



God

Or No God

Islamic Viewpoint vs.
Atheist Viewpoint

The Problem of Evil

part 14

By Haya Muhammad Eid



الله اعلم
الله اعلم



THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

THE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES OF ISLAM AND ATHEISM



● ● **From the standpoint of atheism, the problem of evil, whether due to humans' brutality to other humans or to natural disasters, constitutes the greatest obstacle to belief in God's existence.**

● ● **Atheism argues that because evil and suffering exists, a good, all-powerful, and all-knowing God cannot exist. Otherwise, He would stop evil and suffering.**



- ● **Atheism posits that even if God were to have adequate justifiable reasons for allowing certain evils or suffering to occur to bring about some greater good, God would only allow as much evil or suffering as is absolutely necessary. But the prevalent instances of apparently pointless (gratuitous) evils from which no greater good seems to result provides strong evidence that God does not exist.**



- ● **Atheism rejects the free will component, arguing that even if it provides a satisfactory explanation for moral evil produced by morally wrong human choices such as murder, adultery, and racism, it fails to address natural evil such as earthquakes, disease, hurricanes, and famines. This is because natural evil arises through no fault of humans, who are completely powerless to prevent it.**



**MERCY IS THE BASE ...
AND FORGIVENESS IS A
PROMISE**



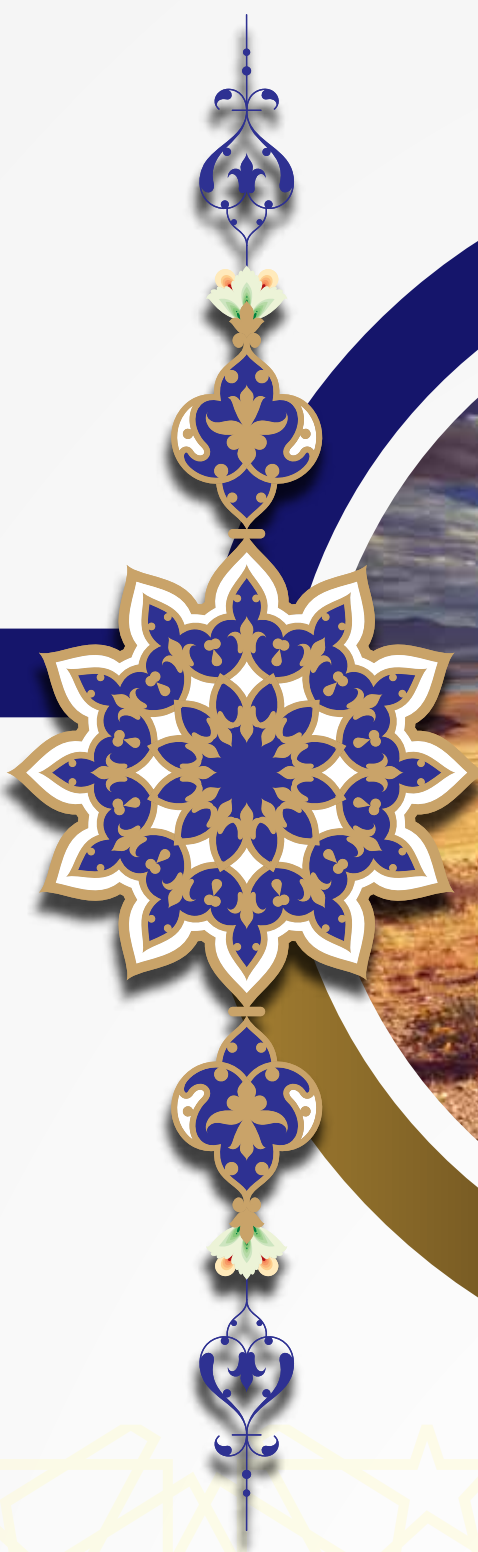
01

In Islam, one of God's most emphasized attributes is mercy. All the chapters of the Qur'an except one begin with the statement "In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate," known as the Basmallah. The Basmallah is also the common statement that Muslims should recite before doing any action. It thus ingrains in them the confidence that God's ultimate design for creation is one of care and mercy.

