

# Looking Through the Apple

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**Hayrât Neşriyat**

# Looking Through the Apple

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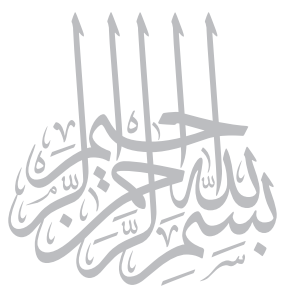
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**Hayr t Ne riyat**

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## Looking Through The Apple



### **The Excitement of Learning New Things**

The beautiful days of summer vacation had come to an end and the new school year had begun. The students were fond of school and were eager to learn new things. September passed in a blink of an eye with this enthusiasm, and now the leaves were being tinged with the yellowing hues of October.

Leaves were falling from the massive trunked oak tree in the school garden, under which the students played during spring and summer. Its thick branches, once home to bird nests, were now bare, and its dry leaves fluttered around its base. This was the garden of a historic school near Üsküdar, built in 1898, that is, in Ottoman times.

Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan, may Allah grant him paradise, who greatly valued education and the importance of youth,

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had ordered this school's construction. The cut stone building, planned in those years to be a Rüşdiye (preparatory school), was comfortably spacious. The classrooms had high ceilings to make the most of the space, and windows were designed to be wide for maximum amount of light and air to enter. The entrance gate of the building was very large, adorned with beautiful artistic touches.

Opposite the school stood a large bookshop, selling stationery, magazines, and books. It was very spacious, surrounded by grass and trees. One could sit at tables inside, drink tea, and read books. It was bustling with students after school, attending to their study needs and finding books they wished to read. The owner of the shop was a retired teacher, an avid reader, whom the youth affectionately called Uncle Omar. The students would often find him reading a book behind his beautiful glasses and would engage in conversation with him and seek help to find their desired books. Uncle Omar would gladly serve them.

Written in bold on the shop's wall was "Take what you wish and read, then return it." Newcomers to the library were initially surprised by this phrase but delighted upon understanding its meaning. This allowed them to benefit from these books with minimal expense, renting their chosen book from their beloved Uncle Omar for fifteen days without needing to purchase it.

Uncle Omar's grandson, Ali, a lively, always smiling, and playful student from the preparatory school, would come to the library with his friends during the lunch break. Sometimes he helped his grandfather, but often he would sit at the tables, listening to his grandfather's sweet conversations with his friends.

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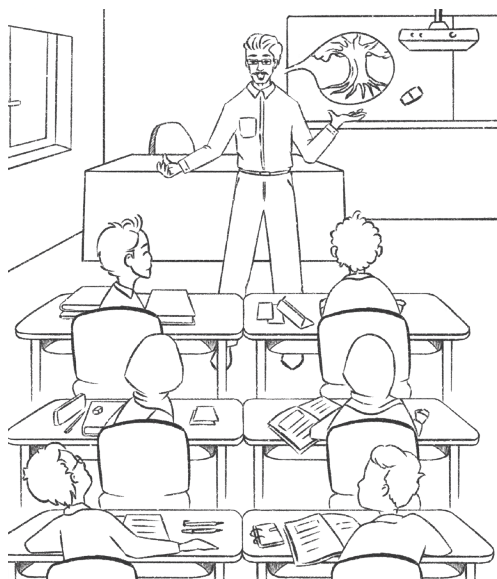
And here I must not forget to mention Uncle Omar's charming cat, "Snowflake," which had become an inseparable part of the shop. Library patrons loved seeing her and would inquire about her when they couldn't see her in the shop. Snowflake was a strikingly white cat who endeared herself to visitors with her sweet purring.

The school's religious education teacher, Mr. Yusuf, would also visit the shop frequently to have talks with Uncle Omar.

### How Beautiful Is Faith

It was Monday, and the students were in the last class of the day, which was Religious Education. They were a bit weary from the day but eager for their favourite class. Mr. Yusuf, the religious education teacher, was one of the most

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beloved teachers at the school. The students loved him due to the values he would teach them and because he cared about their opinions. When posing questions, he patiently awaited their responses and encouraged them to think independently, helping them find answers themselves. He actively engaged with them, using real-life examples to explain his lessons, talking about the universe, the beauty and artistry of Allah's wondrous creations. He involved them in the lesson, sometimes even taking them outside to the school garden for an open-air class!

The students adored their teacher, attending his classes with enjoyment and curiosity, often wishing the lessons wouldn't end. Mr. Yusuf would smile and remind them, "You need breaks as well, young ones. You have other classes after this for which you need to prepare yourselves." When the bell rang, he would end the lesson, leaving the class with a promise, "We'll continue our topic next time, *In Shaa Allah* (Allah [God] willing)! See you all soon.

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And now, it was another of Mr. Yusuf's lessons and the topic was "Faith in Allah." He began his lesson by saying:

"Before discussing faith, my friends, let's talk a bit about humans. You know, humans are very different from other creatures. We think, get curious, ask questions, observe our surroundings, and search for the causes of events. How a small seed turns into a big tree doesn't concern the tree or the birds that perch on it, but human curiosity drives us to understand how it happens, and we watch in wonder.

Dear friends, humans are sent to this world with a very high level of equipment. They are born with traits that elevate them above other beings, like intellect, curiosity, admiration, and love. This distinction of humans from animals in creation and these advanced capabilities are very clear evidence that we are sent to this world for very important purposes, the greatest of which is faith in Allah. Now, let's delve into the question, 'What is faith?'"

He encouraged his students to participate in the lesson and asked for their opinions on defining faith.

Nasiba said:

- "It's belief, sir."

Mr. Yusuf responded to her saying, "Excellent!"

Ali said:

- "It's believing sincerely from the heart."

Mr. Yusuf replied, "Correct, this is going well, who else?"

Then Betul, one of the most avid book readers in the class, stood up and said:

- "I read in a book, sir, that it's believing in Allah from the heart without the slightest doubt."

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Mr. Yusuf responded, “Very good!”

Mustafa then raised his hand and said:

- “Sir, the concept of faith has been around since the first human, right?”

- “Yes, Mustafa, the concept of faith has been there since the first human. Prophet Adam (peace be upon him), was the first human and also the first prophet. People learn about faith through the prophets who explain why faith is necessary and what it entails. Only the prophets can provide convincing answers to universal questions like: ‘What is the meaning of human existence? What is the meaning of the world? Why were we sent to this world? What is our purpose here? Where will we go after this world?’”

Rayyan then asked:

- “How does one have faith? Do we just believe from the heart and that’s it? Do we not do anything else?”

Mr. Yusuf expressed his happiness with the students’ interest and participation in the lesson, saying:

- “You’ve asked an important question, Rayyan. Faith first develops in the heart but afterwards it is expressed with the tongue. The heart is the spiritual centre where faith settles and takes root, whereas the tongue is the means through which faith in the heart is expressed. The heart that harbours our beliefs has a spiritual side, dear friends. We shouldn’t confuse this heart with our physical organ the size of a fist, which pumps blood through our body.

You all have beautifully expressed different aspects and characteristics of faith, so allow me to summarise what you’ve all said: ‘Faith means accepting what our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) brought as a messenger from

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Allah and believing in it sincerely with our hearts.’ A person first affirms his faith deeply in his heart and then expresses it with his tongue.

All the prophets, by the command of Allah, taught people to have faith in Allah and His oneness. Our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) also taught us that our Lord is one, without any partners or helpers. This is what we call the belief of *tawheed* (monotheism), and Islam is the religion of *tawheed*.”

Hasan asked:

- “What is *tawheed*, sir? Can you please elaborate on it a little bit?”

- “*Tawheed* means believing that Allah is one, that is, accepting and believing in the oneness of Allah. *Tawheed* is a very important principle in our religion, and a person who embraces Islam must sincerely say the phrase of *tawheed*, ‘Laa ilaaha illallaah, Muhammadur-rasulullah.’ This phrase expresses *tawheed*. In the first part of this phrase, we state that there is no deity but Allah, and in the second part, we affirm that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the messenger of Allah. A person is not considered a believer unless they say this phrase in this manner.”

Ahmad asked to speak, saying:

- “Sir, can I share the story of an event I experienced last weekend related to this topic?”

- “Go ahead, Ahmad!”

- “Sir, we went to the Hagia Sophia mosque as a family over the weekend. I witnessed an interesting event in that majestic mosque. A young German tourist named Fredy, who was exploring Islam, decided to become a Muslim.

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He came to the Imam of Hagia Sophia with his friends who were his neighbours in Hamburg, Germany. I witnessed his first steps in becoming a Muslim near the mihrab, where the Imam was leading the prayers.”

Ali said:

- “Ah, I wish I had been there! It sounds really interesting.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

- “Can you tell us more, Ahmad? How did it happen?”

- “First, the Imam congratulated the young man. The young man’s Muslim friends were translating between him and the Imam. Then, the Imam spoke to the young man about the virtues of Islam and asked him why he chose Islam. The German young man pointed to his friends beside him and said, ‘The biggest reason is my Muslim neighbours and friends at school. I was greatly influenced by their beautiful lifestyle, family structure, humanity, good neighbourliness, compassion, and fairness. Then I started researching their religion, and the more I learned about Islam, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the Holy Qur’ân, the more I loved it and the more I wanted to learn about it. With this intention, I came to see Türkiye. I was greatly influenced by the mosques and the call to prayer<sup>1</sup> in Istanbul, and today I decided to become a Muslim, *alhamdulillah* (All praise be to Allah).”

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1 **Adhan (Islamic Call to Prayer):** The Islamic call to prayer recited before each of the five times daily prayers (Salah)



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“Then the Imam congratulated the young man again and then talked to him about the importance of the testimony of faith and asked him to repeat it with him. We also recited the testimony of faith with him, saying: ‘Ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha illallaah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluh.’ I was really moved, sir. Then everyone present hugged their new brother in religion and congratulated him. I still can’t forget the tears of joy that streamed from that young tourist’s eyes.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

- You have experienced an event filled with deep emotions. *Alhamdulillah*, another young brother of ours has been honoured with embracing Islam. How beautiful that is!”

Yavuz asked:

- “What does it mean to be honoured by Islam, sir?” Mr. Yusuf replied:

- “Yes, that’s a deep question, dear friends. Believing in Allah and accepting Him is our first obligation because this is the highest purpose of our being sent to this world. Allah Almighty created the universe to introduce us to Himself, to tell us about Himself, and to endear Himself to us. He sent all the prophets to call people to faith. By uttering the testimony of faith, one acknowledges the greatest truth in the universe, accepting and surrendering to Allah, knowing everything comes from Him. Through faith, one realises that the One who created him and gave him all kinds of blessings like his hands, tongue, eyes, mind, heart, mother, father, and homeland is Allah. Thus, a bond of faith is formed between the person and his Creator. This bond of faith is our most noble and highest value. In Islam, honour is not

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in wealth, race, position, lineage, or riches, but in faith and Islam. Thus, Fredy was honoured with such honour.”

- “Oh sir, I almost forgot, when Fredy converted to Islam, he said he wanted to change his name,” Ahmad continued. “The Imam said, ‘As you wish, you can do that.’ He also told him that Prophet Isa (Jesus) [peace be upon him] had prophesied the coming of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) centuries ago and that our Prophet’s name in the Gospel is Ahmad. He suggested this name to Fredy, who happily agreed to the name Ahmad.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

- “You can now say, Ahmad, that you share both religion and name with our new Muslim brother.”

- “Yes sir, it was a very beautiful day I will never forget in my life. Now, whenever I think of Hagia Sophia, I am reminded of our revert brother Ahmad.”



Mr. Yusuf turned to the class and said:

- “I give my thanks to your friend Ahmad. He shared with us a meaningful event that touched us all. He showed us through experience the beauty of faith. Dear friends, faith is like a sun that not only illuminates the exterior of a person who is in darkness but also his interior. By means of faith, a person becomes truly human by embodying the noble virtues taught by our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), an example for all humanity. He learns what humanity, mercy, cleanliness, sacrifice, loyalty, good morals, and

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courtesy are, and he not only learns them but also practises them. And you've seen how beautiful people living Islam in a foreign country and practising it well can influence others, warming their hearts towards Islam. I think we should also congratulate the Muslim neighbours and friends of that young German brother because the beauty and truth of the Islam they lived has resonated in the hearts of others."

Nasiba asked to speak and said:

- "Sir, are there different types and levels of faith?"

The entire class quieted down, as if birds perched on their heads, eagerly awaiting the answer to this question. But then the bell for the break rang, and Mr. Yusuf concluded the lesson, saying, "Dear friends, if you wish, let's answer this beautiful question next time in our lesson on Wednesday."

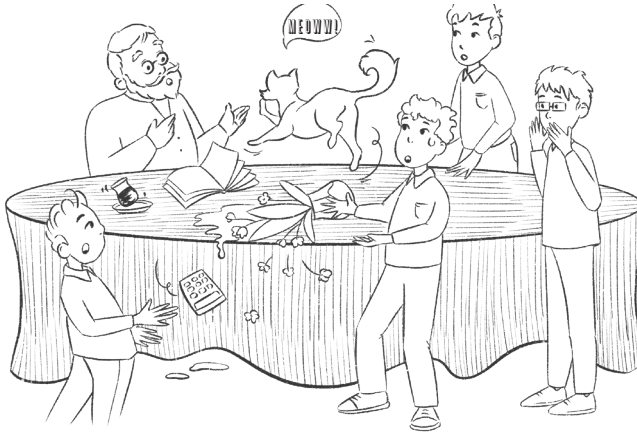
### **The Three Great Teachers Who Introduce Us to Our Loving Lord**

The students quietly picked up their bags and left the classroom. A group of four or five students chatted among themselves and headed towards the bookshop opposite the school. Upon entering, they found Uncle Omar, as usual, sitting at his table reading a book. Snowflake was there too, with her usual cuteness. Uncle Omar greeted them with a smile, saying:

- "Welcome, dears!"

There were fragrant flowers in a colourful vase on Uncle Omar's table. As Ali was about to ask his grandfather's permission to smell the flowers in the vase, he accidentally bumped into it, causing the vase to tip over on the table. The vase didn't break but made a noise that caused Snow-

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flake to jump into Uncle Omar's lap, saying "Meoww!" And then everyone started staring at Ali. Upon seeing Ali looking at his grandfather with a shocked face, everyone broke into a laughter. Then Ali said to his grandfather with his usual smile on his face:

- "Grandpa, I'm sorry, it was an accident."

Uncle Omar replied understandingly:

- "No problem, Ali. Such things happen. We are all human and bound to make some mistakes. But what's more important is our values, and our exchange of respect and love. A Muslim is loved in society for his kind tongue, smiling face, and understanding. As it goes in the proverb, 'He who seeks perfection in his friend finds no friend!'

So, anyway, how are you, young ones? Are you well? Ma-Shaa-Allah, I see you are all fine. How are your lessons going?"

Hassan said:

- "Thanks to Allah they are going very well, Uncle Omar. In our last lesson, we discussed the subject of belief in Allah, and when we realised the importance of faith, I discussed with my friends 'What kind of books can we read on this topic?' and so we came here."

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Uncle Omar said:

- "First and foremost, I congratulate you young ones, and I'd like to help you. A person who understands and realises the importance of strong faith also wonders how to strengthen it. Indeed, our ultimate purpose of creation is to believe in Allah and worship Him. In truth, we need to strengthen our faith. And as for your question; there are three great teachers of faith who have introduced us to our Loving Lord, and first and foremost, we need to understand and learn from them."

Ibrahim asked,

- "Who are these great teachers, Uncle Omar?"

- "The first of these three great teachers who introduce us to our Lord is the book of the universe, the second is our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and the third is the Holy Qur'ân. The universe is like a book that introduces us to our Lord and makes us love Him with all that it contains. We must read and contemplate the book of the universe, looking at everything in it with a thoughtful eye and extracting lessons from it, as guided by our Lord in the Holy Qur'ân and as taught by our beloved Prophet through his putting the Qur'ân into practice. We call this act of comprehensive thinking - contemplation. Would you like me to tell you, young ones, about one of the examples of contemplation mentioned in the Qur'ân?" They said in unison,

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- “Yes!”

Ibrahim said,

- “Uncle Omar, if possible, could this example of contemplation be related to the life of a prophet?”

Meanwhile, the bookshop staff, noticing that the discussion had deepened, brought hot tea and nuts to the table. Uncle Omar thanked the staff and asked them to serve the tea first to the youngsters who are the hope of the future, then continued:

- “Well, why not, Ibrahim! First, enjoy the nuts with this fresh tea. Our example relates to an event experienced by Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him).”

Mustafa turned to his friend Ibrahim and said quietly,

- “Look, Ibrahim, it’s an event related to your name.”

Uncle Omar, with a compassionate tone, said:

- “Dear young ones, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was a young man like you. Belief in Allah was not known in his time, and people worshipped idols. Prophet Ibrahim found idol worship to be illogical and searched for his Lord. One night, he saw a star in the sky and began to think, ‘Could this be my Lord?’ But when he saw the star set and disappear, he said, ‘I do not love those that set. This star cannot be my Lord.’ Then he saw the moon rising in the sky and thought deeply, ‘Could this be my Lord?’ But in the morning, he realised that it too had set and said, ‘The moon, too, cannot be my Lord.’ He prayed to Allah Almighty, ‘O Lord, if You do not guide me to the right path, I will never be able to find it.’”

Ali eagerly asked,

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- "And what happened, Grandpa? Was Prophet Ibrahim able to find Allah after making that prayer?"

Uncle Omar replied:

- 'Yes, Ali, you are always so eager, and I was just about to tell you. Yes, in the morning, when the sun rose, Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) thought, 'The sun is so large, could it perhaps be my Lord?' When he saw that it too set in the evening, he realised that the great Creator must have attributes that do not set, do not vanish, do not disappear, and do not pass away or perish. And he found Allah, saying, 'Indeed, I have turned my face toward the One Who originated the heavens and the earth.'

Mustafa said,

- 'It's beautiful. Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) endeavored to find his Lord by reading the book of the universe, and through this contemplation, he taught us what characteristics the true God must possess.'

Ali said,

- 'Grandfather, there are people in the world who do not believe in the existence of Allah. How should we view this?'

