

PARADISE THE BELIEVERS' REAL HOME

**Race each other to forgiveness from
your Lord, and a Garden [i.e., Paradise]
as wide as the heavens and Earth,
prepared for those who do their duty.
(Surah Al 'Imran, 133)**

HARUN YAHYA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author, who writes under the pen-name HARUN YAHYA, was born in Ankara in 1956. Having completed his primary and secondary education in Ankara, he then studied arts at Istanbul's Mimar Sinan University and philosophy at Istanbul University. Since the 1980s, the author has published many books on political, faith-related, and scientific issues. Harun Yahya is well-known as an author who has written very important works disclosing the imposture of evolutionists, the invalidity of their claims, and the dark liaisons between Darwinism and such bloody ideologies as fascism and communism.

His pen-name is made up of the names "Harun" (Aaron [as]) and "Yahya" (John [as]), in memory of the two esteemed Prophets who fought against their people's lack of faith. The Prophet (saas)'s seal on the cover of the books is symbolic and is linked to the their contents. It represents the Qur'an (the final scripture) and the Prophet Muhammad (saas), the last of the prophets. Under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the author makes it his purpose to disprove each one of the fundamental tenets of godless ideologies and to have the "last word," so as to completely silence the objections raised against religion. The seal of the final Prophet, who attained ultimate wisdom and moral perfection, is used as a sign of his intention of saying this last word.

All of the author's works center around one goal: to convey the Qur' an' s message to people, encourage them to think about basic faith-related issues (such as Allah's Existence and Unity and the hereafter), and to expose the feeble foundations and perverted ideologies of godless systems.

Harun Yahya enjoys a wide readership in many countries, from India to America, England to Indonesia, Poland to Bosnia, and Spain to Brazil. Some of his books are available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Urdu, Arabic, Albanian, Russian, Serbo-Croat (Bosnian), Polish, Malay, Uygur Turkish, and Indonesian, and they are enjoyed by readers worldwide.

Greatly appreciated all around the world, these works have been instrumental in many people recovering their faith in Allah and in many others gaining a deeper insight into their faith. The wisdom, as well as the sincere and easy-to-understand style, gives these books a distinct touch that directly effects any one who reads or studies them. Immune to objections, these works are characterized by their features of rapid effectiveness, definite results, and irrefutability. It is unlikely that those who read these books and give serious thought to them can any longer sincerely advocate materialistic philosophy, atheism, or any other perverted ideology or philosophy. Even if they continue to do so, it will be only a sentimental insistence, since these books refute such ideologies from their very foundations. All contemporary movements of denial are now ideologically defeated, thanks to the collection of books written by Harun Yahya.

There is no doubt that these features result from the Qur'an's wisdom and lucidity. The author modestly intends to serve as a means in humanity's search for Allah's right path. No material gain is sought in the publication of these works.

Considering these facts, those who encourage people to read these books, which open the "eyes" of the heart and guide them to become more devoted servants of Allah, render an invaluable service.

Meanwhile, it would just be a waste of time and energy to propagate other books that create confusion in people's minds, lead them into ideological chaos, and that clearly have no strong and precise effects in removing the doubts in people's hearts, as also verified from previous experience. It is impossible for books devised to

emphasize the author's literary power rather than the noble goal of saving people from loss of faith, to have such a great effect. Those who doubt this can readily see that the sole aim of Harun Yahya's books is to overcome disbelief and to disseminate the Qur'an's moral values. The success and impact of this service are manifested in the readers' conviction.

One point should be kept in mind: The main reason for the continuing cruelty, conflict, and all the ordeals endured by the vast majority of people is the ideological prevalence of disbelief. This state can be ended only with the ideological defeat of disbelief and by conveying the wonders of creation and Qur'anic morality so that people can live by it. Considering the state of the world today, which leads people into a downward spiral of violence, corruption and conflict, it is clear that this service has to be provided more speedily and effectively. Otherwise, it may be too late.