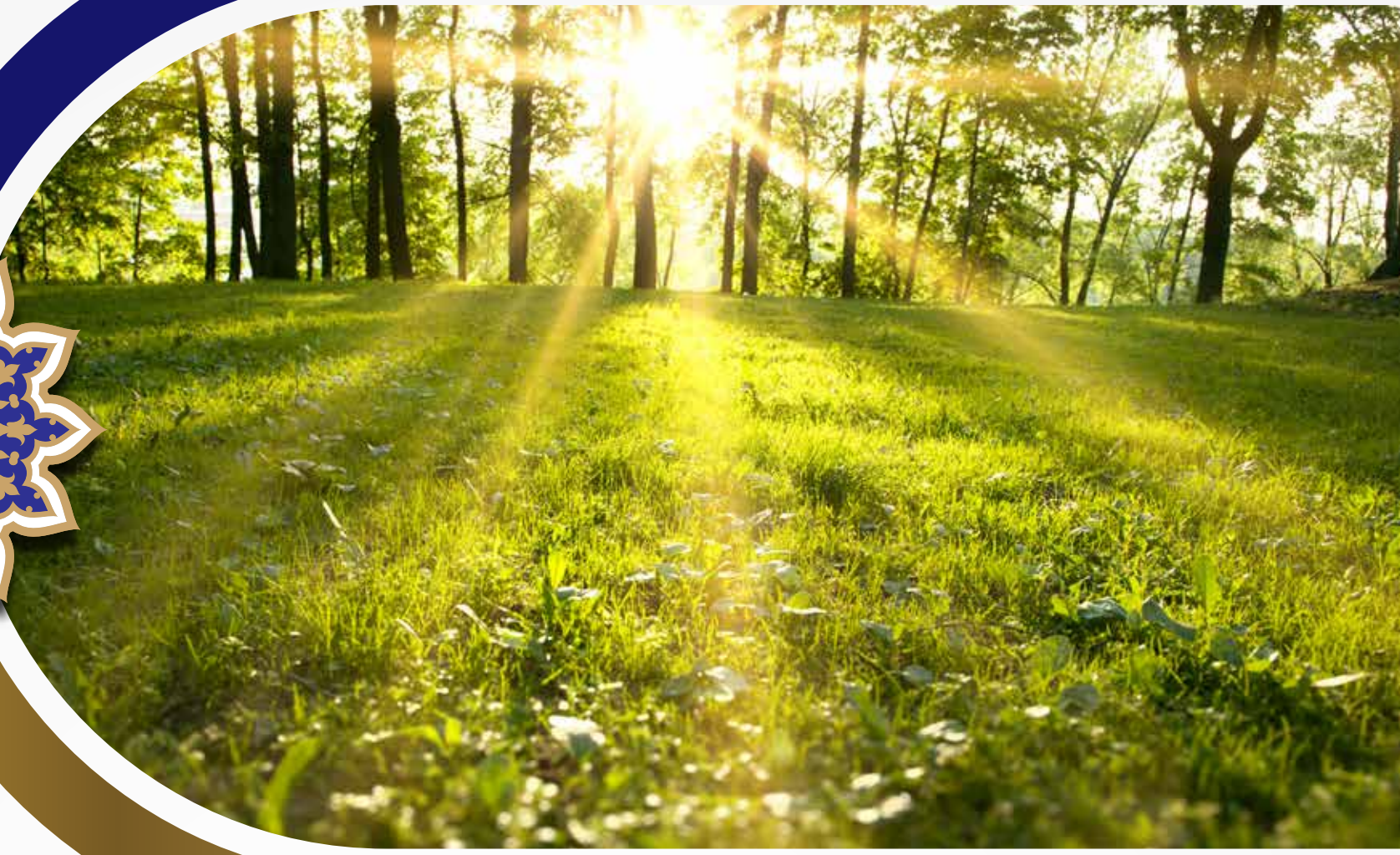


02

A hadith also tells Muslims that **“God’s Mercy precedes His Anger,”** while the Qur’an states that **God’s Mercy embraces all things, not just some things, which signifies that mercy is the dominant characteristic underlying God’s actions.**