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- 'Yes, that's also a good question,' Uncle Omar said. 'We are all in a test, my dears. Our Lord has given us the freedom to believe or not to believe. Some looked at the signs of Allah and found Him, like Ibrahim (peace be upon him) and his followers. But others did not accept Allah, making illogical claims. Our Lord gave humans intellect and a finite lifespan, placed in front of them His traces, blessings, and grace filling the world, and left them to their free will. When a person looks with their intellect and conscience, he knows that even a simple sewing needle cannot come into being on its own; even a needle has a designer and maker.

We don't say 'Allah exists' because everybody else does; we say 'Allah exists' because He truly exists and we can prove it. We believe in Allah with evidence. If something exists then it is easy to prove its existence.'

Mustafa, somewhat puzzled, said,

- 'I didn't entirely understand, Uncle Omar.'

Uncle Omar took a dictionary from the side shelf and handed it to Mustafa, saying:

- "Mustafa, can you find the term 'Allah' in this dictionary?"

Immediately, Mustafa found the term 'Allah' under the letter 'A' and said,

- "I found it, Uncle Omar, it's on page eight."

Uncle Omar replied,

- "You found the term 'Allah' easily because it exists in that dictionary. Now, try to prove to us that the term 'Allah' does not exist in the same dictionary."

Mustafa said,



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- "That's very difficult, Uncle Omar. I would have to show that this term does not exist on any of the pages, one after the other."

- "Yes, my young friends, it's easy to prove the existence of something that exists, but difficult to prove its non-existence. We Muslims can easily prove the existence of Allah, but non-believers cannot prove His non-existence."

Uncle Omar led the students towards the shop door, pointing to the sun whose light was reflecting outside:

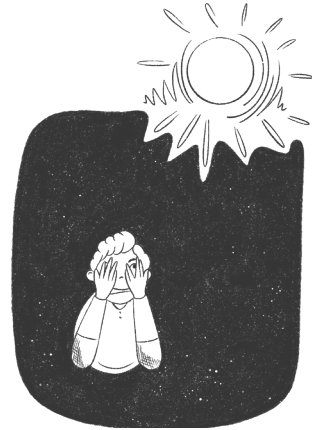
- "My dears, would the sun disappear if some people closed their eyes so as not to see it?"

The students replied,

- "No, it's just that those people would not see the sun. The sun would still be there."

Uncle Omar turned to Ali and said,

- "See, Ali, those who do not believe are just closing their eyes to Allah, whose existence is as obvious as the sun."



## Are There Levels of Faith?

It was Wednesday, and it was time for Mr. Yusuf's class as usual. Like every time, Mr. Yusuf asked the students how they were doing. Then he turned to Nasiba who had asked a question in the previous class:

- "Nasiba, you had asked a question in our last class on Monday, and I couldn't respond because the bell rang. Remind the class of the question, if you please."

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- "Sir, I asked if there are types and levels of faith?"

Mr. Yusuf said,

- "The weather is sunny, let's answer this question under the oak tree in the garden if you wish."

He took the entire class out to the garden. It was October, but it still felt like summer outside. They sat amongst the flowers and started talking, and the students were in for a surprise. There were about twenty apples, very red, ripe, and large, in a beautiful tray.

Mr. Yusuf said:

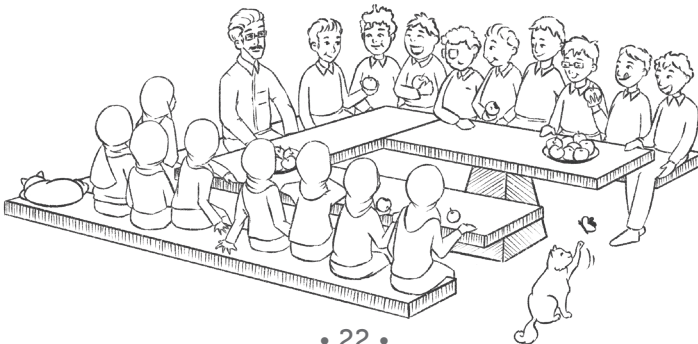
- "First, let's eat these apples, and then we can talk about the types of faith that arise from its different levels. Dear Sa'id, I had washed the apples beforehand, could you please serve them to your friends?" Class representative Sa'id took the tray and handed it to his friends, each taking one apple.

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "Bismillah (In the name of Allah)! Let's start my young friends, please go ahead!"

They began eating the apples, thanking their teacher, especially Ali who said,

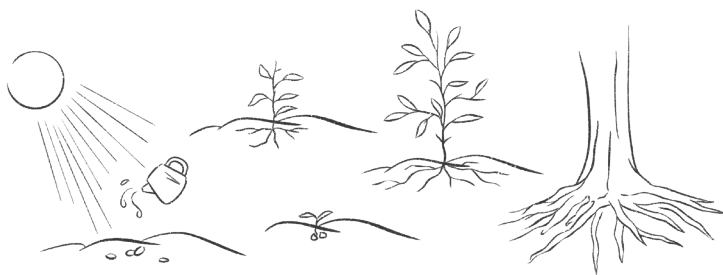
- "The apples are really very delicious, sir."



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While Mr. Yusuf was eating his apple, he said:

- “Enjoy and relish it, my young friends. Thanks truly belong to our Lord, Who is the one Who blessed us with these apples. I have just one request from you all – when you finish eating, take out the seeds and don’t throw them away.”



When they finished eating, they returned to the lesson. Mr. Yusuf took out five or six seeds from his apple and asked the students to do the same with their apples, and they ended up with dark-coloured seeds in each of their palms.

- “My dears, we’re discussing the different levels of faith, and these apple seeds can guide us on this topic. Let’s consider it this way: if we plant any of these apple seeds in the soil, providing the right conditions, the seed will first sprout underground. After a while, it will grow above the surface and become a sapling. As it grows and grows, it strengthens, and eventually, it becomes a large apple tree with fruit and shade. In reality, all these stages are phases of the apple tree’s life.

My dear friends, just as there are stages and levels between an apple seed and an apple tree, there are many levels and stages in faith as well. A person can develop and strengthen his faith by striving through these levels and stages. Dear Nasiba, I want to ask you a question: which is harder? To uproot a delicate apple sapling from the soil or to uproot a solid, firmly-rooted, apple tree?”

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- “The apple tree, sir. Uprooting it is, of course, harder.”
- “That’s right. It’s never easy to uproot a large tree because it is deeply rooted into the ground. Similarly, the stronger the faith, the deeper it settles in the depths of a person’s spiritual being, becoming so entrenched that it cannot be uprooted. Look at the oak tree under which we sit. Its roots spread in all directions. Can such a tree be easily uprooted?”

Mustafa asked:

- “Sir, do you mean to say that faith is classified into different types according to these stages of growth?”
- “Yes, that’s correct. Faith is divided into two types based on its level of growth. The two fundamental types of faith are weak faith and strong faith. Let me explain weak and strong faith with an example. My dear friends, if a large quantity of different goods comes to the market for a rich person, we can understand that they belong to that person in two ways. The first is through a superficial view, where we say, ‘If these goods belong to anyone, it must be that rich person. All these good cannot belong to anyone else.’ Thinking this way is superficial.

Yavuz said:

- “But sir, wouldn’t this view be a kind of generalisation?”
- “True, this view is based on general judgement and surface level assumptions, since someone might tell such a person thinking this way, ‘These goods you see don’t belong to that person but to someone else,’ or ‘Some of these goods belong to another person.’ Then the person with the superficial view would immediately retract their opinion and say, That could be true, yeah!’ because he has no evidence to say otherwise.”

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Yavuz asked:

- "So, what's the second way, sir?"

- "The other method is through careful observation and study.

The person using this method notices the owner's mark on each item; seeing that symbol, they recognize the owner of the goods. In this

way, they understand with certainty that every item of those goods belongs to that person and never doubts or wonders, 'Does this really belong to him?' If someone tries to mislead them and instil doubt, they immediately point to the owner's mark and prove ownership by saying, 'This merchandise and everything here carries his symbol, from the smallest to the largest. These goods belong to him.'



Likewise, my dear friends, faith also comes in two types in terms of level. The first is faith acquired without studying the existence and unity of God, that is, accepting the existence and unity of God just because of seeing and imitating parents, relatives, and the broader society. This type of faith is also called faith acquired through imitation, and it is weak because a person at this level of faith says, 'God exists and He is one' without feeling the need to investigate that and prove it, taking it only at face value. It is easy for a person with this level of faith to fall into doubts."

Ibrahim raised his hand and said:

- "Sir, in this type of faith, is a person's faith stable?

- "Good question. Unfortunately, friends, a person who has not studied faith, but only acquired it through imitation cannot have a belief that is firm about the fact that Allah is

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the owner and creator of everything. His faith would not be stable. Therefore, such a person can easily fall into doubt. Yes, friends, we have now understood the faith that we learned from society through imitation. So, let's now work together to discover the characteristics of the stronger level of faith."

Class representative Sa'id asked for permission to speak and said:

- "Based on what you've told us, sir, strong faith requires study, questioning, and scrutiny, right?"

- "Yes, that's exactly right."

Betul said:

- "So, through study, questioning, and scrutiny, sir, we will find evidence of the existence and unity of our Lord, is that so?"

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- "Yes, very good, the characteristics of strong faith are beginning to appear. Yes, my dear friends, for strong faith, initially study is essential. It is possible to arrive at the existence and unity of Allah through study. Anyone who reaches this degree of strong faith knows with certainty that Allah is the owner of everything because they have evidence. With this evidence, they definitively confirm that Allah creates and manages all beings, and they notice and see and examine Allah's evidence in all creation. They believe without the slightest doubt. Whatever this person looks at, he sees it belongs to Allah and reveals this truth to others too. A person who reaches this level of faith does not fall into doubt because they have unshakable faith. This faith settles and becomes deep-rooted in a person's heart as it grows stronger. His faith becomes very difficult to shake."

One of the quiet students in the class, Alif, said:

- "Sir, can you explain to us more about how faith settles in

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our hearts? Are there other examples we can present when explaining this topic to someone else?"

Ali said:

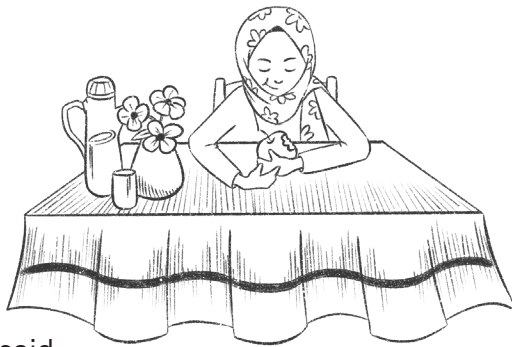
- "Yes, sir, I'm also curious about Alif's question. I want our faith to be very strong and deeply rooted in us so that it never leaves us, so we don't fall into doubts."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "Wonderful, the idea of helping others in this regard is a good approach. Imagine, my friends, faith is like the spiritual nourishment our hearts need. Let's think about the apples on that tray! Alif, pick up an apple. OK good. Can someone now forcefully take that apple from your hand by any means?"

Alif said:

- "Yes sir, they can take it by force."



Mr. Yusuf said:

- "True, that's possible. Okay, now, if you ate that apple, digested it, and it mixed with your blood and spread to your cells, could anyone take that apple from you then?"

Alif said:

- "No, sir, nobody can! No one can take this apple from me now that I've digested it and it has become a part of me."

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Mr. Yusuf said:

- “And that is how strong faith becomes. Strong faith settles deep within a person’s heart, there it takes root and solidifies like an oak tree. Nobody can take out such a strong belief from a person’s heart if the person knows the evidences of his belief and feels it deep inside. A person like this lives by his faith.

Ali, who was very impressed with the example given, said enthusiastically:

- “Yes sir, nobody can uproot such faith from our hearts, by Allah’s will.”

Sa’id spoke with a determined tone:

- “Sir, now I understand better why some people doubt matters of faith, and when our faith is weak, we become impressionable. Therefore, I must work on strengthening my faith more.”

Mr. Yusuf nodded in agreement with what Sa’id said and then continued:

- “My friends, a person with strong faith can see the existence and unity of Allah in everything he looks at. For example, let’s look at our school building here! It was built over a century ago, and we haven’t seen or met the engineer who designed and built this building, but we are completely certain that there was an engineer who planned and built it, right?

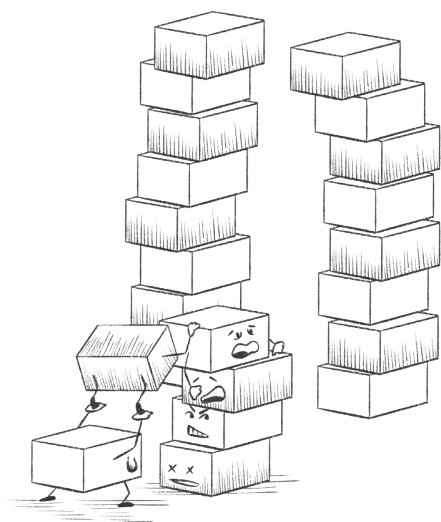
The students said:

- “Of course, professor! How could this beautiful building have come to existence by itself?”

That’s right, friends. The cut stones of this building could



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not have come together on their own to build it. This beautiful, spacious building was built by a man who knew it would be inhabited by humans and who also understood humans well. With his knowledge, he first laid the foundation, then the walls, and finally the roof. Although we don't see the building's engineer, we can form an understanding of the engineer based on the characteristics of this building and understand different characteristics about him.

### **Do We Look at the Apple? Or Do We Look Through the Apple?**

The lesson continued with all its enthusiasm. Sa'id asked for permission to speak again and said:

- "Sir, can we do another contemplation exercise that leads us to strong faith?"

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- "Absolutely! For instance, let's think about the apples we ate! A person with strong faith deeply contemplates the apple and realises that there are qualities like shape, colour, fragrance, and taste that affect people's preferences and emotions. Didn't we all notice this when we were just eating the apples? Large-sized, visually appealing, juicy, fragrant, delicious apples... Then a person begins to explore the source of these qualities in the apple and says, 'Only someone who

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loves and understands humans can create these qualities in an apple.' For example, only someone who knows our need for vitamins gives us apples filled with vitamins. Then he looks at the soil, water, air, and trees, which are factors in the formation of the apple, and he questions: 'Are these factors truly capable of thinking about and planning the qualities we see in an apple? Do they possess such an ability?' Searching for answers to this question, he realises that the shape, amazing taste, and wonderful fragrance of the apple can't originate from the tree, soil, or other causes lacking knowledge, awareness, and feeling."

Mr. Yusuf paused for a moment to catch their attention and continued:

- "My friends, there's a very important difference in perspectives here. Looking at the apple and looking through the apple are two different things. There are two types of viewpoints here. If you only look at the apple, you'll see its physical properties without considering who made it, and you'll talk about the beneficial vitamins in the apple, without much thought about who placed those vitamins there. You won't be able to fully acknowledge Allah who created the apple and blessed us with it. However, when you look through the apple, the apple becomes an object, and you wonder about who created this object, who originated it. When you look through the apple, it becomes a piece of art, and you search for the artist of this work. You ask, 'Who hung this beautiful fruit on the branches? Who decorated it inside and out according to our senses? Who filled the apple with medicinal and beneficial vitamins that we need?' Then you search for the doer of these actions present in the apple. With this viewpoint, you realise that the beautiful shape, astonishing aroma, and delicious taste of the apple are made

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by Allah, who knows and cares for us. With this perspective, you don't say 'What a beautiful apple!' but say 'What a beautifully made apple this is and how wonderfully was this created for us!' Thus, you realise that the beauty and benefits of the apple don't come from the soil, water, or air but from the true owner, Allah. Then you reach the understanding of our compassionate, generous, knowledgeable, and powerful Lord Who blessed us with all kinds of blessings, just as He blessed us with apples.

Ali, excited to learn something new, said:

- "Sir, may I share something about this topic? I think it will contribute to the lesson."

Mr. Yusuf nodded his head and said:

- "Go ahead, Ali!"

- "My mother made a beautiful cake for my younger sister during the weekend. My grandparents also came to visit us. The cake was very delicious, with chocolate inside, cream on the outside, and decorated with strawberries on top."

Mustafa said:

- "Ali, please don't! You describe the cake in a way that makes our mouths water."

- "Sorry, friends, you're right, but I need to explain it this way. My mom worked hard to make this cake among all her other tasks, and as we were about to eat the cake, my grandfather said, "Can you two wait a moment, please?" With a fork in each of our hands, our eyes on the cake, and drooling mouths, we said, "Oh, Grandpa!" Then Grandpa asked my sister a question, 'My beautiful granddaughter,

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could the person who made and presented you this beautiful cake not love you?’

My sister looked at my mom and said, ‘Dear Grandpa, how could that be? Mom obviously loves me very much.’

Grandpa said, ‘Very good, your mom made this cake exactly the way you like it because she truly loves and cares for you, right?’

‘Yes, Grandpa.’

‘My dear grandchildren, I’m sorry I made you wait a bit, but I wanted to solidify this in your minds! Now, I want to share a life lesson with you — one which I hope you’ll never forget. Let’s contemplate for a second: Saying which of these expressions makes you remember your mother more, ‘What a beautiful cake!’ or ‘How beautiful has our mom made this cake for us?’

My sister and I answered, ‘Of course, the second one, Grandpa.’

Grandpa said, ‘Yes, my smart grandchildren, the second perspective is completely different. With this view, you understand your mother’s affection and love for you, and the fact that she dedicated her time and effort to make this beautiful cake for you. When you just say ‘The cake is beautiful’ or ‘The cake looks nice’ you don’t think much about its maker. But when you say, ‘How beautiful was this cake made, just the way I like it,’ you remind yourself about your mother



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who made this cake for you. Now let's say 'Bismillah' and thank your mom and then eat this beautifully-made cake. Afterwards, I will give you the gifts I brought for each one of you, which I think you will like very much. Then he said, 'I will tell you another time, In Shaa Allah, how to use this perspective when contemplating the universe.'

Sir, now with this apple example, I better understand that Grandpa wanted to tell us the difference between looking at the cake and looking through the cake.