It is no exaggeration to say that the collection of books by Harun Yahya have assumed this leading role. By the will of Allah, these books will be a means through which people in the twentyfirst century will attain the peace, justice and happiness promised in the Qur'an.

TO THE READER

The reason why a special chapter is assigned to the collapse of the theory of evolution is that this theory constitutes the basis of all anti-spiritual philosophies. Since Darwinism rejects the fact of creation, and therefore Allah's Existence, during the last 140 years it has caused many people to abandon their faith or fall into doubt. Therefore, showing that this theory is a deception is a very important duty, one that is strongly related to religion. It is imperative that this important service be rendered to everyone. Some of our readers may find the chance to read only one of our books. Therefore, we think it appropriate to devote a chapter for a summary of this subject.

In all the books by the author, faith-related issues are explained in the light of Qur'anic verses, and all people are invited to learn Allah's words and to live by them. All the subjects that concern Allah's verses are explained in such a way as to leave no room for doubt or question marks in the reader's mind. The sincere, plain, and fluent style employed ensures that everyone of every age and from every social group can easily understand the books. This effective and lucid narrative makes it possible to read them in a single sitting. Even those who rigorously reject spirituality are influenced by the facts recounted in these books and cannot refute the truthfulness of their contents.

This book and all the other works of the author can be read individually or discussed in a group. Those readers who are willing to profit from the books will find discussion very useful in the sense that they will be able to relate their own reflections and experiences to one another.

In addition, it will be a great service to religion to contribute to the presentation and reading of these books, which are written solely for the good pleasure of Allah. All of the author's books are extremely convincing. For this reason, for those who want to communicate true religion to other people, one of the most effective methods is to encourage them to read these books.

It is hoped that the reader will take time to look through the review of other books on the final pages of the book, and appreciate the rich source of material on faith-related issues, which are very useful and a pleasure to read.

In these books, unlike some other books, you will not find the author's personal views, explanations based on dubious sources, styles that are unobservant of the respect and reverence due to sacred subjects, nor hopeless, doubt-creating, and pessimistic accounts that create deviations in the heart.

INTRODUCTION

What do you want most out of life? A nice house, expensive clothes, money, wealth, opulence? What if you were told about a place where you could get everything you wanted and keep it forever? What would you say? Of course you would be very excited and want to see this perfect place right away. Surely no one would ever object to living in such a wonderful place.

Now just think. Has anyone ever talked to you about a place filled with a countless array of blessings, where beauty is spread out at your feet? Surely someone must have done so, telling you and all other people about the existence of a life – the life of Paradise – where everything that you want will be prepared for you. Everyone knows that after death there is an endless Paradise. Everyone judged worthy to enter it will find everything they desire there; they will receive their rewards and blessings, and live in a perfect place surrounded by beauty forever. To those faithful servants who pass the test of this earthly life, Allah has promised an unprecedented land. The limited time one spends in this world, on the other hand, is an opportunity to attain these beauties.

So what keeps people from being overcome with joy at the good news of Paradise? What stops them from longing for it, from expending every effort to attain it? Why do people, knowing that they will receive these blessings as a divine reward, not prepare for Paradise? Surely the most important reason is that some people do not have an assured faith that it exists; others are not convinced. There may be other reasons why people do not believe in or have doubts about it. But the basic thing that we must consider is that this doubt sometimes arises from a lack of knowledge.

The only remedy for this lack of knowledge is the Qur'an.

In the Qur'an, Allah describes a wonderful life of perfect and endless beauty in Paradise. Someone who does not know this beauty's extent or how the Qur'an describes it may have difficulty envisioning Paradise and the kind of life there.

This book tells people about Paradise, which Allah offers to them, describes its great blessings, and proclaims its beauties to everyone. It informs people that Paradise is one of two ways of life prepared for them in the afterworld, and that every good thing will be theirs in Paradise to a degree that surpasses our present ability to imagine. It also shows that Paradise, is a place where all blessings have been created perfectly and where people will be offered everything their souls and hearts will desire; that people will be far removed from want and need, anxiety or sadness, sorrow and regret. Every kind of beauty and blessing exists in Paradise and will be revealed with a perfection never seen or known before. Allah has prepared such blessings there as a gift, and these will be offered only to people with whom He is pleased.

