

# Basic Questions of Our Lives

H A R U N   Y A H Y A

**Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Surely, they have no firm belief. Or are the treasures of your Lord with them, or have they control over them? (At-Tur, 35-37)**

The first error a prejudiced person makes is trying to evaluate religion without giving thought to Allah. Sociologists, for example, who do research on religion, can write thousands of books on how religions arose and how they affected societies sociologically. Yet, in spite of all these great academic studies, they cannot understand religion even to a minute extent when compared with those who lead their lives within the boundaries of religion.

Such people are not capable of comprehending the reality of Allah's unity, which is the basis of religion. Anyone who decides to learn about Islam needs first to understand the existence of Allah. If he does not believe in Allah, he will simply be investigating the Qur'an and Muslims in terms of his own limited vision of life.

The Qur'an thus expresses disapproval of such people: **"They disbelieve what they cannot grasp, for they have not yet seen its prophecy fulfilled."** (Yunus, 39) Islam is not a man-made ideology about which half-baked ideas and baseless conclusions can be put forth from the outside. The individual can understand what Islam is about only when he understands the existence of Allah and lives his life as enjoined in the Qur'an.

Essentially, the existence of Allah and the reality that there is no deity other than Allah are crystal clear facts. But in "the society of ignorance" where people fail to use their reasoning due to their habit of indifference and indolence, they grow blind and cannot comprehend this reality. As a matter of fact, that is the reason why they were stigmatized as a "society of ignorance" (Jahilliyyah).

One of the many Qur'anic verses about pondering on the existence of Allah records the Almighty's advice to the Prophet on how he should address the ignorant:

**"Say: 'Think, you, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts, who - a god other than Allah - could restore them to you?'"** The same verse goes on to say: **"See how We explain the signs by various symbols; yet they turn aside."** (Al-Anaam, 46)

A brief example can help us enrich our views and remove our innate ignorance.

Let's assume that there is a person from whose memory everything, including the knowledge of his self-being and his body, has been wiped out. If he found himself on a place like earth, what would he feel like? He would undoubtedly be so amazed and so astonished as to lose his mind out of curiosity. The first thing he would notice would probably be his body. He would not be aware that his body in fact belonged to him in the first place, thinking of it as an external object, like the other things in the scene. Then it would be very interesting for him to be able to control his body parts and make them do what he wanted them to do. He would probably try to figure out the use of his arm by moving it up and down for a while.

He would find very suitable surroundings for his body, the reason for the existence of which would still be unknown to him. There would be safe ground to stand on, a clear image to view, beautiful fragrances to smell, various animals, a proper air temperature exactly suitable to the body, an atmosphere suitable for breathing, and thousands of other sensitive balances. Edible fruits to satisfy his hunger, pure and clear water to cool his parched throat and many more things.

For a moment, let us put ourselves in his position and reflect for a while. In a place like this, would we just go and enjoy ourselves, or be wise enough to ask ourselves some very crucial questions? Would we try to understand who we were, why we were there, what the reason for our existence was, what the reason for the existence of the present order was or, would we simply ignore these questions and be concerned with how much we enjoyed our lives? Would not the first questions come to our minds be as follows:

*Who am I?*

*Who has created me, who has created this perfect body of mine?*

*Who has created this great order which surrounds me?*

*What does He, who created everything, want from me? What does He want to show me?*

Even an individual with a weak mind would think that there is nothing more important than finding answers to these questions. Someone who pays no attention to them, preferring rather to spend his life in fulfilling his physical needs, amusing himself during the day and sleeping at nights, would undoubtedly be a creature of no understanding at all. Someone must have created his body and his surroundings, and they must have come into being all of a sudden. Once he was created, every second of the rest of his life must also have been dependent on that Superior Being, Who had initially created him. What could be more important than knowing about this Superior Being, Who obviously possesses a great power?

Let us continue with our example and assume that he reaches a city after walking through the land for a while. There are various types of people there, most of whom are pretty vulgar, ambitious and insincere. And almost nobody is thinking about his Owner or the place he is living in. Although everyone has a job, an aim or an ideology, the people of the city cannot bring good order to the city, with which everyone would be content.

Let's assume he meets some people whom the denizens of the city dislike, and towards whom they feel rage and enmity. As to what these people are like, he sees that they are significantly different from the others in many ways. He feels that, as human beings, they are amiable reasonable, and trustworthy. They look humble and they speak in a clear, moderate and sensible manner. He can easily see that there is nothing wrong with them, so he becomes confused and has doubts as to why the citizenry think otherwise.

Let's assume he starts a conversation with them and they tell him: "We have a different view of life and think differently from other people because we are aware that there is an Owner of this place and everything in it. We are also aware that His power is above everything and He has created this place and everything else to test and educate us until the day comes when we will leave this place. We have a book which we have received from Him, and we are leading our lives in accordance with this book."