03 Islam does not reduce God's attributes to power, knowledge, and goodness, and leave out His sovereignty, His wisdom, His judgment, His anger, and His punishment. Rather, God has ninety-nine names and attributes, based on a saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). They are broadly categorized into two kinds: attributes of Jamal (beauty and beneficence) and Jalal (grandeur, power, and majesty). He is the Kind, the Wise, the Merciful, the Loving, the Forbearing, the Pardoning, the Generous, and the Protector. On the other side, He is the Mighty, the Just, the Judge, the Watchful, the Avenger, the Humbler, and the Compeller.



04

A one-sided view of God as only loving or punishing will result in a wrong idea of what God is truly like; the Qur'an points this out, saying: "Know that God is Severe in punishment and that God is (also) Most-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful." (Qur'an 5:98).



This implies that a correct relationship with God and outlook on life requires experiencing the full range of God's attributes — those of Jamal as well as those of Jalal — in a manner appropriate to each. Together, these two aspects instill the right balance of fear of and hope in God, allowing neither to overwhelm the other. (Fear and hope are like the two wings of a bird – they are both needed to fly. If they are balanced, the bird flies properly. But if one of them stalls, the bird will fall down and will not be able to fly).



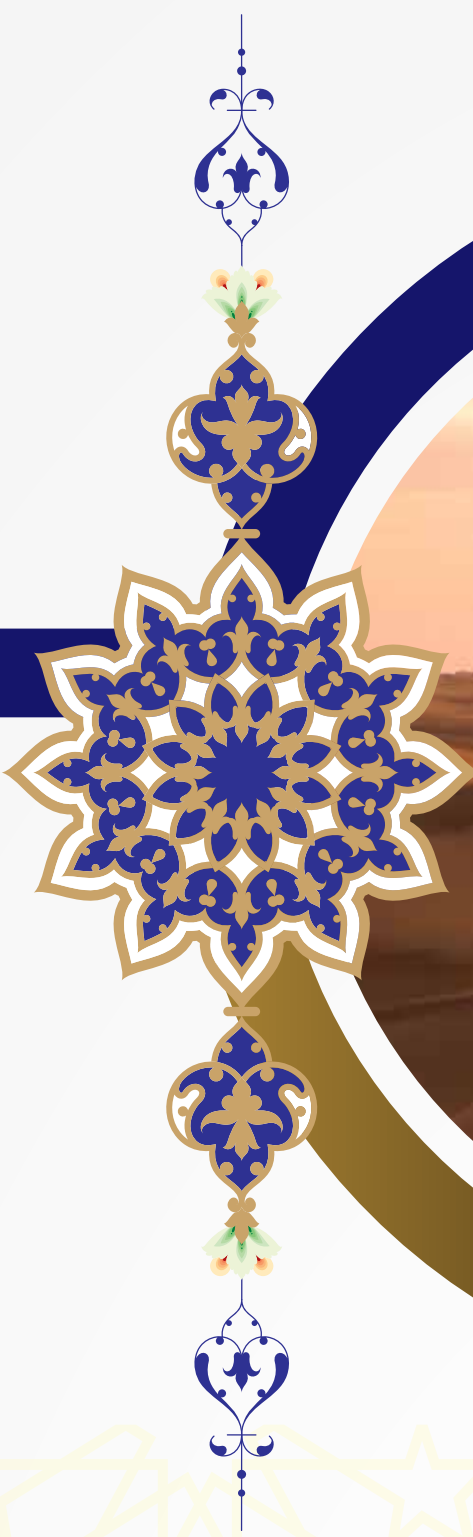
**ALL OF LIFE IS A TEST
FROM GOD**



**“EVERY SOUL WILL TASTE DEATH. AND WE
(GOD) TEST YOU WITH EVIL AND WITH
GOOD AS TRIAL; AND TO US (GOD) YOU
WILL BE RETURNED.”**

[QUR'AN 21:35]

تفسير البغوي: (كل نفس ذائقة الموت وتبلوكم) تختبركم (بالشر
والخير) بالشدة والركاب والصحة والسيئة، والغنى والفقر، وقبل بما
تؤمنون وما تكفرون من الآيات تظهر كيف شكركم فيما تصفون
بها أنفسكم من نعم الله عليكم (والله أكرم من أن يرى)



01

Given the perfect Nature and Character of God, there can be no pointless evil or suffering. God's decision to permit or not permit something is always in accordance with His Knowledge, Wisdom, and Justice and also His Plan.