Mr. Yusuf smiled and said:

- "Ali, I know very well that your grandfather loves you a lot. Perhaps your grandfather is also hinting at something else?"

Ali, somewhat surprised, asked,

- "Like what, sir?"

Mr. Yusuf replied,

- "For instance, teaching you the difference between looking at a gift and looking through a gift!"

Ali laughed enthusiastically and said, "Yes, you are absolutely right; I never thought about it that way!"

Said, who had been listening intently to the lesson, commented,

- "This perspective is really different, sir. It's a view that leads one to the Creator. We thank you very much."

The lesson was nearing its end, and there was only a little time left before the bell rang.

Mr. Yusuf announced,

- "Friends, I will be giving you some good news tomorrow."

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The students curiously asked,

- “What is this good news, sir?”

Mr. Yusuf teased,

- “Think about what it could be until tomorrow, and I will share this news with your class when you come to school.”

The students went home, pondering, “What might be this news Mr. Yusuf talked about?” Their curiosity was truly piqued about what their teacher would say. Some students planned to meet at the library opposite the school after returning home and having dinner. Meanwhile, Alif went home, greeted her mother, changed out of her school uniform, and began eating the freshly baked apple biscuits her mother had just taken out of the oven. When she saw these biscuits, she thought of the lesson about looking at or through the apple and said to her mother,

- “Mom, these biscuits you’ve made are really great! Thank you for making them for us!”

Her mother replied,

- “Enjoy it, my daughter, how are you?” and started a conversation with Alif by asking about her day. Alif’s mother would always ask her when she returned from school, “Did you ask your teachers any questions today, my daughter?” Then she would say, “My beautiful daughter, if there are no questions, there will be no answers. It’s very important to ask questions in their right place. How beautifully it is said in the proverb...” and in a melodious tone, she would recite: “He doesn’t know, how can he — when he doesn’t ask? If he knew, he would ask. He doesn’t ask, how can he — when he doesn’t know? If he asked, he would know.”

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Alif replied to her mother,

- “Yes, I did ask, Mom.” She quickly summarised Mr. Yusuf’s lesson for her mother and excitedly shared what she had learned at school.

“Mom, Mr. Yusuf will share some good news with us tomorrow, and my curiosity is driving me crazy to know what it is. My friends and I are so curious about this news he will tell us.”

Her mother said,

- “Curiosity is good, but patience is also good, my daughter. Just be patient. I hope your teacher will tell you the news tomorrow, then you will feel relieved.”

Alif said,

- “Mom, if you allow, my schoolmates and I have agreed to meet at the library opposite our school at four o’clock.”

Her mother replied,

- “Okay, my daughter, it’s fine as long as you return home on time.”

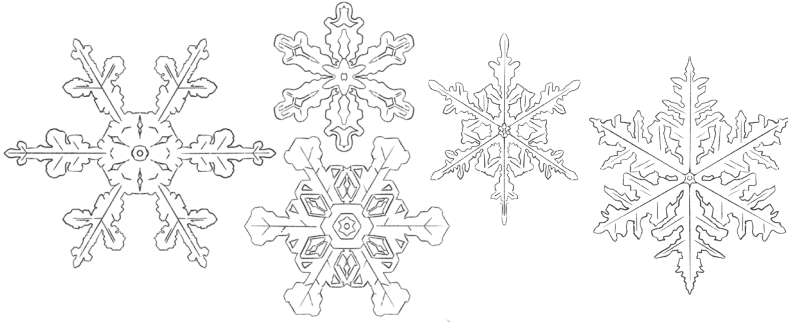
## Snowflake Is One of Allah’s Signs

Alif wanted to go to the library and was especially eager to see Snowflake. The students met in the library at four o’clock as planned, with Fatima, Nasiba, Rayyan, and Betul arriving right on time as agreed. The bookshop was quiet, and Snowflake, a fixture of the shop, greeted the newcomers at the door. She seemed even whiter today, with the afternoon sun rays making her fur shine as they hit her. When the youngsters reached the bookshop, they also found their teacher, Mr. Yusuf, already there, deeply engaged in conversation with Uncle Omar. The youngsters



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greeted them. Alif, usually quiet but adept at asking the right questions, wanted to ask something she had been pondering for a long time, seeing the library quiet and her teacher present. Suddenly she said:



- “Uncle Omar, may I ask you something?”
- “Of course, my daughter Alif.”
- “Do you have a particular reason why you named your cat Snowflake?”

Uncle Omar smiled and said:

- “Well, you’re right for being curious about that. Snowflake is not a common name for cats. Actually, Mr. Yusuf also knows the answer to this question, but I am not sure whether I should answer, or he should.”

Mr. Yusuf replied respectfully:

- “Please go ahead, Uncle Omar.”

Uncle Omar began,

- “Well, if Mr. Yusuf permits me,” and continued: “Alif, my daughter, it was winter, and on a cold, snowy evening, we were chatting with some friends like Mr. Yusuf here in the shop. Suddenly, the snow started falling heavily, resultigg in

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a stunningly beautiful scene. We, along with our friends, got up from the tables and began watching the snowfall in amazement. The snowflakes were swirling, each landing in a different spot without colliding with one another. In that moment, we had a contemplative conversation about how each snowflake is unique and distinct from the others, and how this diversity is evidence of our Lord's oneness and infinite knowledge. Then, something wonderful happened."

The youngsters asked curiously,

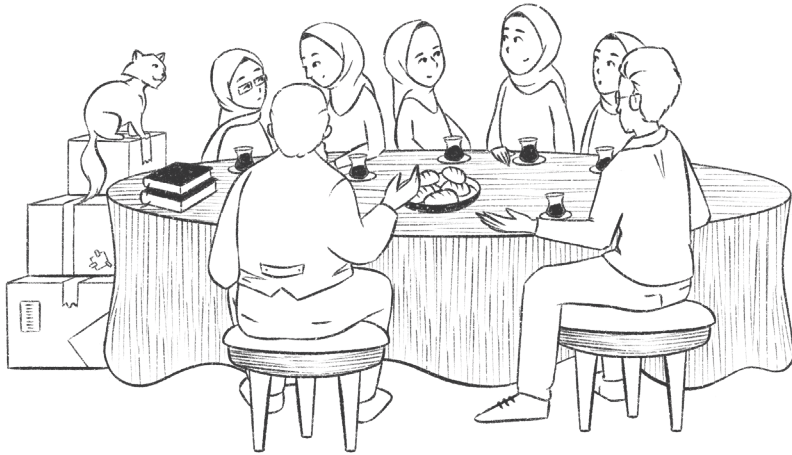
- "What happened, Uncle Omar?"

- "Suddenly, a small white cat appeared at the shop's door. It was hungry and cold, so we quickly brought it inside. We warmed it up near the heater, wrapped it in a dry towel, and gave it some warm milk. As it warmed up, it became friendlier and started doing amusing things. Once it was fed, it began playing joyfully. Those of us who witnessed this grew very fond of the cat. While discussing what to name it, some suggested 'Pearl,' and others thought of 'Cotton.' Then, when Mr. Yusuf suggested, 'How about we name this little guest who came to us amidst falling snowflakes

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Snowflake?’ Everyone liked the idea. We’ve been calling her ‘Snowflake’ since then, and I think she really liked the name too.”

Just then, Snowflake jumped into Uncle Omar’s lap, surprising everyone there and prompting laughter.



- “May I ask a question too, sir?”

- “Of course, Fatima!”

- “Sir, since the uniqueness of each snowflake is evidence for the oneness of Allah, what other creatures can we use as examples to demonstrate that Allah is one, besides snowflakes?”

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- “This is a good question.” Then he asked everyone there to look at each other’s faces. The girls at the table looked at each other’s faces with confusion while Snowflake the cat was staring at them curiously.

Mr. Yusuf asked:

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- “Are there any two people in our school who look exactly the same?”

The students replied:

- “No.”

- “Is there anyone in our school who is the same?”

Again, the students said,

- “No.”

- “And in Üsküdar?”

- “No.”

- “In Istanbul or Turkey?”

- “There are none.”

Mr. Yusuf expanded the discussion around the same question, asking whether there was anyone the same in Asia, Europe, or even the entire world.

The students kept replying with “No.”

Mr. Yusuf then said:

- “And so, my friends, we can understand that Allah is one, from the fact that the faces of all people are different from one another. There are billions of people and no two faces are identical. Each face is given only to one person; that face is not given to anyone before or after them. The DNA of each person, which carries their characteristics, is unique and specially designed for them. All these facts indicate the oneness of Allah, who knows the characteristics of all people He creates. He chooses and creates that face, that DNA from an endless array of possibilities. Allah knows the faces of all the creation that has been and will be created, granting each a unique face. If all the faces did not emerge from the boundless knowledge of the one God, they would all be mixed up with each other. Therefore, the one who

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has created all humans differently from one another since the first human, Prophet Adam (peace be upon him), is Allah. Our Lord wants to show His boundless knowledge and power through creating every person differently from one another.”

Fatima then said:

- “Sir, could fingerprints also be an example of what you are describing?”
- “Of course, Fatima. There are numerous examples, and because our Lord’s knowledge is unlimited, He doesn’t give the fingerprints He gives to one person to anyone else. Each human being is born with a perfect uniqueness. The fingerprint given to a child is not given to any other child and will not be given to anyone else in the future. Similarly, the iris of a newborn’s eye is unique to that individual.



Betul asked for permission to speak and said:

- “Sir, I read that some banks’ security password systems work by establishing a relationship with the iris layer in our eyes.”
- “That’s correct,” replied the teacher. “Passwords in many places are established through iris scanning, for example, used for security in mobile phones, banking systems, and special entry gates. So then tell me: Can a mind accept that phones, cameras, and entry gates made with facial recognition systems and iris scanning systems have a craftsman or maker, but the perfect face of a human and his wonderful eyes do not have an owner and creator? The giving of such unique characteristics to each one of the

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eight billion humans on earth can only be realized if those humans are created by a Creator who possesses unlimited knowledge. And also, just as this is evidence for the oneness of Allah, it is also evidence for the fact that Allah governs every beings in the universe at every moment.

### Looking at the Universe Holistically

Nasiba said:

- “Sir, I am very interested in the matter of our Lord’s governance of the universe at every moment. Could you explain this matter more?”

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- “This is indeed a significant matter, Nasiba. There is a Lord for us who governs every part of the universe at every moment, and when we look at the universe holistically, we see this. Everything in the universe, big or small, moves according to a common goal and works towards achieving a shared purpose. The fact that inanimate materials perform conscious actions necessitates that we consider meaning alongside these material things. Who is it that gathers these entities around a goal and makes them perform their duties? For example, clouds come to aid plants, the sun rushes to extend all living creatures a means of life, and plants rush to help animals. We see this, but there’s a very interesting situation here: these entities we mentioned don’t know or are unaware of each other. This means there is a God who hears creatures at every moment and meets their needs. He is Allah, Who makes these creatures perform their duties and rush to help each other. We can also ask Uncle Omar for an example in this regard.”

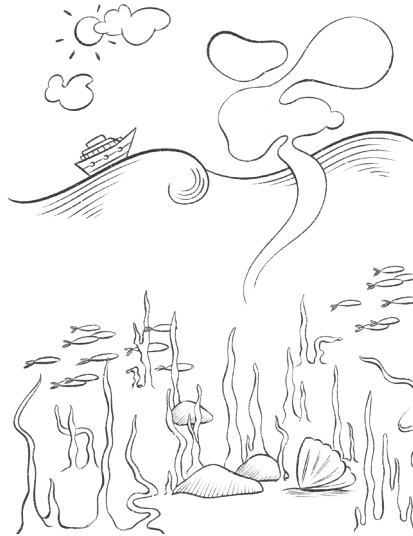
## Looking Through The Apple

Uncle Omar said while petting Snowflake's back:

- "You've explained it beautifully. If you allow me I will share an example that amazed me greatly. So, the substance that living creatures desperately need to live is oxygen, right?"

Nasiba said:

- "If there's no oxygen, we can't breathe, and if we can't breathe, we die."



Uncle Omar said:

- "From the moment we are born, we find oxygen immediately available, without having to search for it, isn't that so?"

The students responded:

- "Yes, Uncle Omar."

- "Moreover, it's not just us humans, my dears, but all living beings..." At that moment, Snowflake meowed gently as if to say, "I'm here too, don't forget about me!"

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Uncle Omar smiled and continued:

- “For instance, all cats, like Snowflake, need oxygen right from birth. Could it be a coincidence that oxygen reaches our noses abundantly and for free without us having to search for it? What do you think? Then, we have another important point: as scientists say, 78% of the air we breathe in the atmosphere is nitrogen, and 21% is oxygen. This ratio is very important for the continuation of our lives. If we breathed air that was entirely oxygen, it would slowly kill us because pure oxygen would damage our cells, and then there would be no life on Earth. Now, my dears, could life-sustaining atmospheric gases and their precise proportions be created by entities that have no life, consciousness, or knowledge of humans? The existence of oxygen is more important than humanity’s invention of the wheel or cutting tools. Pay attention here! Who makes the trees, especially the algae in the seas and oceans, which all produce oxygen, our most basic need to survive? Behind these material things is our Lord who loves and has mercy on humans and meets the needs of humans at all times. So much so that our Lord makes the algae in the seas and oceans produce about 70-80% of the oxygen used on Earth. The remaining part is produced by plants. Therefore, algae are indispensable for life on Earth. When we look at the universe as a whole, we see that creatures are guided towards a common purpose, and thus we begin to know our One Lord who gathers all creatures around a purpose at every moment.”

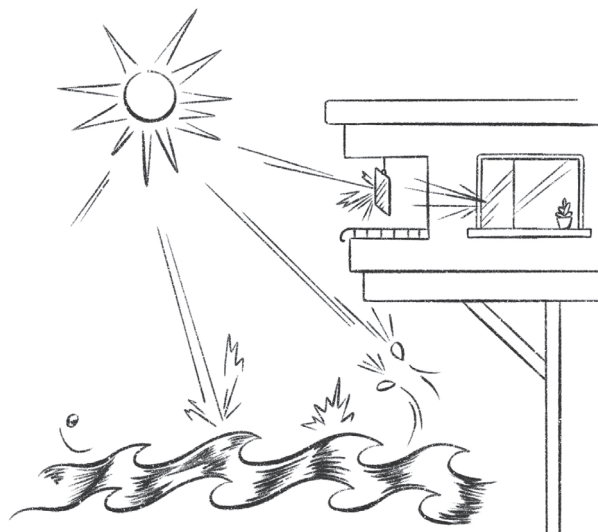
Rayyan asked curiously:

- “Uncle Omar, how does Allah do so many things without having any helpers alongside Him?”



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- “My dear Rayyan, you’ve asked a very good question. We humans, my dears, need help and support from others due to our inadequacy, ignorance, and limitations. But Allah, Who has infinite knowledge and power, is not like that. Allah Almighty is not like the creatures He created and is not similar to them. He doesn’t need anything because He

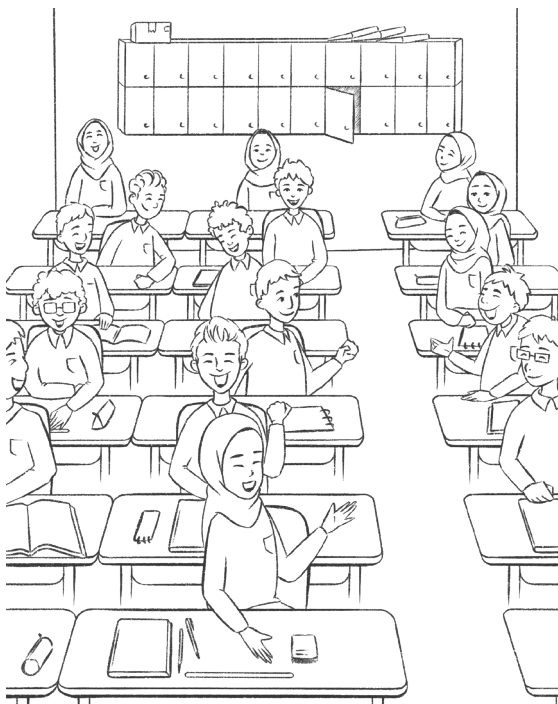


is the One who created all living and non-living things in the first place! Everything exists because He created it, and all creatures continue to exist by His grace. Does Allah, the creator of everything, need His creations? Of course not. Since our Lord’s power is unlimited, He doesn’t need help from anyone else, and since His wealth is unlimited, it’s inconceivable that He would need anyone else.

My dear young friends! I would like to explain this subject with an example. For instance, our sun in the sky is one, yet it has the attribute of being able to reflect on things, and that’s why we see the reflections of the sun on all mirrors, shiny

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objects and water. The sun, in this way, enters all objects like these, warming and illuminating them. Its presence in one of them does not prevent it from entering others. The sun exists in everything it enters with its reflection, heat, and light. It can do this easily in many places at the same time and does not require another sun while performing these tasks. As you can see, even the sun, which is a being created by our Lord, is capable of working in countless places at the same time. Similarly, doing one thing does not prevent Allah Almighty from doing another. Our One and Unique Lord does everything everywhere with perfect ease and without needing anything. Simultaneously, He nourishes a tree at the edge of the earth, feeds a fish in the depths of the seas, and rotates atoms with the same ease He rotates galaxies in their orbits.”



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Rayyan said:

- "Thank you very much, Uncle Omar. Alhamdulillah, you have resolved a question that was stuck in my mind."

In the morning, before the first class, Mr. Yusuf came to the class as the students were starting to run out of patience.

Ali said:

- "Sir, I had a tough time this morning. Please, tell us this news."

Rayyan said:

- "Please sir, what is this news you are going to tell only to our class?"

Mustafa said:

- "Sir, my family at home is also curious to know the news, and I told my grandmother, and she is also excited to know the news."

Mr. Yusuf waited for the class to quiet down and said:

- "I wish you all a good morning, friends! The news is that, at the end of this week, there will be a special conference for middle school students at the Istanbul University of Islam and Science. As your class advisor, I would like you all to participate in this event. Would you like to attend?"

The class erupted in joy, as the students were very excited. The class representative, Sa'id, stood up and said:

- "Yes sir! We would love to come. Right, friends?"