In such a situation, he might not be a hundred per cent sure whether these people were really telling the truth or not. But he would probably understand that what they were talking about was quite important. He would feel there was nothing more important than obtaining further information about these people at that moment, and he would be extremely curious about the book they were talking about, would he not?

The only thing that stops us from being as sensible as the person in this example is our having been on this earth for a longer period of time. We have experienced a growth process instead of coming into being as an adult all of a sudden, like the person in the story. Consequently, we have to admit that most of us are in a position similar to that of the town people in the example due to our disregard of such questions in our lives. What we should further bear in mind is that almost none of the people in this city actually thought about the questions cited above, found some consistent answers on their own, and finally turned away from the Superior Being, Who created them. In fact, most of them did not even go through these steps, but simply pushed these questions aside and stopped thinking about them, because of their "collective ignorance".

Are we aware of the fact that the "society of ignorance" we are living in prevents us from answering those crucial questions mentioned above by keeping us occupied with questions like: "What shall I eat tonight, which dress should I wear tomorrow?" or "What is she thinking about me, what should I say to him?"? Unfortunately, this shows nothing but abysmal ignorance although we claim to be living in the "information age".

Now, you have a chance! **Think about the complete ignorance you might have been exposed to by such a "society of ignorance" and ask yourselves the following question, which so far you might not have thought over, or might have brushed aside with insufficient explanations: How did I come into existence?**

In order to be able to answer this question, it would be useful to start with the physical beginning of our existence and think about that extraordinary event - "birth".

The brief history of birth can be summarized as follows:

Sperms are produced literally 'outside' of a man's body. The reason for this is the fact that sperm production can occur only in a suitable environment with a temperature of about 35 degrees Celsius, which is two degrees below the average body temperature. Male testicles are the only body parts with this temperature, as they are rightly placed outside of the body. To bring the temperature to the required level, another mechanism is activated. The skin covering the testicles shrinks when it is cold and sweats when it is hot to keep the temperature of this area stable. Approximately a thousand sperms are produced per minute, and they have a special design that eases their long journey from the man's testicles to the woman's egg. A sperm comprises a head, a neck and a tail by the use of which a fish-like movement towards the mother's uterus takes place.

The head part, which carries the genetic code of the future human being, is covered with a special protective armour. The benefit of this armor is noticed at the entrance of the mother's uterus. This place is very acidic to protect the mother from microbes and other alien particles like sperms, but by the use of this armor, most sperms manage to stay alive.

Not only sperms are ejaculated to the uterus. Semen is a mixture that consists of many other liquids. These liquids contain sugar that supplies energy to the sperms. Semen, which is a base in its chemical form, neutralizes the acidic environment at the entrance of the uterus and creates a safe environment for sperms. It also makes the environment slippery so that sperms can move along easily. Sperms make a difficult journey inside the body of the mother until they reach the egg. No matter how hard they try to survive, only a thousand sperms out of 200-300 million can make it to the egg.

In the light of this brief information, let's try to find the answers to some questions that cross our minds: How can a sperm make itself so suitable for entry into the mother's uterus, about which it knows nothing beforehand? How can a sperm be produced in the male body in a way that it can survive and find its way to the egg in the female uterus in spite of the protective mechanisms of the female body, about which the sperm had no previous idea? How can this happen?

Since a sperm lacks the ability to adapt itself to an unknown environment in advance, the only possible answer to these questions is that it is actually created that way.

Let's continue with the brief story of birth:

An egg is about half the size of a salt grain. The place where an egg and a sperm meet is called the Fallopian tube. The egg secretes a special fluid that leads the sperms to the egg. As they come closer to the egg, their protective armor is melted by another fluid secreted by the egg. As a result, solvent enzyme sachets appear on the cover of the sperms' heads. By the use of these enzymes, the sperm that is to fertilize the egg, penetrates the membrane of the egg. When the sperms surround the egg, they race one another to enter to the egg. Mostly, only one sperm fertilizes the egg and from that time on, there is no possibility for another sperm to enter it. Before fertilization, the electric charge of the sperms and the egg are opposite, therefore they attract each other. However, after the entrance of the first sperm, the electrical charge of the egg changes, acquiring a pushing effect on the rest of the sperms.

Finally, the DNA of the male present in the sperm combines with the DNA of the female. At this moment, there forms a new cell (the zygote), that is, a new human being inside the mother's womb.

After considering this bit of information, a new question comes to our minds: How is it that an egg is prepared to welcome a sperm as if it "knew" that it would meet the sperm? How can this happen? The only possible answer to this question is that the egg is created to be suitable to the sperm by the will of a Creator who has also created the sperms and controls both the sperm and the egg.

**The extraordinary nature of birth does not finish with all this.** The fertilized egg clings on to the womb by its special knobby surface. The small protuberances on the surface of the egg jut out and penetrate deep into the mother's womb like the roots of plants in the ground. The zygote starts to develop through hormones secreted by the mother. The egg keeps receiving nutrition provided by the mother.