02

Humans lack the knowledge to understand or judge God's ways – "Of knowledge, you (humankind) have been given only a little." (Qur'an 17:85)

They also lack patience with God's Decree until it unfolds – "Verily! You will not be able to have patience with me. And how can you have patience about a thing which you know not." (Qur'an 18:67-68)

Humans also have no authority or power to question God – "He (God) cannot be questioned about what He does (for His acts), but they (humans) will be questioned (for theirs)." (Qur'an 21:23)



03 Full insight into the reasons and wisdom that justify every particular instance of evil or suffering in the world throughout history is impossible for humans; however, the Qur'an provides a clear view of the overall causes of evil and suffering on earth.



04

According to the Qur'an, all of life, with its good and bad happenings, is a test from God, **"He (God) Who created death and life that He may test you."** (Qur'an 67:2)

Tests are decreed on all humans; God decides the type, time, place, and magnitude of the test. **"Surely, We (God) shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient."** (Qur'an 2:155)

Testing shall be experienced on two fronts: internal and external. **"Know that God knows what is within yourselves, so beware of Him."** (Qur'an 2:235)



05

Testing involves suffering; according to the Qur'an, suffering is an inevitable and natural part of worldly life:

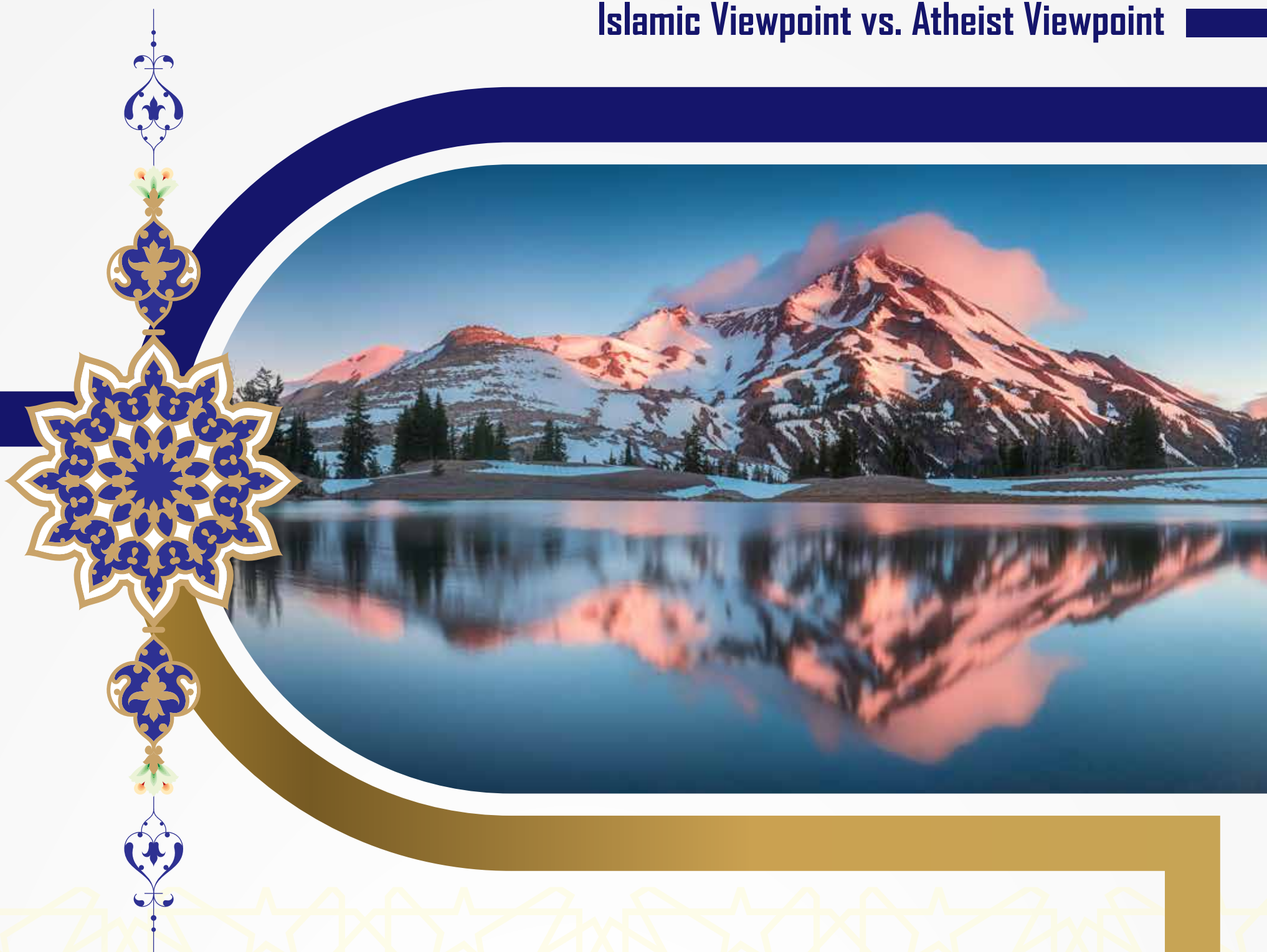
"Verily, We (God) have created the human into hardship." (90:4)