The entire class shouted:

- "Of course, we will come with pleasure."

Mr. Yusuf said:

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- "Quiet down, friends, so we don't disturb other classes!"

Yavuz asked:

- "Sir, what is the topic that the conference will cover?"

Mr. Yusuf replied with a smile:

- "Yes, that's a good and relevant question. The conference is titled 'Sciences Talk About Allah'. I recommend all of you to attend, as it's a great opportunity to strengthen our faith, young friends. To attend this conference is an opportunity to enhance our awareness about faith. In this conference, academics from various disciplines will give short presentations to middle school students, introducing our Lord with examples from everyday life."

The students were overjoyed at the prospect of spending the weekend with their beloved teacher. Additionally, many in the class had never set foot on a university campus before, so they all said "Okay!" and accepted Mr. Yusuf's invitation. On Saturday, they would meet at the Uskudar ferry dock and cross the bosphorus by ferry, then travel to the university in a rented minibus.

### The Trip to the University

The day of the conference arrived with beautiful weather. The families brought their children to the meeting place, entrusting them first to Allah and then to Mr. Yusuf. The students were not in their school uniforms but wore clothes of their choosing. Mr. Yusuf was dressed in a suit over a white shirt. The class representative, Sa'id, checked the list one last time and announced, "The list is complete, sir! Seventeen of us have gathered without any absences, and we are ready!"

The students headed towards the ticket booth to board the ferry. Now on the ferry, they climbed to the upper deck

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to view the sea, the strait, and the sky. The sea was very calm, with the sun's rays hitting its surface, forming a splendid reflection. A gentle breeze played with everyone's hair, and seagulls flew close as if greeting them. The pastry seller on board was shouting, "Simit\* and pastries! Fresh and delicious! Get your pastries here!" The students started buying simit and pastries from him and threw pieces of them to the seagulls who caught the pieces mid-air with unbelievable aerobatics and quickly flew away to eat them. The students and some passengers watched them in amazement, admiring their graceful and precise flight patterns.

Mr. Yusuf said to the students who no longer had pastries to throw:

- "Friends, have you ever thought about how seagulls can manage to fly in the air?"

Ali replied,

- "I never really thought about it, but I'm definitely curious to learn."

Mr. Yusuf said:

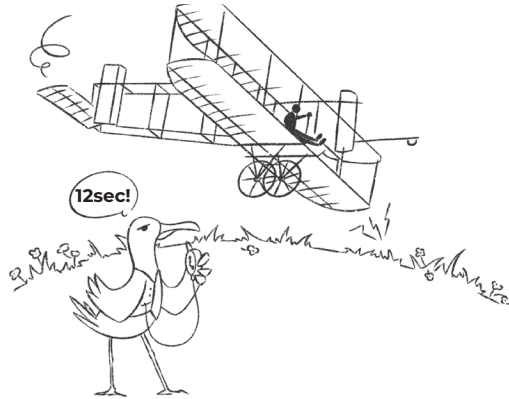
- "It's wonderful that you're curious, Ali, because curiosity is the teacher and tutor of all sciences. Friends! Curiosity drives people to ask questions and to seek answers. The more curiosity we have and the more we question, the more we marvel at the beings around us and, more importantly, our Lord who created them.

We ask questions to get to know a person we only know a little, so that we can know more about him, right? The more we know about that person, the more we love him.

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\* **Simit:** A conventional, round-shaped bread covered with sesame seeds, very common in Türkiye.

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Similarly, we should ask questions to get to know more about our Lord, and contemplate, investigate, and inquire about the creatures that He has created.

Let's give an example of this. This question is for all of you... When did humans build the first winged aeroplane and fly with it?

Nasiba, who was interested in planes and aviation, asked for permission to speak:

- "Teacher, the Wright brothers managed to fly with the propeller plane they built in, if I'm not mistaken, the early 20th century."

Mr. Yusuf praised her:

- "Well done, Nasiba! We humans succeeded in flying with aeroplanes in 1903, just over a hundred years ago. But the first flight by the Wright brothers lasted only 12 seconds, while birds, flies, and bees have been flying for centuries. Now, we need to question: How do these birds fly? Who keeps them in the air? How do birds know the laws of flight that humanity discovered only a few centuries ago? How can they fly without falling or crashing? And how did they acquire this skill without any training?"

Ali jokingly said:

- "Excuse me sir, but some people, when they want to describe someone as less intelligent, say 'they have a bird-brain!'"

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Mr. Yusuf responded:

- “Yes, some people say that, but how did these animals – whose intelligence is belittled by some as you mentioned – manage to fly thousands of years before the smartest creatures on earth, humans? Shouldn't we, as ‘people with human minds’, wonder about this? For example, migratory birds come to our country every year. You know the storks that have been landing on the roof of our school for a long time. How do these birds leave Central Africa and travel thousands of kilometres every year? How do they find their way without a compass or navigation, and without getting lost? Who discovered the compass and navigation devices first, humans or birds?”

Mr. Yusuf continued:

- “My dear friends! Just as our Lord created birds suitable for flying and fish equipped for swimming, He created us humans with the necessary equipment to contemplate the universe and the wonders of creation in it. For this reason, He gave us a high intelligence and noble emotions that He did not give to animals.”

The ferry was slowly approaching the pier, and all the passengers started walking towards the exit stairs. Meanwhile, the seagulls following the ferry flew joyfully, spreading and then closing their wings as if they wanted to say something.

### **Laws Are Proof That There Is a Law-Maker**

After disembarking from the ferry, they gathered again. Every student looked at their friend beside them; the class was complete. Not far from the pier, they saw a small white bus.

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- “Do you want to run and race to that white minibus?”

The energetic students replied all together,

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- "Why not, teacher!"

- "Alright," he said, "I'll give two pieces of chocolate to the first boy and girl who touch the minibus."

And the race began. They ran about two hundred and fifty metres, and something unusual happened. Surprisingly, Ali, who usually had the upper hand in such races, wasn't running. Instead, he was pulling things out of his bag. What's this? My goodness, Ali had brought his roller skates! He quickly put them on and joined the race.

The students were running at full speed, the competition was intense. The boys were led by Sa'id, and among the girls, Betul was in the lead. Ali, on his roller skates, was closing in on them. However, in the last fifty metres, Ibrahim and Rayyan took the lead and were the first to touch the minibus. Ali touched the bus at the same time as Said, who was shocked by the turn of events.

Then Mr. Yusuf followed them and said,

- "You were like the wind, kids, Ma Shaa Allah! But Ali, we won't count your touch on the bus because you didn't abide by the rules."

The students agreed:

- "You're right, teacher. The rules bind us all, and we must follow them."

Then Mr. Yusuf took out the two pieces of chocolate he had prepared earlier from his pocket and handed them to Rayyan and Ibrahim, the winners of the race. The students had gotten a bit tired, but some action had felt good. Ibrahim, panting a little said





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happily after receiving his gift:

- "Teacher, the chocolate is delicious, but receiving it as a gift from your hand is even sweeter."

Then Hasan interjected:

- "Teacher, our friend Ibrahim understood yesterday's lesson well, I think. You see, he is not looking 'at' the gift, but 'through' the gift."

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- "You're both right. It's great to apply what you learn in everyday life. Now we have a long way ahead of us, so let's talk about this on the minibus."

The doors of the minibus closed after several checks to see if anyone was missing, and they set off for the university. Then Mr. Yusuf asked the bus driver for permission and took the portable microphone that could broadcast in the bus, and said:

- "Dear friends, I wish you a pleasant journey! We have about forty minutes to our destination, and if the traffic continues to flow like this, we hope to arrive on time for the program, but pray for it so that we will be able to In Shaa Allah. As you know, traffic in Istanbul is full of surprises."

From one of the back seats, Ali called out:

- "Teacher, you said we would talk about the chocolate gift on the bus."

Mr. Yusuf responded:

- "Alright, let's talk, friends. Let's imagine we all go through a time tunnel and visit Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan, may Allah grant him paradise, who ordered the construction of our school. Would you be happy if the Sultan gave each of us beautiful pens with our names on it?"

Ali replied:

- "Who wouldn't be happy about that, sir? Of course, we'd

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be very happy.”

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- “Would you be happier about receiving the pen or about receiving this gift from the Sultan’s hand?”

Rayyan said:

- “About receiving this gift from the Sultan’s hand, sir.”

Mr. Yusuf explained:

- “True, if the happiness the pen provides is one thing, receiving the pen from the Sultan’s hand multiplies that happiness by a hundred times. When the Sultan presents you with a gift, it shows that he loves and appreciates you.

This is how the blessings from our Lord work, my dear students. For instance, eating an orange normally gives us a sense of worldly pleasure. But when we think about the fact that that orange is a gift to us from Allah, that is, when we remember our Lord, suddenly the pleasure we get from it is magnified a hundredfold. Contemplating about the fact that our Lord—who very much cares for us and has mercy on us—is fulfilling our needs, brings us closer to Him.”

The journey continued with pleasant conversations. They stopped at a suitable place along the way to refuel, and traffic was sometimes congested and sometimes clear. Suddenly, a bus recklessly sped past them, endangering other vehicles in traffic, and unfortunately, it caused an accident ahead. Traffic came to a halt, drivers began arguing, so the atmosphere needed calming.

Mr. Yusuf, along with the bus driver, got off the bus to try to calm the situation. He asked them to stop arguing and to place hazard signs on the road and called the traffic police. The hazard signs were important because, God forbid, other vehicles could come and collide with the stopped

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vehicles. The drivers calmed down a bit and did as Mr. Yusuf suggested. There was a small child in the car involved in the accident, crying out of fear. All the students in the minibus expressed their most sincere good wishes to the child and his family and prayed for their speedy recovery. The students were watching the unfolding events from inside the minibus.

Rayyan opened the minibus window and said:

- "Sir, I haven't eaten the chocolate I won in the race. Maybe I can give it to the little boy."

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- "Please do, Rayyan. It's a kind thought. I will offer it to him and see."

The boy accepted the gift, then his mother opened the chocolate and fed it to her son, bringing a slight smile to the child's face.

The driver of the speeding bus was indeed at fault and aware of his mistake.

Then they got on the minibus again and started proceeding to their destination. Despite the occasionally heavy traffic, thankfully, they were moving safely.

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "You see, friends, how harmful haste and irresponsibility can be. God forbid, a more dangerous accident could have occurred."

The minibus driver added:

- "Sir, it's good that we got out and helped them. Otherwise, the argument could have led to more negative consequences."

- "We are Muslims, Mr. Driver, and this is our responsibility. We cannot ignore the problems and troubles of society. When we see a problem, we try to help with our hands and

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tongues. If we can't do anything, we pray to Allah for our people. There are some fires which can be extinguished with just a cup of water, but if everyone says why should I care and ignores it, it will grow and potentially engulf everyone."

The traffic lightened a bit, making the journey smoother now.

Alif, softly said: -

- "Sir, my mother sent some Turkish delight with me for you all to enjoy, I had forgotten to mention it because of the accident. May I share it with you and everyone else?"

Mr Yusuf responded:

- "Of course, Alif. As the Turkish proverb goes, 'Let's eat sweets so our words will be sweet!' Good timing right after that accident."

Alif took out two large boxes of Turkish delight from her bag and handed one to the boys at the back. The other was for the girls at the front along with the bus driver. Ali opened the box and expressed his joy saying:

- "Wow, what a treasure!."

It sure did look like a treasure inside the box. There were many kinds of Turkish delight each with a different flavour and colour.

All the students thanked Alif and her mother and began to enjoy the Turkish delight from both boxes with great pleasure. Mr. Yusuf also thanked Alif and her family, then took the microphone again and opened a new door for contemplation.

- "My friends, as you see, we have just witnessed an accident. Every vehicle on the road has an adult driver. Humans who have the gift of intellect can only use these vehicles after receiving specific training. Driving licences are not issued to those under eighteen and to those who cannot pass the driving test successfully. Traffic laws and signs, as

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well as lights, have been set up everywhere. Our police make continuous efforts for inspection and surveillance. There are also electronic camera systems in places where there is no police presence. Despite such precautions, accidents still happen, and we have just witnessed one of them.”

Ahmad asked for permission to speak and said:

- “Sir, are traffic laws the same everywhere in our country?”
- “Yes, Ahmad, the traffic laws are the same everywhere in our country. The traffic laws applied throughout our nation confirm the existence of our government and also show that there are no multiple governments in this land but just one. This is because if there is a law laid down in one place, that rule is evidence of a lawmaker who established that law. Laws and rules do not come into existence by themselves. If a law operates in the same way everywhere, it indicates that this law originated from the same source.

Now let’s think about this! The stars, planets, and moons that move in space do so according to a rule and law. Now, who established these rules and laws that the celestial bodies follow? When scientific awards are given to scientists who discover these laws, shouldn’t we think and question “Who set these laws and who is implementing them constantly in an organised manner everywhere?” And how do these celestial bodies move in such an orderly manner without colliding with each other? Who determines their paths? Or do they have drivers?”

Hasan chimed in,

- “Planets and stars don’t have drivers, sir!”
- “Exactly, Hasan. So, by whose power and whose knowledge do these celestial bodies move so regularly? How can these massive, lifeless, mindless bodies without drivers avoid colliding with each other, despite their different speeds,

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sizes, and completely different orbital paths and rotational directions? Isn't this astonishing?

Sa'id said:

- "Sir, there are driverless vehicles, drones and even trains that run with artificial intelligence."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "You are right, Said, good point! Are there experts who plan and design those vehicles that are driven without humans being on them?"

- "Of course, sir."

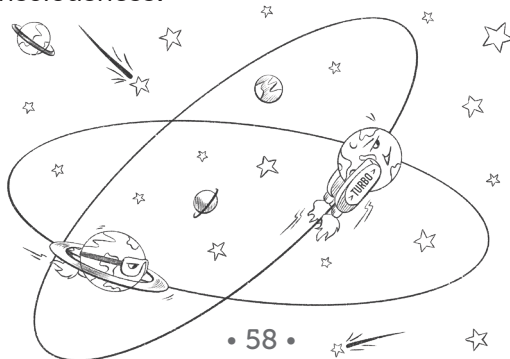
- "Are there software engineers who write hundreds of thousands of lines of code for them?"

- "Yes, there are."

- "Are there management engineers who manage those vehicles according to their job definitions?"

- "Yes, there are, sir."

- "My dear friends, this high-level technology is only available in eight or ten countries in the world. So, this is a fairly new technology that humans have only recently invented. But what about the celestial bodies in space? They succeed in these tasks although they are not experts or engineers in this field, and their movements are very deliberate despite lacking consciousness."



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Unmanned vehicles, drones, and trains are human inventions. They operate according to programming and rules set by humans. These machines don't move randomly but follow specific instructions given by us. Now, let's think about the universe. If stars, planets, and moons move according to precise rules, who set these rules? Who is managing this grand system? There must be a powerful, knowledgeable Creator who established these rules and governs the universe accordingly."

Mustafa, a student interested in space science, joined the conversation and said:

- "Yes sir, we should study and research celestial bodies like planets, stars, comets, and black-holes. May I share something that has me thinking about this topic?"

Mr. Yusuf handed him the portable microphone and said:

- "Of course, take the microphone so everyone can hear you better."

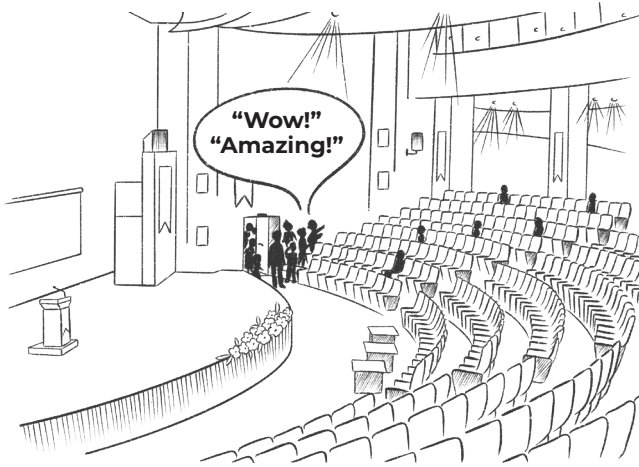
- "Sir, we just refuelled our vehicle, and we will travel with this fuel for a certain period of time. When the fuel runs out, the driver will stop somewhere again and refill the tank. Two astonishing questions came to my mind about this. First, how do the celestial bodies you mentioned never run out of fuel with all that travelling they do? Second, how do these bodies follow their specific paths without harming each other? It's hard not to be impressed by that."

Mr. Yusuf nodded in agreement with Mustafa's opinion.

### **The Islamic Scientific University**

They arrived at the university and passed under the majestic entrance gate of the university. After entering the university campus, they began to look around inside. There were very large buildings on the campus, big glass-clad

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buildings, extensive green spaces, and wide roads leading to various faculties. And all these places were filled with university students who were older than them. So they were looking everywhere with amazement, since this place was nothing like a primary, middle or high school which they were used to.

They followed the signs and headed towards the hall where the conference would be held. This lecture hall was next to the library. Although they only saw it from afar, this library spiked the interest of Betul very much, not only because she was among the most avid readers of the class, but also because it was the most impressive building they had seen on the campus: A two story building with many windows and with an eye-catching,, modern, and imposing architectural design that drew you to see what was inside.

While Betul was admiring the entrance door of the library, she noticed an interesting detail. Written on the door was the first commandment from our holy book: **“Read in the name of your Lord who created”** (Surah Alaq, Verse 1). Betul said to Mr. Yusuf:

- “Can I ask a question, teacher?”



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Mr. Yusuf replied compassionately,

- "Of course you can!"

- "What should we understand from this verse written on the entrance to the library? It got my attention."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "I commend your interest, Betul. I hope we will get an answer to this question at the conference, and there is only a little time left before it starts. If you want, let's leave the answer to this question for the conference!"

The program was scheduled to start at 10 am, and the hall where the conference would be held slowly began to fill. It was truly beautiful, with excellent lighting and ventilation, and its stage was very spacious. The podium and the seats seemed very comfortable. The seats were designed in such a way that no one would obstruct anyone's view. The students began to talk amongst themselves, with some expressing their admiration by saying "Amazing!" and others "What a majestic hall!".