With time, the cells divide and grow in number by the two-four-eight-sixteen model. In the beginning, all cells that are formed by the division of old ones have the same properties as each other. Then, all of a sudden, newly formed cells somehow start differentiating, showing separate characteristics, as they are to form different organs of the fetus. **The science of today still lacks the competence to give a satisfactory answer to the question of why and how exactly this differentiation of cells takes place and how they form different organs with such perfect organization.**

As time passes, a drastic change takes place in the jelly-like fetus. Relatively rough bones start to form inside that soft structure, all of them surprisingly, in their proper places. What's amazing here, is that while all the cells carry exactly the same characteristics at the beginning, through the differentiating process, some of them turn out to be eye cells sensitive to light, others become nerve cells that perceive heat while yet others form those cells that detect sound vibrations.

Finally the fetus' construction is completed and a new baby is born into the world. At this stage, it is 100 million times bigger and 6 billion times heavier than its initial form when it was a fertilized egg.

This "brief history" mentioned above concerns us, because it is the story of how we came into being. For us, what can be more important than finding the ultimate Cause and Owner of that great, extraordinary and complex event of our existence? When we glance at this short history, we come across many other questions to which science, which is under the influence of materialism, has not yet found any answers.

But there are still many questions that need to be answered. One of these is: How can cells of the same structure start to gather in groups and form different organs of the body while they multiply?

Actually, **there is no answer to these questions about birth other than accepting the presence of a Creator.** It would be a great mistake to think that all of these complex operations occur on their own or by chance. **How can cells agree to form “human organs”?** Let’s think about this a little further. Let’s assume that there are two wise adults who come together and decide to work on an engineering project. Even between these two persons, some misunderstandings will unavoidably occur and this will put the success of the project at risk. Then, how can thousands and millions of cells work together to form an absolutely perfect organization without any mishap? Who would dare to say an answer to this question: “It may be possible by chance”? Some atheist “scientists” of today explain this marvelous occurrence as the “magic of nature”. What does this mean? Who or what is nature? Has not nature also been created?

Another attempt to answer this question might be to refer to the mother and the father—which would be meaningless. The role of parents in this event is in fact, negligible. Neither mother nor the father is aware what goes on within them in the production of gender cells, fertilization and development of fetus. The exact date of birth is unknown to mother who has no control over delivery. In spite of this, mother and father are seen as the “origin of one’s life”? But are they so?

The mother and father are very important to their child, as they play a role in his existence. On the other hand, one never, or only rarely, thinks about ones real Creator. Is not the real Creator, who has the ultimate power and control over everything including birth, life and death, worth more love and respect? His existence is clear and the existence of any other thing without Him is not possible. No one but Allah can create anyone or any matter on his own, while He neither begets nor is begotten as is stated in the third verse of Al-Ikhlās 3.

The creation is explained in the Qur’an as follows;

**“We created man from a quintessence (of clay);**

**Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed;**

**Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a (fetus) lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the noblest of Creators!” (Al-Mumenoon, 12-14)**

This being so, it is clear that there is no difference between ourselves and that man in the story, who was “suddenly” created and become curious about who had created him and everything around him. Of course, he found himself as an adult and without any parents who gave birth to him and raised him. But now that we also know that our coming into existence can in no way be explained by parents, we can consider our situation similar to that of the man in the story.

In such a situation, the most important thing to do is to search exclusively for the truth, to listen to those who claim they have knowledge and evidence about the truth and then to think over what we have been told. Take the man in the story again. As we know, he meets some people in the city who tell him that they can make known to him the Creator Who has created himself and everything around and that there is a book from Him. What do you think he would do? Would he listen to them, or would he simply turn away from them and prefer to be involved with such ordinary, everyday questions like: “What shall I wear tonight, what shall I say to him?” that are daily repeated and will one day become meaningless when death comes to him. Which one of these two choices is the more rational, logical and conscientious? You, without doubt, know the correct answer for this man. But, what about yourself?

What leads up to the event of creation is specifically described in certain other verses of the Quran;

**“Does man think that he will be left uncontrolled, without purpose? Was he not a drop of sperm emitted in lowly form? Then he became a leech-like clot; then Allah made and fashioned him in due proportion. And of him He made two sexes, male and female. Has not He, the same, the power to give life to the dead?” (Al-Qiyama, 36-40)**

**“Allah created you from dust; then from a sperm-drop; then He made you in pairs. No female conceives, or lays down her load, but with His knowledge. No man is long-lived, nor is a part cut off from his life, but in accordance with His Decree. All this is easy to Allah.” (Fatir, 11)**

The human is a being created by Allah and as a created entity, he cannot change this fact. He cannot bring any other explanation to his own existence. Since he has been created, he would not be left uncontrolled and irresponsible as emphasized in the above verses. There is, of course, a purpose for creation. Where then will he find the answer?

There is only one answer to this question and that is in the book that Allah has sent down to him.

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