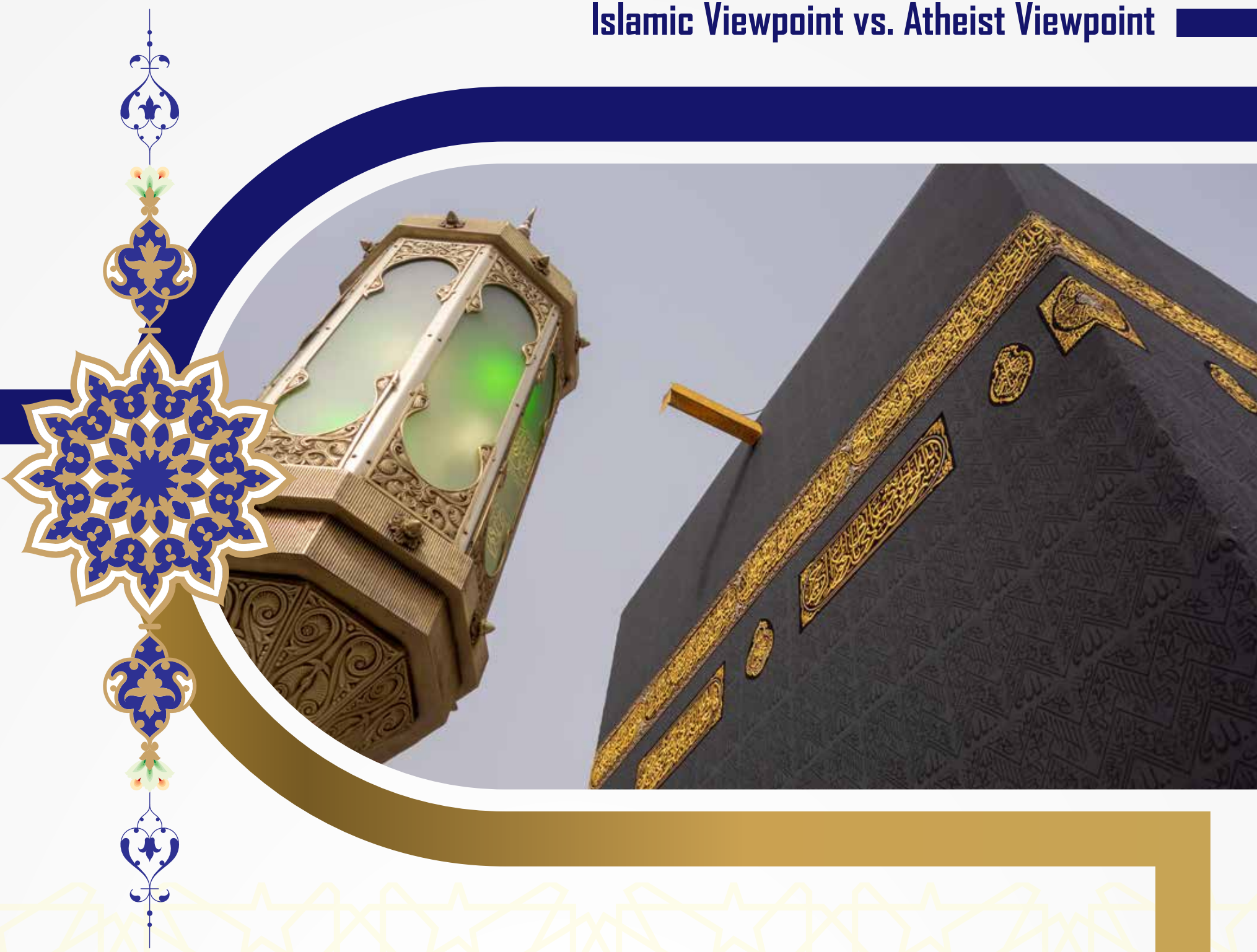
06

Human life is a process of continual hardship. Each stage brings its own set of challenges, often with increasing complexity, and every human will continue to face different struggles in life until death, as stated in the Qur'an: "Verily, you are ever toiling on towards your Lord – painfully toiling – and you shall meet Him (meet the result of your toiling)."

(Qur'an 84:6) The Qur'an is not here to eliminate suffering, but to point humans in the direction of how to navigate hardship and adversity in their lives, and to give them the ability to successfully recover from crises and get back on their feet and thrive once again.