Ali said:

- "What is this place, teacher? We are happy that we came!"

Mr. Yusuf replied:

- "Wait, Ali. The program hasn't started yet. Let's talk about it after the program, shall we?"

Other middle school students from different schools were entering the hall. Mr. Yusuf greeted some of the university staff there and spoke with them. Then Mr. Yusuf and his students sat in their designated section in the second row. The program would soon start; they waited a little while for the sound systems to be adjusted and the hall's system to be checked.

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The presenter of the program came on stage as everyone was eagerly waiting.

The presenter began his speech by reciting the Basmala and outlined the program's schedule. The program began with a recitation of the Holy Qur'ân. The person who recited the Qur'ân was a young hafiz who had won first place in a competition for the most beautiful Qur'ânic recitation. He recited verses from Surah Al-Isra that were relevant to the conference's theme. The Arabic originals, along with the Turkish and English translations, of the recited verses were displayed on the giant screen on stage. The English translation on the screen was: **"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."** (Surah Isra', Verse 44). This verse caught everyone's attention, indicating that all beings praise and glorify our Lord.

## The Harmony Between Islam and Science

After the national anthem was played, the conference's opening speech began. It was scheduled to be delivered by the Vice-Chancellor of the university, who started his speech by greeting all the guests with a warm "Welcome!" and then continued as follows:

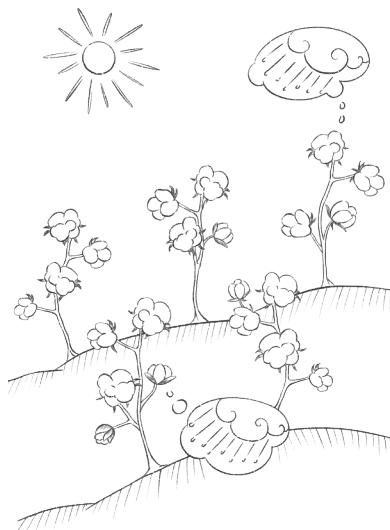
- "Dear students! I spent my childhood in Çukurova. Tell me, what crop is Çukurova famous for?"

The students replied in unison: "Cotton!"

- "Yes, it's cotton. We were a family primarily engaged in cotton farming, and so I want us to reflect on the cotton plant together.

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As a child, I used to wonder: How does the pure, soft, smooth, lightweight white cotton, which is the raw material for textiles, emerge from black soil? This situation led me to amazement, and I wondered what was inside that black soil that turned into that bright white cotton. Was there a paint factory in the soil? Moreover, how could the delicate cotton fibres come out of that hard and rough soil? As you know, cotton is the raw material for



textiles. Could the soil that grows cotton know what fabric and clothing are? In addition, cooking oil is also made from cotton seeds, the cottonseed oil that our mothers use in the kitchen. Is there an oil factory in the soil, I wonder? And where did the soil learn to make the cottonseed oil which is very healthy for us? Could the soil know what health is? I used to think about such questions... For cotton to form, soil, water, air, and sun must come together. When I was a child, I thought with my child's mind, "Do they agree among themselves to come together like this? And how do they understand and agree with each other to achieve a common goal? Then I would say, "But they don't have the mind or consciousness to do that. They can't know about the clothing that humans need or they can't know about the oil we need when making potato chips...

Yes, dear young ones! All the needs of humans are sent to them from where they least expect. And when we think about it, there can be two answers to the question of how these needs are met: Either we say that inanimate objects

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like soil, water, sun, and air know us and love us, so they pity our neediness and give us what we need, or we say there is a Being who knows and loves humans, who is merciful, omnipotent, and that Being meets our needs at the right time without forgetting or erring. We will get the answer to this question at the end of this conference.”

The Vice-Chancellor paused for a moment. He looked silently at the students and said these thought-provoking words,

“Dear young ones, there is harmony between our beautiful religion, Islam, and science, because the universe, which is the field of study of science, is Allah’s creation in all its aspects. And Islam is the religion sent by Allah to people through our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore, there is a harmony between religion and science. The Qur’ân and Hadith , the two main sources of Islam, encourage the acquisition of knowledge and highly praise scholars. Thus, Islam attaches great importance to research and observation. Islam is a religion of knowledge, and Islamic civilization is a civilization of knowledge.



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All sciences, such as medical sciences, space sciences, and earth sciences, examine and observe things and actions created by our Lord in the universe. They exist to research the laws that Allah has established in the universe. Every science tells us about Allah and speaks of Him in its own language, and we will have the opportunity today to listen to these languages from various lecturers throughout the conference. For this reason, when we are observing the universe, we should not forget its Creator, Allah Almighty. Although we are not able to see Him physically, we should get to know about Him through His creation that we can see. Once again, I welcome you and am pleased to inform you that such diverse programs will continue, and I wish you all success in life. Stay well!

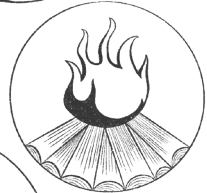
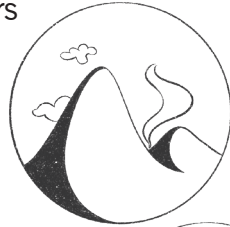
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After the Vice-Chancellor sat down amidst warm applause, the program host said,

- “And now, I invite our first lecturer, Assistant Professor, Dr. Erdem, one of the professors of engineering and technology sciences, to the stage. The floor is yours respected professor!” and he handed the microphone to Dr. Erdem.

### The Mind Works with Evidence

- “Dear young ones, let me share an experience from life with you. Let’s assume we are near a mountain and we see smoke rising behind it. Then we say, ‘There is a fire there.’ Although we can’t clearly see the fire, the rising smoke from there is evidence of its existence. If we climb the mountain and see the fire with our own eyes,



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our knowledge of the fire's existence will increase even more. And finally, if we go to the fire and benefit from it and warm ourselves by it, the fire's existence becomes absolutely certain to us.



Just like that when we see a building like this one, we acknowledge that there must be an engineer who built it. Even if we haven't seen the engineer with our eyes, the features of the building are evidence of the engineer's existence. When we hear a song, we are certain that it cannot be the result of random sounds coming together by chance to create it. These are all truths we deduce using our minds because the mind needs evidence and proof to be reassured."

### **The Invisibility of the Maker Doesn't Mean Things Are Formed by Chance**

"Dear friends, one of the first things we wonder when we see a beautiful building is who built it, right? For instance, when we see magnificent structures like the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul or the Dolmabahçe Palace, we wonder about the architects of these edifices because we know in our minds that it's impossible for such magnificent structures to come into existence on their own.

Dear young ones! Now I ask you all, could this conference hall have come into existence by itself?"

Shouts of "No!" echoed through the hall, with Ali's voice being the loudest.

- "If someone claimed that this conference hall came into existence by chance, wouldn't you doubt their sanity?"

The entire hall responded in unison once again: "Yes."

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Then Mr. Erdem invited Hasan, one of the students sitting in the front, to the stage. He asked him his name and said,

- “Dear Hasan! What would you do if someone claimed that this conference hall was created by chance?”

Hasan answered,

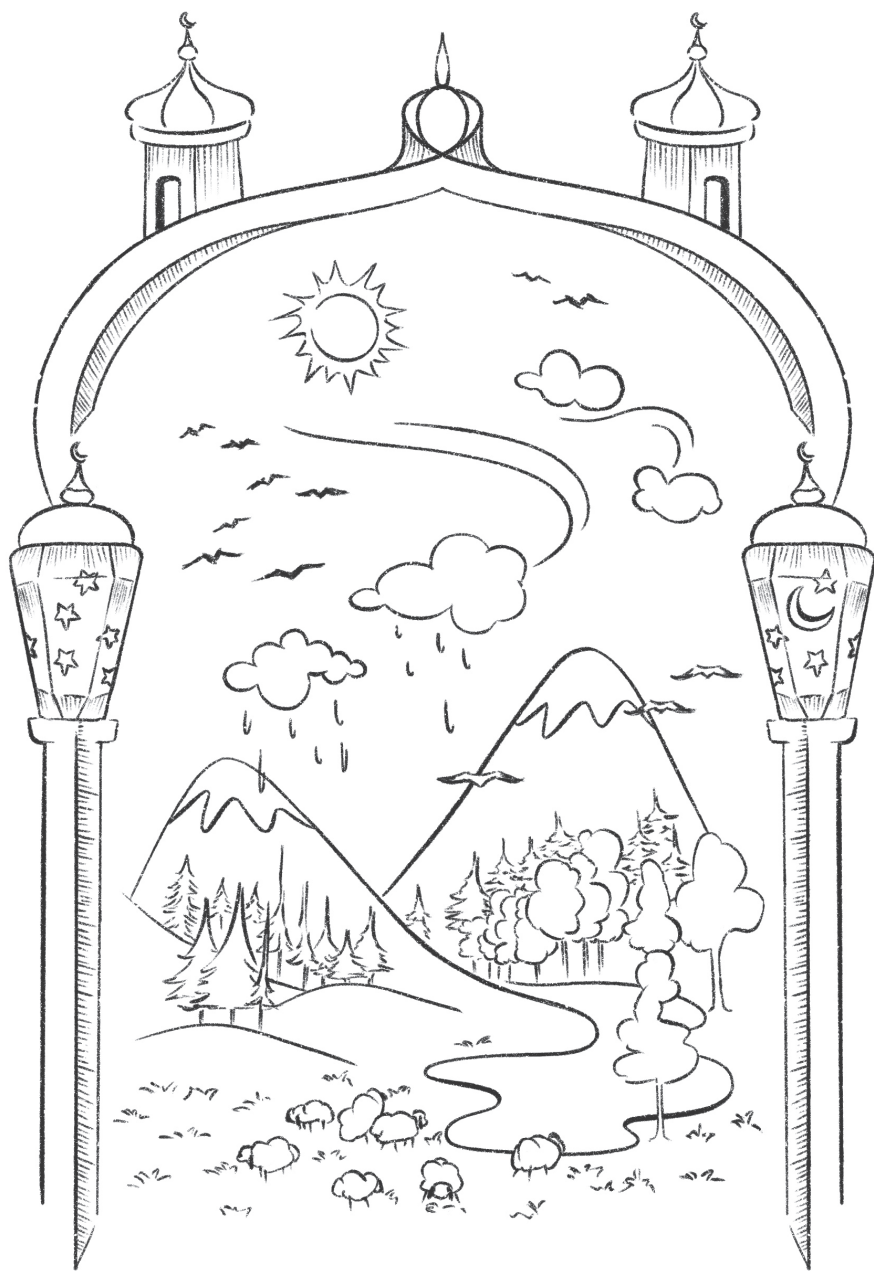
- “I would say that such a beautiful architectural building must have a maker. A building like this cannot form by chance. If I knew its architect, I would introduce him to that person.”

Mr. Erdem thanked Hasan and sent him back to his seat, then continued his speech with a smile,

- “Dear friends, I am both an architect and a civil engineer, educated in both fields. By the way, I am the engineer Hasan just said he would introduce. As engineers, we draw the plans of buildings before their construction — planning everything in it down to the finest detail. We took the inspiration to create this hall from the Earth, the world in which we humans live comfortably and easily. We tried to prepare the lighting, ventilation, sturdiness, and sound system of the hall by imitating the wonderful examples from our world.

Therefore, we first considered the purpose of this hall before building it. We decided how big it should be, and we planned its ventilation to be cool in the summer and warm in the winter, just like the seasons. We made calculations for lighting and positioning so that the stage would be visible from every seat in the hall. We then designed the interior decor, the walls, and the floors artistically. We also paid great attention to the sound system that spreads throughout the hall. And particularly, we took special precautions against potential earthquakes and fires, allowing us to build this conference hall with very precise engineering calculations.

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### Our World Is Like a Luxurious Palace!

Now let's think together, isn't this Earth we live on like a luxurious building? It's like a majestic palace, with its intensely blue sky as the roof of this palace, glittering with the sun during the day and with the moon and stars at night. Its base is adorned from one end to the other with ever-renewing trees and flowers; it is land that pulses with life. Our sun is like both the lamp and heater of this palace. Dear young friends, does anyone have a lamp in their house or school that hangs in the air without being connected to anything and which continuously rotates in an orderly manner?"

The students shouted:

- "No," indicating that the lamp must be fixed somewhere.

Mr. Erdem said:

- "Our sun rotates even though it's a giant lamp. Despite being large enough to contain one million three hundred thousand celestial bodies the size of our Earth, it continuously moves through the vacuum of space. There's no column beneath it, nor is it tied to anything. It constantly rotates and moves the other planets around it, sending us the light and warmth we need without asking for any payment.

What about the winds in our world; aren't they like air conditioners that work to cool living beings and distribute clean air to those who need it? The winds also carry rain-bearing clouds from place to place, and they help plants reproduce by distributing pollen everywhere.

Then there are the mountains, another beauty, filled with minerals and therapeutic waters we need, while acting as very firm pillars of our world.

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Dear friends, I would like to conclude my talk as follows: While it's obvious that even a simple house or ordinary building cannot be built by chance, our world, resembling a magnificent palace, cannot exist by chance either, nor can it attain such excellence, such beauty, by itself. Our world was built by Allah, who cares for us and proves His love for us through the blessings He created for us. Our world introduces us to our Lord through its plan, system, seasons, artistic structure, wonderful natural sceneries, and so on. Now, I thank you for your attention and wish you all success in your future.”

The students who listened to the presentation then discussed it amongst themselves, expressing their pleasure by saying to each other, “It’s good that we came!”

### **The Mysterious Language of Beings**

The presenter took the stage again and said:

- “And now, I would like to invite another speaker to the stage to deliver a speech on ‘The Mysterious Language of Beings’”

A professor in communications ascended the stage and said:

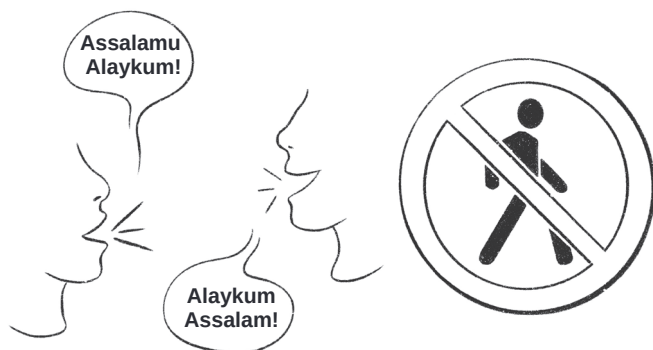
- “Dear students, perhaps there is no one among us who has not heard the word ‘communication’. Communication has a very important place in all our lives. We humans transmit our emotions, information, and thoughts to others through verbal or non-verbal communication. Verbal communication is the communication we do through our language and words, while non-verbal communication is through our body language and state. For example, smiling at someone when we meet them expresses our sincerity and happiness.

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Dear young ones, we can discern if a person is happy or unhappy, joyful or angry, excited or calm, by looking at their face, body language, and behaviour at that moment. Even though the person may not say it verbally, they say a lot through their body language.

Also, a doctor's white coat or stethoscope around their neck, a lawyer's robe worn during a court session, and a commander's military uniform with a gun on their waist belt, communicate what their professions are without needing words.

My dear young friends, sometimes a person can say a lot by



choosing to remain silent and using his language of state. Through opting for silence, he may achieve more than he could with words. That is why it is said in the proverb: 'Speech is silver, silence is golden.' If we look carefully, we can see that there are many elements of non-verbal communication in life.

For example, the things that catch our attention such as warning signs, traffic signs, traffic lights and even the colours of things send messages to us without words and communicate with us. Our phone charger communicates

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with us in its language of state, saying, ‘You can charge your battery with me!’ But it also tells us that it cannot charge every device. The yellow taxi passing by on the road tells you, “You can travel with me from one place to another!” Also, a wall clock talks to us numerous times a day without using words,, reminding us of time and its passage.”

### **I’m Communicating With You, Are You Aware?**

“Dear young ones, just like the examples I mentioned, all beings have the ability to communicate with us through their language of state, a quality given to them by Allah Almighty. It’s much easier to understand a person whose language we know, and similarly, if we can understand the language of the state of existent things in the universe, we can easily understand what our Creator wants to tell us through those beings and things.

All beings act as intermediaries in the messages that our Lord wants us to acknowledge. They speak to us in their unique language of state, telling us about Allah, their Creator, and introducing us to Him. This is known as speaking in “the language of state,” through which existent things tell us about our Lord through the characteristics they have and don’t have. For example, the sight of an ignorant man accomplishing a task that requires great knowledge is something that should make us contemplate and wonder. Because his ignorance tells us that he is not the one who actually accomplishes that task.

A powerless and unable person achieving success in a task that requires great power tells us something, does it not? Their powerlessness informs us that it is actually someone else with great power who did that work which requires great power. And if we see a wonderful artistic work done by someone who has no idea about art and beauty, we must

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realise that we are facing a situation that needs further scrutiny. Here, each being in the universe says to us: 'O son of Adam! I am communicating with you through my language of state, are you aware of it?'



Dear friends, for example, the fact that the bee, a venomous insect, gives us sweet and healing honey is a message to us. The flower sends us the following messages in its language of state: "The beauty in me can only be created by Allah, who created me and also created the soil, water, and light.



I am evidence of my Creator's existence, His unity, and His attributes. We flowers who emerge from the soil belong to the one who owns the soil. All the flowers in the world, like me, receive light from the same sun and benefit from the same air, so the owner of the sun is also our owner."

Dear young ones, a person who looks at beings with the light that faith brings notices that all beings speak to us in their own language, and he can understand this language in the universe.

Thank you for listening attentively to me. I wish you all a happy and successful future.

The hall erupted with applause again. The students realised that existent things communicate with humans without words. After this presentation, there was a presentation by a professor of fine arts, but first, there was a 30-minute break. The students wondered what the next speaker would talk about. They had been taking important notes from all the speakers' speeches and trying to listen as attentively as possible.