This book describes everything about Paradise in the light of the Qur'an's verses. So, as you read this information and try to envision that blessed place, remember that the Qur'an is the truth. Based on this information, consider the perfection of the real land that is waiting for you, and make every effort to be worthy of it. Be aware that Allah will give you all of these things by His grace, and that they can be yours forever. Given all of this, if you still cannot decide in favor of eternal beauty, remember that the only choice left is Hell, a place full of anguish from where you will observe the comfort of those in Paradise and experience eternal anxiety, sadness, misery, and sorrow.

BLESSING AND DISSIPATION

In the following sections, we will analyze how the Qur'an looks at Paradise and, based upon these descriptions, "try to imagine this perfect place. But before we do this, let's look at a few important points. In today's societies, many people have erroneous ideas and impressions in their conscious and subconscious minds. As such obstacles cause them to formulate a mistaken view, we must describe some basic Islamic concepts whose meanings have departed from their original understanding.

With this in mind, we first have to distinguish between "blessing" and "dissipation."

In the following pages, we will see that the Qur'an describes Paradise as an extremely luxurious and magnificent place, and that life therein is as comfortable and attractive as it can be.

However, to many people today, such a life is not so much "Islamic" as it is a natural outcome of being alienated from Allah and religious moral teaching.

So, because of this erroneous understanding that dominates society, very many people think that a comfortable, luxurious, and ostentatious life, and all that goes along with it, are "un-Islamic." They see such things as expensive clothes, rich food, entertainment, dinner parties, magnificently appointed houses, décor, and valuable art works as belonging to ignorant people cut off from their religion. They usually call a life filled with these things "dissolute," and criticize those who give this society its name as "living undisciplined lives of dissolution." The word "dissolution" (*safahat*) comes from the Arabic *safih*, and can be translated as "a lack of discipline, overindulgence, a weakness of mind that comes from living an irresponsible life of wealth and comfort."

Here, we encounter a false understanding that must be corrected. The life of Paradise that Allah has been pleased to choose for His servants, as well as a life that contains every kind of luxury, comfort, and ostentation, is also the most beautiful and noble way of life, one that conforms as closely as possible to religious moral teaching.

A false definition of dissolution opens the way to misunderstanding. Dissolution, or rebellion against Allah through a lack of discipline and overindulgence, is a condition of the human mind. People are not dissolute because of their clothes, ostentatious houses, aesthetic environments, or material wealth. Rather, the problem is in their minds.

The natural result of this situation is this: If people have a Qur'anic morality and a strong faith, they can live among the richest opulence imaginable without ever becoming dissolute. On the contrary, because they view everything they encounter according to the Qur'anic criteria and moral teaching, they see all of the beauty surrounding them as a blessing. In other words, they realize that all of these things are gifts from Allah. So, if Muslims know that Allah has given all of the surrounding riches, beauty, opulence, and magnificence, naturally they thank our Lord for what He has provided. This is, after all, why all blessings have been created.

If we applied this general way of thinking to our present society, we would have to say that those who live a dissolute life and turn away from Allah's commands have gone astray, because they do not see that all of their possibilities are blessings from Him. If they saw these things as blessings, this understanding would lead them to give thanks to Allah. And then, they would use these blessings as Allah intended them to be used: avoiding waste and using them in a way pleasing to Him.

So, wealth can be defined in two ways. Some rich people are believers who consider all of their possessions to be blessings from Allah, while other rich people go astray by considering all of their possessions as their own, forget Allah, and fall into dissolution. However, the model that Allah has proposed for all of His servants is wealth, as mentioned in the first model above. Wealth and poverty are tests for believers. Although some believers may be tested by poverty, Allah commands: **"We desired to show kindness to those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them leaders and inheritors"** (Surat al-Qasas, 5). This might happen in the world, but it certainly will happen in the afterlife.