God says in His Noble Book, the Qur'an: "Indeed, with every hardship, there will be ease." (Qur'an 94:5) Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), therefore, said: "Know that victory is with patience, and relief is with distress, and that with hardship comes ease." (Kanz Al-Ummal by Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi) This means that whenever there is difficulty and adversity in a person's life, ease is simultaneously happening with it.



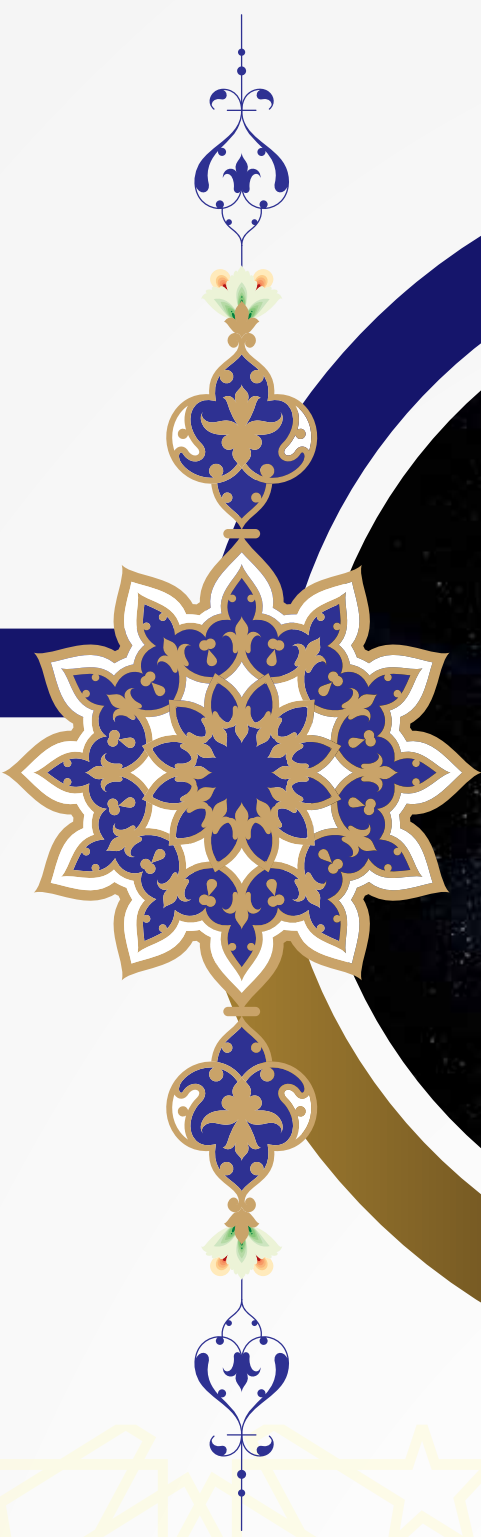
07 Richness or poverty, pleasure or pain, prosperity or adversity, health or sickness are not signs of God's favor or disfavor; rather, they are means of testing how each human will feel and react to the various situations that life presents, the good and the bad, the happy and the tough.