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### **An Ignorant Person Cannot Perform a Task That Requires Knowledge**

In this break they were given, everyone went out to the foyer (the break area). Some students asked permission from Mr. Yusuf and headed towards the food and drink vending machine in the right corner of the area. They were a bit thirsty and hungry. The vending machine was filled with items like water, soft drinks, and biscuits. When you insert coins in the appropriate slot, the food or drink you select is dispensed from the bottom section. Mr. Yusuf was observing them from a distance and said to the students beside him,

- “Let’s join your friends.”

So, everyone went to the vending machine together. There was no such machine in their school, so some of the students were curiously observing it.

Mr. Yusuf said,

- “Could this machine be an example of the non-verbal communication that our professor just explained?”

Mustafa replied,

- “Yes, it might be, Mr. Yusuf, because this vending machine communicates in the language of its state. It says, ‘If you want water from me, I can give you water. If you want biscuits, I can give you biscuits. If you want chocolate, I can give you chocolate.’”

Mr. Yusuf responded,

- “That’s true. Does anyone else have any thoughts?”

Betul said,

- “Sir, this machine does not have intelligence or consciousness, so how can it know that we need water and

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food? Someone who knows humans and their needs has placed this machine here.”

Sa'id, the class representative, commented:

- “Sir, if no one fills this machine’s contents, it won’t be able to give anything.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

- “That’s very true. You all have really understood the concept of non-verbal communication through the language of states of beings. As you know, the communications professor who just presented said, “Seeing an ignorant person do something that requires knowledge is a situation that calls for thought.” And now we quench our thirst through this vending machine. Is this lifeless machine the one that provides us water and quenches us? Is it possible for this machine, empty of all senses, to know our desire to taste sweet things? Of course, it cannot know. So, shouldn’t we look into its source? Aren’t the same questions raised in regard to soil? How does the soil know we are hungry? Can the soil or water know that giving us wheat will satisfy and make us happy?”

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The students unanimously said:

- “Of course, they cannot know, sir, because they don’t have such a capability.”

- “Exactly, they are just intermediaries, through which blessings come from the treasury of mercy of our Lord. Allah sends blessings from His limitless treasury of mercy, filling the dry branches of trees, which look like grand skeletons in winter, with fresh fruits in spring. This happens every year because the treasury of mercy of Allah is inexhaustible. While if no one fills this vending machine, it cannot give us anything on its own.”

Rayyan said:

- “Sir, is it not also the same with ATMs that dispense money?”

- “Yes, it is the same, Rayyan. An ATM doesn’t know your need for money. Knowing our needs cannot be done by things that lack consciousness, intellect and emotion. Can an ATM dispense money if no one supplies it with cash?”

### **No Painting Without a Painter**

The break ended, and the students took their seats in the hall again. The presenter took the stage and invited the professor of fine arts to the podium. The professor, who appeared to be in his fifties, walked onto the stage amid applause and began speaking slowly. He said he would deliver his speech while walking around on the stage, not by standing still at the podium. A painting was displayed on the giant screen on the stage.

In the picture was an oil painting, with various colourful butterflies fluttering over flowers. The fine arts professor said,

- “I would like to invite a volunteer student from among you to the stage, as I would like to interpret this painting with them.”



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Hearing this, Rayyan, the artist of the class, immediately raised her hand and caught the professor's eye. As she also was sitting close to the stage, the fine arts professor quickly invited her saying, "Please come up." Rayyan got excited as she was walking to the stage. Various thoughts like 'I sure do love painting. But interpreting a painting alongside a university professor!?' were swirling in her head." She stood beside the professor, who first congratulated her on her confidence, and then asked her name, also telling her to feel at ease.

- "Okay, Rayyan. Now, let's evaluate this beautiful painting together. What does the painting tell us? Let's comment on it together."

- "Okay, I'll try. I see butterflies painted on the canvas, each butterfly is very beautiful, artistic, and different from each other. There's also a clear sky in the background, and there are colourful flowers and trees too. The butterflies are flying, and there's also a painting palette, on which I see paints and brushes of different sizes."

- "Very good description, Rayyan. Do you think this painting could have formed by itself?"

- "Not at all, that's unimaginable! Only a skilled painter could make this beautiful painting. We can even see that the painter has signed his name at the bottom of the painting."

- "That's right, and the painter's name is clear in his signature. Of course, a painter made this painting because there is no painting without a painter, and no sculpture exists without a sculptor. This beautiful painting was made as a result of the feelings and skills of a talented painter. Dear Rayyan, I want to ask you another question. Do you think the colours in the painting could have splattered

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randomly left and right to create these different butterfly shapes?”

- “No, that’s impossible!”

- “Why?”

- “Because an organised shape cannot result from randomly scattered colours, and the colours don’t have the talent to paint this picture...”

- “Congratulations, Rayyan, you are correct. The inanimate colours used in the making of a painting cannot be the painters of that painting. Moreover, the brush used in the painting cannot possess the skills of a painter. The exact same goes for the canvas too.”

Then the fine arts professor turned again to the audience and began to explain.

- “My dear young friends, if you allow me, I would first like to make a confession.”

The audience in the hall, especially Rayyan, became very excited.

The professor continued:

- “I too draw pictures of butterflies sometimes. I take a butterfly as a model, look at it, study it carefully, and then start to draw it. I start with the first wing, but when drawing the other wing, I have to be even more careful and attentive.”



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Rayyan asked curiously:

- “Why do you have to be careful and attentive when drawing the other wing?”

The professor replied with a smile:

- “When I draw the other wing of the butterfly, I do so by measuring and looking at the first wing. This requires attention and care because both wings of the butterfly have the same symmetry, excellent order, and precise measure.”

As the fine arts professor explained these things, the young artist Rayyan nodded in agreement with his words, based on her own experience in drawing and painting.

### **The Creator Cannot Be of the Same Kind as the Creation**

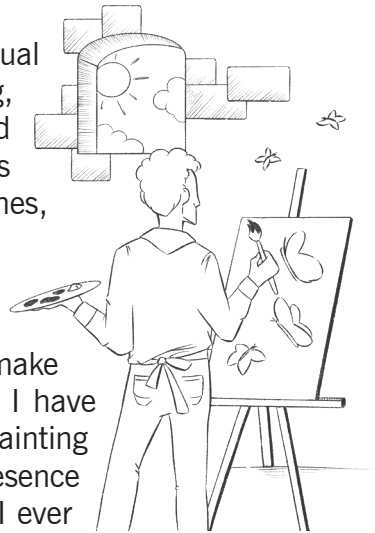
The fine arts teacher thanked Rayyan and asked her to return to her seat.

- “Yes, dear friends, we have all seen that there is no, and there cannot ever be, a painting without a painter. When we look at the process of creating a painting, we notice two elements: an object—that is, the painting—and a subject—that is, the painter who painted it. The painting is the effect, the thing acted upon, and the painter is the do-er, the person who painted, coloured and adjusted the measurements of the painting. The painter must possess certain high-level skills. There can be a painter without a painting, but a painting cannot come into existence without a painter. A crucial point here is that the painter is not of the same kind as the painting; the do-er is not of the same nature as the effect. The do-er must possess different, higher-level qualities. The painter needs a lot of knowledge and the ability to apply

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it, such as understanding of light, visual perspective, three-dimensional thinking, and colour harmony to measure and draw the picture. These characteristics are not present in the paintings, brushes, or colours.

The same applies to sculptures. Even an ordinary statue cannot come into existence on its own. No statue can make itself, and as a professor of fine arts, I have never witnessed colours and brushes painting a picture by themselves without the presence of a living, sensible painter, nor have I ever encountered a hammer capable of sculpting a statue by itself, and nor has anyone.”



The professor continued:

- “So, let’s think together about a real butterfly. Yes, a real butterfly flies and breathes. It has a respiratory system, its wings flutter and it almost never stops moving. Moreover, it has a circulatory system — it needs such a system so that it can pump blood to keep its wings fluttering continuously. It also needs a digestive system to grow and develop, as well as many other systems and organs for its movement and vitality, especially for interacting with the world and searching for its daily sustenance. We had just said that even drawing a lifeless butterfly on paper can only be done by an expert, right? So, how can a living, vibrant butterfly come into existence without a creator?”

A friend of mine from the Science Department will answer this question and explain it to you. I’d like to give him the floor now. Thank you for listening attentively, and take care.”

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The host presenter reappeared on the stage, thanked the fine arts professor for his beautiful presentation, and invited the science professor to the podium. The science professor, although elderly, was full of vitality. He greeted the audience in the hall with a resonant voice and displayed a text on the screen. Something was written on the screen that was difficult to understand.

### **!Tsitra Delliks a Eb ot Sdeen Ereht, Ylfrettub a Gniward rof Neve**

The professor asked everyone in the hall:

- "What do you think is written here? Everyone looked at the written words, but they were unable to answer.

Suddenly, a student sitting in the front rows from another school said,

- "I've got it!"

The science professor encouraged him:

- "Go ahead, my son."

The student said:

- "It's written 'Even for drawing a butterfly, there needs to be a skilled artist'," which was indeed what was written.

The professor congratulated the young man and praised him, then continued:

- "I wrote the sentence in reverse to capture your attention. Bravo, you found the solution quickly. My young friends, I want to continue where my colleague left off. As you know, just as we have butterflies fluttering about in the day, we have moths doing so at night. These two kinds of insects look similar and, scientifically, they belong to the same order of winged insects called Lepidoptera, but they have their differences. Did you know that there are

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one hundred and fifty thousand species of butterflies and moths? A living, colourful, and flying butterfly or moth has numerous connections with the environment it lives in. For instance, butterflies need sunlight to find their way and direction. And for both butterflies and moths to be able to fly untroubled, they need the law of gravity, hence they have connections with it. And they also have a close relationship with flowers and pollen. Butterflies that live for a month or two don't receive flying lessons from anyone and can fly without knowing the laws of aviation. And as for moths, their olfactory and auditory systems are especially astonishing and highly sensitive, with some species able to smell other moths from a distance of 5 kilometres.

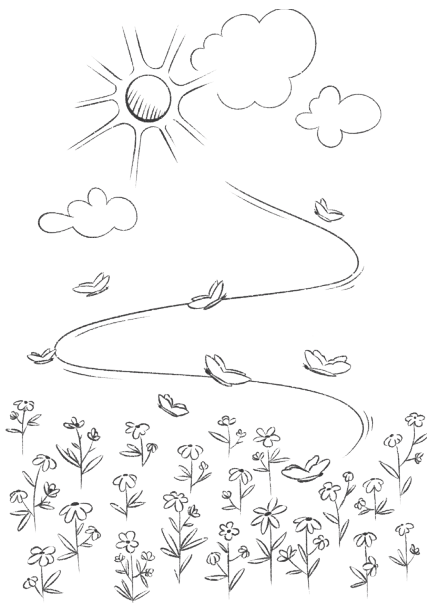
My dear friends, whoever creates or makes the butterflies and moths must possess the qualities I mentioned earlier. Firstly, he must know all the environments related to their lives and design it accordingly, as those butterflies and moths are designed to live in those systems and environments. He must understand the relationship between the butterfly and the sun, and between the moth and Earth's gravity. A being who does not understand these matters cannot be the creator of the butterfly.

Dear friends, creatures like flies, butterflies and moths are not created as a single specimen of their species as well. Rather they are created in absolutely immense numbers and also in very short spans of time. But despite being created in such large numbers and in such rapidity, they bear the same precise forms, perfection, and artistic beauty. Each one of them is like a work of art.

## Everything Is Connected to Everything Else

For the butterfly to be able to live, get nourished and fly, everything that it needs must be given to its service. So, whoever owns the butterfly also owns the sun. Because the butterfly needs the sun with all its light and heat to live, to see, to find food, and to warm itself. There is a coherence

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in the universe; everything is connected to everything else. The vision, flight, and life of every living being are linked to countless factors. One who does not know about each of these factors cannot create the butterfly. The creator of the butterfly must also create all the necessary conditions for its life. Whoever creates the butterfly's eye is also the creator of the solar system. Because each being in the universe is connected to everything in the universe.

### **What Is Lifeless Cannot Grant Life!**

I want to expand on this a little. For example, the most striking feature of a fluttering butterfly is life. Life is a very high-level quality, and I am certain that one who can provide such a high-level quality must also possess very high-level qualities. Therefore, one who is to create a living being must also be alive, that is, have life. How can a lifeless being give life to other lifeless beings? Hence, lifeless things such as water, soil, air, and the sun cannot create butterflies.

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My dear young friends, the one who gives eyes to butterflies and other creatures must also be the owner of the sun, because the eye cannot function without the sun. The one who gives the butterfly its auditory system must also be the creator of sounds. What's the use of ears if there are no sounds? Hence, Allah, who gives living creatures the ability to see, is also All-Seeing. Would our Lord, Who has given all living beings unique auditory systems, be able to bestow this ability if He could not hear? Is it conceivable to say that Allah does not know how to speak and communicate, while He is the One Who makes all living beings continuously communicate with each other in vastly different ways? Would it make any kind of sense to say that?"

After an applause, the host presenter returned to the stage and made the following suggestion.

- "My dear friends! You seem a bit tired, and the topics being talked about are really beautiful. I understand from the audience's 'language of state' that we might need a break to be able to listen to the next presentations with more attention and energy. Now, we'll have a 30-minute break as scheduled, with tea and refreshments available in the foyer.

### **Too Many Cooks Spoil the Broth!**

Tea and cookies were served in the foyer. The students sat on the chairs in the large foyer with Mr. Yusuf. The large aquariums placed in different parts of the area caught their attention. They went to look at one of them. The aquariums seemed truly beautiful. Inside them were fish of many colours along with green algae. One could also see many air bubbles both in the water and on its surface.

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- "Do any of you have a fish tank at home?"



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Betul replied:

- "We have one at our house, Sir."
- "Is it difficult to take care of the fish?"
- "Yes, Professor, it's somewhat challenging, but my father takes care of it. I help him do so though, and it's really enjoyable."
- "Can you tell us a bit about how your father takes care of it?"
- "Of course sir, there are very important balances in the tank. My father actually says, 'Life is all about balance.' For instance, the electric oxygen pump in the tank operates and pumps clean oxygen into the water. The oxygen amount shouldn't be too much or too little; it must be perfectly balanced. Once, we went on vacation, and the air pump broke down, depriving the fish of oxygen. We lost all our fish. Also, keeping the tank clean is crucial. We continuously filter the water through an electric filter, as fish waste pollutes the water. Fish cannot grow in dirty water; they become sick. For this purpose, we buy catfish that feed on the dirt in the tank to help keep it clean.

My father doesn't want anyone else to interfere, to avoid disturbing the balance and order in the tank. I'll never forget one time when my cousin visited our house as a guest. Without my father knowing about it, he fed the fish the wrong food and too much of it, which made our fish sick. That's when my father explained what the proverb 'Too many cooks spoil the broth.' meant to us."

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- "As you said, Betul, it's really not easy to take care of a tank, is it?"

Betul replied:

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- "Sir, it doesn't end there. We feed the fish fry and the bigger fish in separate compartments. Also, the amount of light in the tank is very important. There must not be too much light so as not to disturb the fish."

Mr. Yusuf commented:

- "I see. This really requires a lot of attention and care. How big is the fish tank in your house? Is it as big as a room?"

Betul said:

- "No Sir, it's not that big. It is one and a half metres in length and seventy centimetres in width."

Mr. Yusuf remarked:

- "You see, my friends, how much care is required to maintain even a small fish tank? It requires regular attention and timely attendance of the fish's needs. And if a second person intervenes, it disrupts the system in the tank."

Let's consider this: Who takes care of the fish in streams,



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lakes, rivers, seas, and oceans? Who maintains the balance of oxygen there? Who feeds and manages the fish and other aquatic creatures? Who provides their cleaning?

For instance, think about the sea creatures receiving their sustenance in simple sands and waters. Despite some fish laying millions of eggs, the balance of life in the seas and oceans is not disturbed. Who establishes and maintains this perfect balance?

My dear young friends, let's contemplate! Our world spins rapidly in the vacuum of space, yet the seas and oceans do not overrun the land, and the perfect system continues. The fact that this system exists and it continues perfectly is evidence that these tasks are executed and managed by a single source. If there were a second creator, things would get messy and even chaotic, and the system would break down. For if there are too many cooks, the broth will be spoiled. Thus, managing, organising, caring for, and feeding the creatures of the seas can only be possible with the knowledge and power of our one Lord."

The students sipped their tea as they listened attentively to Mr. Yusuf's explanation.

### **The Surprise Lecturer**

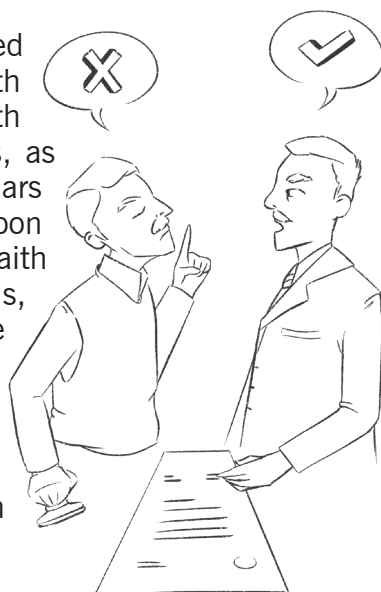
The break ended quickly. Then, all the students returned to the hall and quietly took their seats. They were refreshed and eager to listen to the presentation of the next lecturer. To the shock of the students, the announcer invited to the stage Dr. Yusuf, who had a Ph.D. in Islamic Sciences from Istanbul University of Islam and Science. This was truly a surprise for the students, they were both astonished and happy. They had never known this side of their teacher.

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When their teacher ascended the platform, their joy was worth seeing. They were all proud of their teacher. They looked at each other with joy, applauded initially, and then listened to Mr. Yusuf with all their attention.

Mr. Yusuf said:

- “Dear young friends and respected teachers, I would like to share with you four of the six pillars of faith briefly and concisely. Dear friends, as you know, our religion has six pillars of faith. Our Prophet (peace be upon him) specified these six pillars of faith as ‘to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day and that you believe in preordainment (destiny), its bad and good consequences.’ Now, I would like to briefly explain the six pillars of faith in the order given in this Hadith I just mentioned.”



