of Ramadan, giving almsgiving (zakat); performing the hajj (pilgrimage), and participating in qurbani (sacrifice).

Moving on to the third section, it explores the relationship between Islam and good morals. Morality serves as the foundation for human relationships encompassing interaction with Allah, fellow human beings, other creatures, and the environment. Thus, one of the primary objectives of Islam is to establish a virtuous society rooted in sound morals.

This book entitled "What is Islam", was authored by Prof. Dr. Huriye Marti. It is based on the primary references provided by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Türkiye including "Islam through the Hadiths", "Essentials of Islam", the "Islamic Encyclopedia" by Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDV), and the Holy Qur'an Commentary.

The intention behind the book is to present the basic principles of Islam in a very clear and comprehensible language with the aim to contribute to the accurate understanding of Islam. The Presidency of Religious Affairs of Türkiye offers this book as an original work to our esteemed readers who are interested in learning about the basic principles of Islam.



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Diyenet publications are available from local bookshops as well as our attaché and consulting offices abroad.

**He 'also' subjected for you whatever is in the heavens  
and whatever is on the earth-all by His grace. Surely in  
this are signs for people who reflect.**

**(Jathiyah, 45:13)**