08 With such an understanding, a Muslim should see nothing as pointless, insignificant, or to be taken at face value. (Viewing matters through a narrow lens from one angle, with a narrow-minded way of thinking limited to only a fraction of reality). A Muslim soul deals with all matters from the perspective of God's absolute and perfect Knowledge of everything, which encompasses the inner and outer realities of everything and sees the truth of all situations. **"It may be that you hate a thing which is good for you and that you love a thing which is bad for you. God knows, you know not."** (Qur'an 2:216)



THE ONLY CAUSE OF EVIL





- ● **Islam does not pass off all calamities as 'trials,' but differentiates between punishments and trials. Trials are tests of character and faith; punishments are consequences of sins and transgressions.**

- ● **Islam holds sin as the only cause of evil and places the responsibility for evil and its painful consequences on human beings themselves.**



- ● In several passages, the Qur'an makes it clear that any evil or disaster that befalls humans is because of their willful wrongdoing: **"Whatever good happens to you is from God; whatever evil befalls you is from yourself."** (4:79)

"Whatever affliction befalls you is because of what your hands have earned; and He (God) pardons much." (42:30)



- ● The end of the latter verse “**...and He pardons much...**” expresses God’s Forbearance. Although God can instantly punish any sin, He does not. In fact, He overlooks many misdeeds that humans commit, giving a respite and a chance to repent. Otherwise, if humans were to be punished for every single daily transgression, ranging from an unkind look, word, or thought to all sorts of crimes, they would never be free from calamities.



- ● **Serious as they are, worldly punishments in the form of disasters, epidemics, or wars are more warnings for the purpose of self-examination and correction. As the Qur'an states**

“Corruption has spread on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, that He (God) may make them taste (experience) a part of that which they have done, so that perhaps they may return (repent and correct themselves).” (Qur'an 30:41)



- ● **Countless problems and miseries exist in the world — genocide, torture, racism, impunity, addiction, hunger, obesity — in the face of which it is the obligation of every human (not God) to get actively involved in resisting, eliminating, altering, and making the world a better place, in application of the numerous teachings of Islam, such as the saying of Prophet Muhammad,**

“Whoever of you who sees something evil, let them change it.” (Sahih Muslim)



● ● **The Qur'an defines the role of human beings as God's vicegerents on earth. This means they have to work tirelessly for the betterment of themselves and others, and the guardianship of the earth that has been created for them. They have to impact their world for good.**



- ● **A Muslim is literally one who resigns their affairs to God, and finds peace in that resignation. Whether it is a test, punishment, or both, Muslims trust in God and do not enquire too inquisitively into His Ways. Characteristically, they end all inquiries about life and God's Ways with the words, "God knows best." In all cases, they should take a positive attitude and reflect upon their lives to see if their actions truly line up with God's Words.**



- ● **Reward and punishment are central to right and wrong; God's purpose for them is to show His Justice. Islam asserts that actions will not go unchecked; every action, thought, and intention is recorded and compensated with reward and punishment — some in this life, but all in the afterlife. The Qur'an expresses it this way in 99:7-8:**

“Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.”



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and Grace*

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