### Every Poem Reveals Its Poet

- “Dear young friends, belief in Allah entails believing in His existence, His oneness, and His not having any partners with Him. He is the one who created everything from nothing. Everything in the universe is evidence of Allah’s existence. Just as a work of art is proof of its maker’s existence, everything in the universe is proof of the existence of Allah, who created it. Just as a poem cannot come into existence without a poet, or a building without an architect, so too a universe cannot exist without a creator. Moreover, the presence of order and absence of chaos in the universe is evidence of Allah’s oneness. The wonderful

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and perfect order we see everywhere in the universe, from atoms to galaxies, clearly indicates Allah's oneness and that He has no partner. Wherever there is order, there is unity and oneness. For instance, if there were two kings in a country, two governors in a city, or two principals in a school, there would be disturbance and confusion in every aspect of that country, city, or school. Imagine, what would it be like if your school had two principals? Wouldn't things get complicated? Wouldn't one oppose the decisions made by the other, causing problems?"

### **Our Inability to See the Angels Does Not Mean They Do Not Exist**

- "Dear friends, I would like to ask you a question. Has anyone here visited Australia? If so, please raise your hand!" —No hand was raised in the hall.— "Is there even a continent in the world called Australia?"

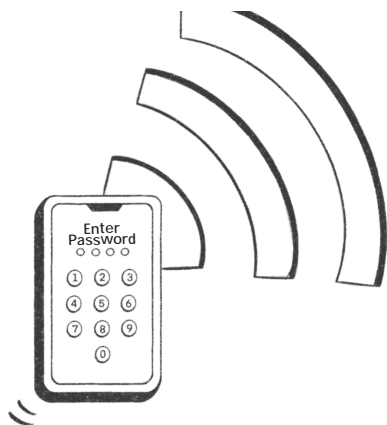
Everyone said,

- "Yes, there is."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "Dear young friends, angels live in a different dimension from humans. The spiritual world in which angels exist is different from our world. Even though we have never visited Australia before and have not seen the people who live there, we have no doubt that those people exist. One of us going there and meeting them would be strong evidence of their existence for all of us. Likewise, we learn about the existence of angels from all the religions sent by Allah, from the prophets who met them, and from the holy books sent by our Lord.

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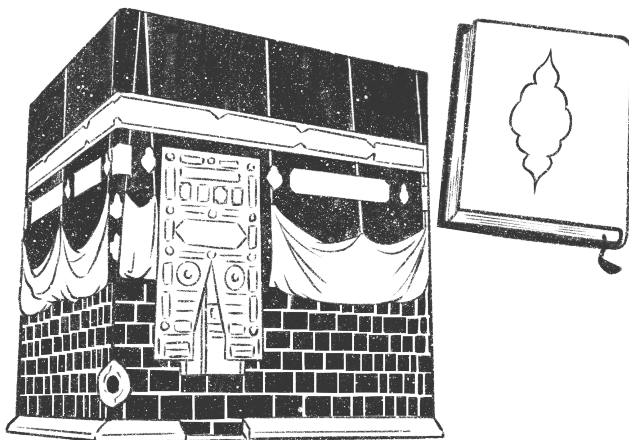


Dear friends, angels are conscious beings created from light, invisible to the naked eye. They perform various tasks given to them by our Lord. Just because we cannot see them does not mean they do not exist. We accept without hesitation the existence of many things we cannot see with our eyes. For example, there are some organisms that can only be seen with a microscope, and there are also some planets and stars that can only be seen through a telescope. Even though we cannot see them, we trust the experts in their fields. Since all the prophets, who are the trusted messengers of our Lord, are experts in the spiritual field, they say, 'Angels exist and are real, and we have met them.' This becomes evidence for our faith.

The fact that we cannot see angels with our eyes does not mean we should doubt their existence. There are many things we have no doubt exist even though we cannot see them. For example, we cannot see the electromagnetic waves in our mobile phones with our eyes, but we strongly accept their existence. There are many entities in the air, like radio waves, sound waves, and television waves, but we cannot see them either. Our inability to see them does not mean they do not exist.

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Dear young ones, the fact that we are unable to see angels means they are not shown to us at the present time, in this world of trial we live in. It also signifies that we are not able to see them on earth.



Dear friends, I now wish to speak briefly about belief in the holy books. Allah sent prophets to show us the right path and teach us the rules that bring happiness both in this world and the hereafter. Prophets are messengers who clarify for people matters they cannot answer with their minds. Our Lord revealed books and scriptures to some of His prophets. And other prophets who were not given books or scriptures fulfilled their duties according to the book or scriptures of the prophet before them.

The four great books and the prophets to whom they were revealed are the Tawrat (Torah) to Prophet Musa (Moses), the Zabur (Psalms) to Prophet Dawud (David), the Injil (Gospel) to Prophet Isa (Jesus), and the Qur'ân to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and all the prophets). The first three books have not remained as Allah originally

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revealed them. People altered and corrupted them over time for worldly interests, causing these books to lose their validity. However, our holy book, the Qur'ân, has remained unchanged since the day it was revealed to our Prophet (peace be upon him) and will remain unchanged until the Day of Judgment, as promised by our Lord.

### Humanity Needs Prophets

Dear friends, prophets are individuals chosen by Allah and sent among people. They are exemplary guides and role models. The history of prophets begins with the first human, who is our master Adam, the first prophet. Just as people need teachers to teach them what they do not know, they also need prophets to teach them matters like faith, worship, and ethics.

Dear youth, there is nothing in the universe without a purpose, for the universe is a creation of Allah, Most Wise. Prophets are messengers who make people aware of Allah and inform them about Him through the signs He created. Through His prophets, our Lord revealed why He created humans and other beings and what He wants from them. These messengers set an example in matters related to worship, ethics, and social life as revealed by Allah.

We need doctors to be healthy and to treat our physical sicknesses, and similarly, we need prophets. They are spiritual doctors who heal our physical and spiritual problems and our personal and social illnesses.

Prophets inform about the purpose of human existence in this world and teach people the realities that Allah has told them. We cannot know the meaning of human existence in this world and the purpose of creation except through



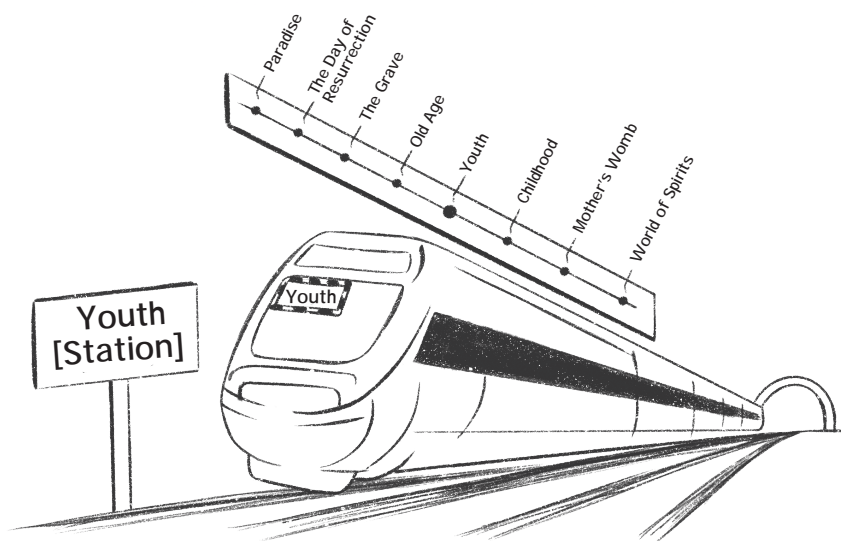
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prophets. Prophets teach humans what they should do, how they should do it, and especially why they should do it. Only through these blessed messengers can one learn what one will gain by doing what they are supposed to and what one will lose if they do not.

Prophets are our Lord's messengers chosen from among people. Allah speaks to prophets through revelation. He gave His messengers miracles that prove they are prophets. Miracles are extraordinary occurrences given to prophets that others cannot imitate. For example, fire did not burn Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), and Prophet Moses's (peace be upon him) staff turned into a snake. Among the miracles of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the splitting of the moon into two by gesturing with his fingers and water flowing from between his fingers. In this regard, we must not forget that Allah is the creator of miracles.

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### There Will Indeed Be Life in the Hereafter

Dear students of knowledge, the belief in the Hereafter means believing in the eternal world that will begin after the Day of Judgment. Our world is a testing ground, and humans are sent to it with a purpose. Life on earth is a brief stop on a long journey. Human beings are the travellers of this journey. This long journey originates in the world of spirits and proceeds on to the mother's womb, then from childhood to youth, and then from youth to old age. After old age comes the grave, and then the Day of Resurrection, with the final destination being eternal Paradise. Life on earth is very important in this journey. Through our deeds here, we determine how we will live our eternal life, because this world is the field for the afterlife. What humans sow here, they will reap in the afterlife. Just as we work for our worldly life, we must also work for our eternal life, which is everlasting. Doesn't even an ordinary country in this world reward those who obey the law and punish those who disobey? Of course, it does, as per the

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law, and our Lord will reward with paradise those who obey Him through faith, and punish with the punishment they deserve those who disobeyed Allah and did not follow our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and who did not accept what he brought.

### **The Second Creation Is Easier Than the First**

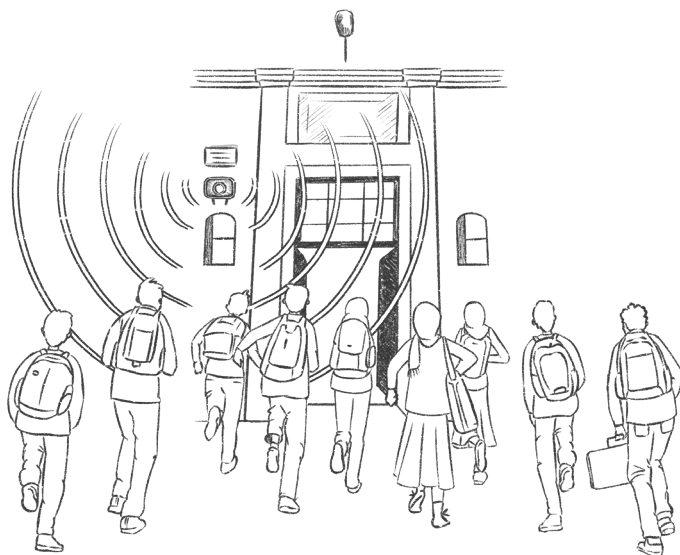
Our Lord will resurrect people with their bodies after their death, which is very easy for Him. Allah created everything from nothing with great ease and creating them a second time ought to be easier than the first. If we say the second creation is difficult after we have seen and accepted the first creation, then we are being illogical. We can better understand this through an example:

For instance, we see that a school principal easily organises thousands of students on the first day of school, assigning them their teachers and places in the classrooms, setting up the lesson schedule, announcing it, and starting the lessons. Then, the recess bell rings, and the students spread out all over the school to take a break from studying. Now, can someone who saw the principal easily set up the initial arrangement say, 'The principal can't re-gather the scattered students back into their classrooms at the sound of a bell; if I don't see it, I won't believe it!'? Of course not. If he says that, do you see the ridiculous situation he would be in?

Yes, the principal established a system which did not exist before and he has been maintaining it since. The principal, who easily does this, would find it even easier to re-gather the students with the ringing of a bell after they have entered the system, their places have been designated, and they have become acquainted with each other.

Likewise, after the Day of Judgment, giving life to humans for the second time will be easier than the first time. Just

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as in the example above, our Lord created humans from nothing, and cells and organs in our bodies have recognized each other and cooperated throughout life in this world. When death occurs, the cells scatter apart to rest. On the Day of Resurrection, our Lord will gather our scattered body cells, similar to school students scattered around in different places, with the sound of Israfil's (peace be upon him) trumpet. This is not difficult for Allah at all. All cells will come back together again in the bodies they served during the worldly life, and then Allah will judge humans for all their deeds in the world.

Yes, when we think about it rationally and logically, we find that redoing something for the second time is easier than doing it for the first time. In human history, the invention of things like aeroplanes, televisions, and computers was difficult initially, but later, it became very easy to gather the scattered parts of these devices and reassemble them. Allah, who created humans for the first time, is able to create them for the second time.

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### People Make Their Choices with Their Free Will

Dear young friends, Allah's knowledge is limitless; He has absolute knowledge of everything, regardless of time and place. Destiny means that Allah, with His absolute knowledge, knows everything that was, is, and will be.

There are two types of volition that affect what happens to a person. The first is the volition of Allah by which He justly decrees the attributes, height, skin colour, gender, homeland, nationality, birthplace, and parents of the servant which He will create. A servant is not accountable for such matters as he has no say in them. The second type of volition, my beloved students, is the free will of humans, that is, their freedom of choice. With this will, a servant has the ability to choose between good and evil. Humans are entirely free in these choices, and they are not prisoners of their destiny. If humans were prisoners of destiny, they would not be praised and rewarded for their good deeds, or punished for their bad deeds.

Yes, Allah has given us all free will, and we all know this by our conscience. Since Our Lord foreknows what choices people will make using their free will with His infinite knowledge, He wrote everything about their choices in destiny beforehand. The fact that Allah foreknows and writes the choices people will make does not force them to perform any action or abolish their free will. This means humans are not forced to live what is written in their destiny; our choosing to study or not study is by our free will. People choose whether to study or play games with their free will, and a student immersed in play who does not study and has poor grades has no right to say, 'It's not my fault. This is my destiny.'

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Humans are responsible for the results of their free choices. For example, when someone buys fruits from the market, he inspects the fruit with his mind and will, not taking rotten or crushed fruits but choosing what he wants. This act of choosing is proof that our will is free. Or else if we think about the alternative, that is, someone putting rotten and crushed fruits into a bag and buying them, and then saying, 'I can't help it, this is my destiny!'; can you imagine how ridiculous of a situation such a person would be in? Could he convince anyone with that statement?

Mr. Yusuf concluded his speech by saying, "Thank you for your attentive listening," and returned to his seat amid applause.

Mr. Yusuf's own students applauded their teacher with even greater enthusiasm. The program had been truly beneficial and was nearing its conclusion. The presenter thanked the university administration, the professors, and everyone who spoke for organizing such a wonderful program.

## Looking Through The Apple

### **How Can Humans Be Without a Purpose While Everything Has a Purpose!**

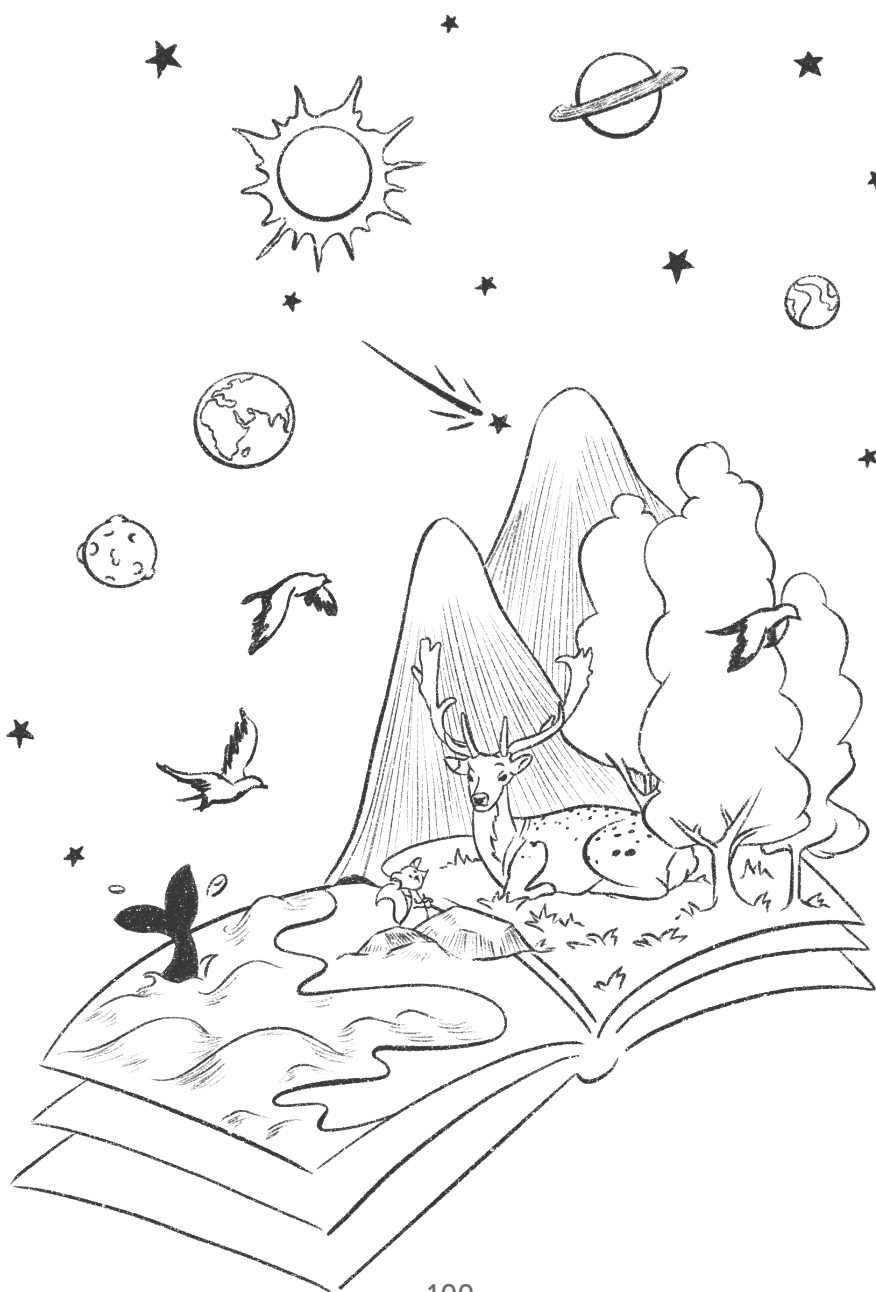
The host presenter invited the Chancellor of Istanbul University of Islam and Science to the stage to deliver the closing remarks. All the students applauded the Chancellor, who then enthusiastically said:

- “Dear students, we have listened to very beneficial presentations from our honourable professors, and you all followed the program with interest. Thank you very much to all of you. You are the ones who truly deserve the applause here. You are the glimmer of hope for our nation.” He added, “I invite everyone here to applaud for you, our young students of knowledge,” and the hall erupted in prolonged applause.

When the applause ended, the Chancellor continued:

- “Dear young friends, the world will be more beautiful when you understand and live our beautiful religion, Islam, which is humanity’s hope. A believing person who knows his Lord and the reason for being sent to this world is an opportunity for humanity. Think about the noble Companions of our Prophet (peace be upon him), each of which is worthy of becoming a role model for humanity because they were taught by our Prophet (peace be upon him). Before being honoured by faith and Islam, they were in ignorance, cruelties and evil. After being honoured by faith and Islam, they suddenly became teachers for mankind, giving lessons in humanity and civilization to the most advanced nations, while they were so harsh in the past that they buried their daughters alive. Through faith and Islam, they elevated to a level where they feared harming even an ant. Absolutely nothing could cause such an immense change in a people except the light of faith brought by our Prophet (peace be upon him).

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Dear young ones, every living being has a purpose in creation. In a universe where everything is created for a specific purpose, from atoms to galaxies, humans cannot be without a purpose. Animals like chickens, sheep, goats, and silkworms are created for specific purposes. Now, is it conceivable to think that humans would be left without a purpose while they are the ones benefitting from all the blessings their Lord bestows on them by means of these creatures?

Humankind, which uses silk woven by a tiny, handleless insect from green mulberry leaves, must know and love Allah, Who gave them this blessing. All living and non-living beings perform their duties and function perfectly. And humans too must fulfil the duties and responsibilities assigned to them by Allah.

We are all sent to Earth with superior equipment, born with high-potential features such as intelligence, awareness, thought, curiosity, wonder, and love, surpassing other living beings. Being equipped with such superior abilities distinguishes us from animals, and clearly indicates that we are sent to Earth for a great purpose.

Yes, dear friends, Allah says in the first verse of our Holy Qur'ân: 'Read in the name of your Lord who created' (Qur'ân 96:1). He commands us to ensure that we do not read with an absent mind. Whatever we read, it should be done without forgetting our Creator, in His name, and by keeping Him in mind.

When we look from this perspective, the universe becomes a book worthy of reading, and every science reveals to us the artful and wondrous things that Allah created in the universe. For this reason, we must not turn a blind eye to its Creator when contemplating a masterpiece. We cannot physically see our Creator in this world, but we must come to know Him by observing His creations which we can

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see. We should strive to contemplate the manifestations of our Lord's oneness, mercy, justice, generosity, and all His names and attributes in everything He created.

My dear young friends, my greetings, love, and respect to you all! So glad we have you here! And I would like to end my speech with a prayer of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him): "O Lord, make faith beloved to us and adorn our hearts with it, and make disbelief, immorality, and disobedience against you hateful to us. Guide us on the path of Your guided servants whom You are pleased with."

All students responded to this beautiful prayer by saying, "Ameen, ameen, by the number of thousands, ameen!" The atmosphere became even more beautiful with these closing words. The students left the hall with conversations filled with good humour and joy, some saying, "So happy that we came!" Others were evaluating the speeches and their speakers, and some were saying, "I want to study at this university too." The program was over and the presentations made in it had left beautiful impressions on the minds and hearts of the students.

### **Faith Is Our Greatest Point of Support**

It was Monday again, and the students were eagerly waiting for their favourite teacher's lesson. They now better understood the importance of faith in Allah thanks to the conference they attended.

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "Dear friends, you all followed the conference we attended over the weekend attentively and took your notes. Thank you all. Praise be to Allah, the outcomes of the conference were fruitful."

Betul said:

- "Rather thanks are due to you, sir. We are very glad that

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you invited us. I would have been very upset if I had missed this program.” And the other students said, “That’s true, professor. Thank you very much!”

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- “What stuck in your minds the most, young ones?”

Sa’id, after asking for permission to speak, said:

- “Sir, I entered a university for the first time and witnessed a wonderful conference by university professors in a very large hall. It was a great experience for me.”

Ibrahim said:

- “Sir, I really liked the topics discussed at the conference. It was truly beautiful.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

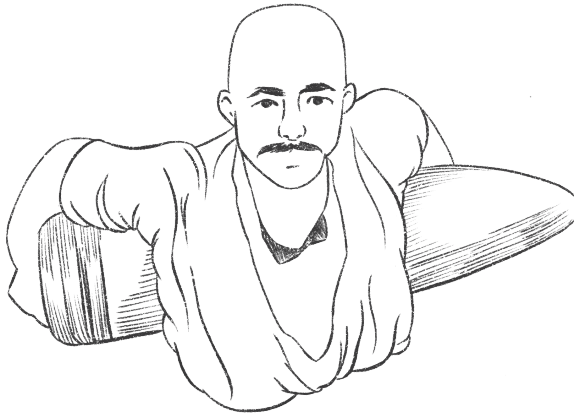
- “What about you, Ali?”

- “Sir, the conference is still very much on my mind, but what also lingers is that delicious Turkish delight we had on the minibus. Please take us to conferences like this all the time!” His words made everyone laugh.

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Mr. Yusuf smiled and said:

- “My dear young friends, the program was indeed beneficial, kindling a different kind of awareness in each of us. We understood the value and importance of faith more deeply. Yes, faith is a powerful reality. Through it, people recognize Allah, the Owner of all that exists, and realise that nothing in the universe happens as a coincidence. They learn that everything created is a marvel of our Lord’s creation and that all beings have a specific duty assigned by Allah. Thus, the existence of Allah gives complete confidence to the believer. A person finds peace in knowing his Creator who



sees and protects him at all times. Such a person abstains from harming any living or non-living being, knowing they too have their duties. Faith drives him to do all that is good and beneficial.

Hasan asked for permission to speak:

- “Sir, I spoke to my grandmother about the program, and she was very impressed. She told us about the strength that faith gives to people, saying, “A believer is strong and courageous. We won in the battles of Malazgirt, Çanakkale, and the War of Independence with the strength of faith.”

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Mr. Yusuf said:

- “Your grandmother is right, Hasan. Faith is our greatest point of support. A person with strong faith relies on the power of Allah in everything that happens to him throughout his life, overcoming every difficulty with the strength that faith provides. What can difficulties do to someone who holds onto the infinite power of his Lord with faith? A strong believer does not despair in the face of difficulties but endures them. He does not become pessimistic because his faith shows him the positive side of everything. He does not lose hope or fall into despair or pessimism. He knows well that the world and the things happening in it have an Owner. He acts with the belief that Allah will never leave him alone. He does his best to achieve his goals or solve his problems and leaves the rest to Allah, the Almighty.

Dear young friends, there is a direct relationship between faith and courage. The more faith we have, the more courage we have. Throughout history, many groups of people who were small in numbers, with the power of faith, have defeated ones that were much larger. Faith gives people the idea: ‘You are not alone, Allah is with you, do not despair in seeking solutions!’ A believer is at peace in his heart, mind, soul, and emotions, and enjoys his life fully because he knows that not even a single leaf falls from its branch without Allah’s permission.”

Sa’id then asked for permission to speak:

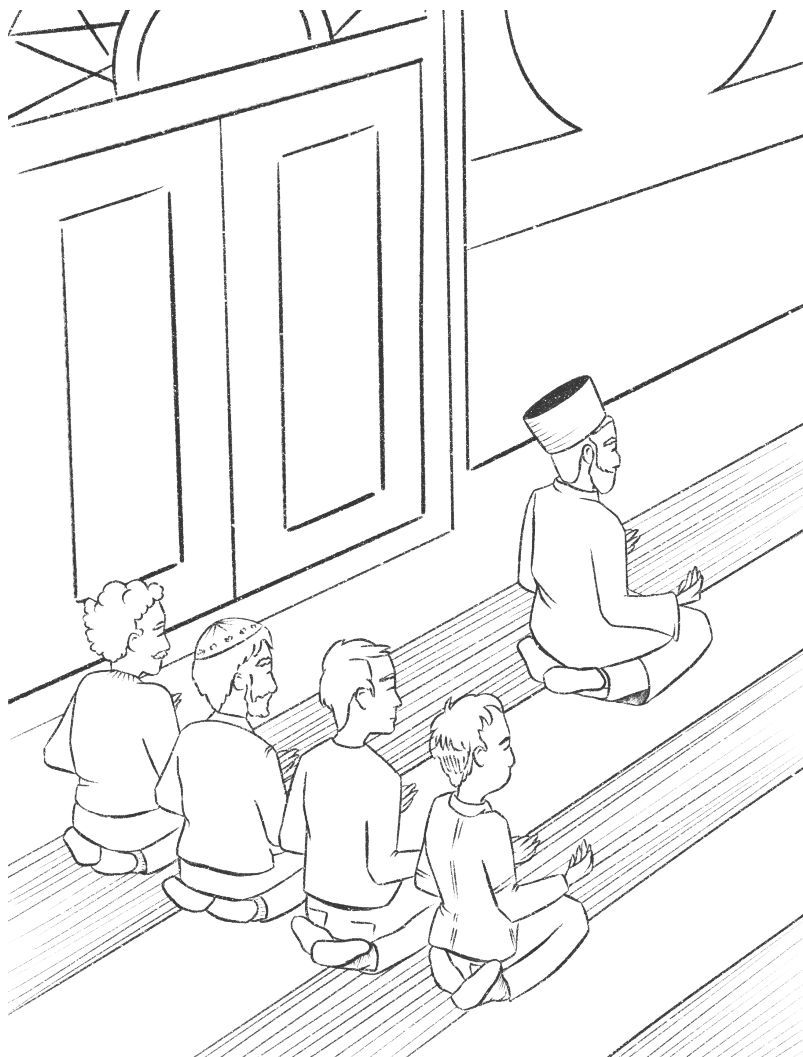
- “Sir, doesn’t faith also give people the ability to make supplications and pray?”

Mr. Yusuf nodded affirmatively and said:

- “That’s right, the ability to pray and ask from Allah is a wonderful blessing, and our faith in Allah enables us to do so. So, faith is also our strongest point of refuge. Through the consciousness that faith provides, we take refuge in the

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mercy of our Ever-Merciful Lord. A Muslim who knows that everything happens by Allah's command primarily seeks help from Allah. He prays to his Lord, and his faith helps him realise that there is someone who hears even the most silent supplications that his heart makes. And since Allah



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is the possessor of absolute power, He responds to the supplications of His servant.

The believer's knowledge that the treasures of Allah are never-ending and inexhaustible provides him with security and peace of mind. A person blessed with faith can pray to his Lord in all circumstances, at any time, and in any place, and for anything that he wants. Since there is no helper in His work, no partner in His kingdom and power, a person can ask for all his wishes from his Lord without encountering any obstacles or barriers. He can rely on Allah's infinite power and resort to His boundless mercy.

Betul, who listened attentively, said:

- "Sir, after the conference, I felt my faith increase and the question of 'How can I strengthen my faith?' came to my mind."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "Yes, I was expecting such a question. Right after Mr. Yusuf said this, the bell rang, and Mr. Yusuf said with a smile: "Look at the timing! Well, let's answer this valuable question in the next lesson. Think and research yourselves in the time being about 'How can we strengthen our faith?' Have a good day and may Allah protect you."

### **How Can I Strengthen My Faith?**

Wednesday arrived, and Mr. Yusuf greeted his students as usual and asked about their well-being. Then he said:

- "Let's discuss how we can strengthen our faith as we agreed in the last lesson."

Nasiba said:

- "I asked my father about this, and he said: 'Athletes train and work hard to develop their muscles, and similarly,

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we Muslims must first be aware of the need to develop our faith. The more a person reads books related to faith, ponders, and talks about what he has read, the stronger his faith becomes. If a person looks at everything around him as a piece of art, he will notice the artist who made them. Thus, he will want to know more about Allah. The more he knows Him, the more his love increases, and the more his love increases, the more he wants to know Him more and more. Every contemplation strengthens the bond of faith between the person and Allah.”

Ibrahim said:

- “Sir, I also asked Uncle Omar, and he said that worshiping and trying to become a good servant of Allah strengthens our faith.”

Mr. Yusuf said:

- “Yes, thank you, that’s true. And as Uncle Omar said, another important way to strengthen faith is worship. A person who performs his worship and fulfils his duties as a servant of Allah realises that the entire universe belongs to Allah. He understands that he was not created in vain. Through his prayers and other regular daily worships, the greatness and mercy of the Creator settle in his heart.

Another important point, my dear students, is that those who perform their worship will realise that all other creatures also perform their worship, because all that is created has a purpose. For instance, sheep are created to give milk, and bees to make honey. Thus, humans, created with qualities surpassing all other creatures, must also have a purpose in their creation, which is faith and the worship of Allah, the Creator of everything. Unfortunately,



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those who do not perform their worship fail to see or are unable to see other creatures' worship of Allah. Indeed, worship, prayers, and supplication greatly enable people to recognize the existence of Allah and His oneness.

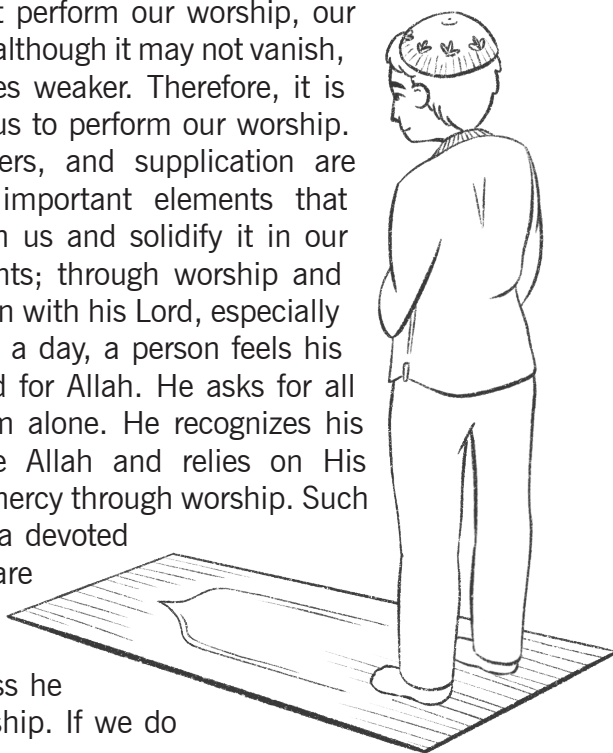
Dear young ones, prayer helps our faith to settle and root in our hearts. Ibrahim, assume that you have planted a sapling into the soil. Can it grow if you never give it water?"

Ibrahim answered:

- "No, Sir, it cannot grow or get bigger; instead, it will wither."

Mr. Yusuf said:

- "When we do not perform our worship, our faith weakens, and although it may not vanish, it gradually becomes weaker. Therefore, it is very important for us to perform our worship. Our worship, prayers, and supplication are among the most important elements that develop faith within us and solidify it in our hearts. Dear students; through worship and daily communication with his Lord, especially in prayer five times a day, a person feels his weakness and need for Allah. He asks for all his needs from Him alone. He recognizes his helplessness before Allah and relies on His infinite power and mercy through worship. Such a person becomes a devoted servant of Allah, aware of his weaknesses and flaws, thanks to the consciousness he gains with his worship. If we do



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not pray and cut our connection with our Lord - God forbid - we will become selfish and hard-hearted.”

Then Mr. Yusuf, addressing the students, asked:

- “Does anyone else want to tell us how we can strengthen our faith?”

Sa'id asked for permission to speak and said:

- “Sir, I read something about this in a book. It was saying that getting to know the lives of all the Prophets and



AwliyaAllah,<sup>1</sup> especially the life of our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him), and understanding their struggles and the difficulties they faced can strengthen our faith.”

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1- **AwliyaAllah:** Friends of Allah, that is, Muslim Saints. They can also be referred to as simply 'Awliya' or in singular form 'Wali'.

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Mr. Yusuf said:

- "That's beautiful... Yes, people are sent to this world for a sacred purpose, and the foremost guides of people are the prophets. Learning about the lives of all the prophets and Awliya who lived their lives devoted to Allah strengthens us spiritually. Especially, the exemplary life of our noble Prophet (peace be upon him) is a great guide for us.

Our beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us what Allah wants us to do. And not just that, he also showed us how to do those things we need to by setting the best example for us through his way of living. He clarified why we should not do the things that should not be done, and informed us about what we will gain if we do what Allah wants, and what we will lose if we do otherwise. The noble Companions were his first students, who learned the lesson of faith in the best way from him. They learned from our Prophet (peace be upon him) the answers to all questions like: What is faith? What does it mean to love Allah? How to be a true human being? How to contemplate the creations of Allah? How can we thank the blessings of our Lord? How to become a true servant of Allah?"

Mr. Yusuf asked:

- "Does anyone have any other ideas on this subject?"

Rayyan said:

- "Sir, may I ask a question?"

- "Of course, Rayyan, with pleasure!"

- "Is strengthening faith also related to being in a good social environment?"

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- “Yes, Rayyan. That’s a good point... A good social environment and good friends are also very important. If a person’s environment instils goodness and virtue in them, that person tends to be inclined towards goodness, virtue, and beneficence. The friends we choose should be those who bring us closer to Allah and His messenger. A person receives his first lessons of faith from his family, relatives, and neighbours. Parents are like spiritual teachers, who live by Islam and faith, and therefore set examples for their children. Relatives and neighbours work together to guide each other towards the land of eternal happiness. Therefore, a person should always carefully investigate and choose his social environment very well, because a bad environment and bad friends are among the most important factors behind harmful habits and behaviours in society today.

Dear young ones, our faith is the most important virtue that we should never lose. Our faith is what will lead us to Paradise. Therefore, we must distance ourselves as much as possible from bad friends and environments that may damage our faith and religion. We must flee from them like we would from scorpions and snakes. We should seek beneficial social environments and friends who lead us towards goodness and virtue.”

Once again, the lesson ended with the sound of the bell, and Mr. Yusuf said cheerfully, “You all need a break, young ones. See you in the next lesson with another topic to discuss, In Shaa Allah. May Allah protect you all, Assalamu Alaykum,” and he left the class with a smile.