Therefore, it would be very wrong for Muslims to find fault with grand, luxurious, and opulent lives. Muslims must not shun such people and regard them with disdain, because, after all, all material things in this life (e.g., fine clothes, delicious food, magnificent homes and works of art) were created for Muslims, as we read in Surat al-A'raf, 32:

Say: "Who has forbidden the fine clothing that Allah has produced for His servants and the good kinds of provision?" Say: "On the Day of Rising, such things will be exclusively for those who had faith during their life in the hereafter..."

The Qur'an gives the example of Prophet Sulayman (as), to whom Allah gave great wealth. In fact, it describes these possessions, as well as his opulent palace and works of art, in Surah Saba', 12-13 and Surat an-Naml, 44.

The important thing here is that Sulayman (as) gave thanks to Allah amid all of these magnificent possessions, for he knew that they were a mercy from our Lord. By relating his words: **"Truly do I love the love of good with a view to the glory of my Lord"** (Surah Sad, 32), the Qur'an draws our attention to his deep understanding.

This example shows us that the love of possessions, defined here as "the love of good," is legitimate as long as it is a means to praise Allah. No doubt, believers who have this kind of love will not hesitate to use their possessions as Allah directs. Possessions are a blessing belonging to Allah, and so those who have them will use them as Allah commands.

But if possessions are not seen as a blessing, dissolution sets in. The Qur'an gives many examples of how deviators understand the meaning of riches. One of the clearest examples is that of Qarun, a rich man who **"gloated"** (Surat al-Qasas, 76) and said: **"I have only been given it because of the knowledge I have"** (Surat al-Qasas, 78). Such a love of possessions cannot bring people close to Allah; rather, it diverts them from His way and alienates them from faith. The Qur'an describes this type of love as:

[T]ruly man is ungrateful to his Lord, and indeed he bears witness to that. Truly he is fierce in his love of wealth. (Surat al-'Adiyat, 6-8)

So, for this reason Muslims must view wealth according to the Qur'an's criteria and pursue it only to please Allah and serve Islam. They must desire all of Allah's blessings, because all blessings of this earthly life have been created for those faithful and sincere servants who exert every effort to please and serve Allah. We

have to be continually thankful for these blessings and follow Sulayman's (as) example: **"What an excellent servant! He truly turned to his Lord"** (Surah Sad, 30).

Those who live according to the real spirit of the Qur'an's moral teachings and adopt the point of view described above will be deemed "worthy and qualified" to enter Paradise, which possesses, as one of its most salient characteristics, eternal splendor and dazzling wealth and beauty. People who think and feel like Sulayman (as), who said: **"Truly do I love the love of good with a view to the glory of my Lord"** (Surah Sad, 32) amid all of this beauty, are believers.

Since this is how believers will think in Paradise, their true home, they must establish this point of view in this world, which is no more than a preparation for the world to come. Far from regarding wealth, beauty, and splendor as dissolution, believers must know that every blessing is a mercy from our Lord, recognize its value, learn to enjoy it, and be thankful.

The blessings of Paradise that we will look at in the following pages must be examined from this point of view.

THIS LIFE IS NOT OUR REAL LIFE

Many people think that they can make a perfect life for themselves in this world. They think that if they can acquire enough material possessions, they will experience total personal satisfaction and happiness. According to the most widespread opinion, a person's life will be perfect after he or she has attained material wealth, gotten married with this intention in mind, and is respected by society because of his or her influential and well-established career.

The Qur'an does not support this view, for it states that this present life will never be perfect and without problems, as it is designed like that.

The root of *dunya* (world) has a very important meaning in this sense: It is a derivative of the adjective "*daniy*": low, unrefined, basic and worthless. "World" means a space characterized by these traits. So, the Qur'an often emphasizes this worldly life's worthlessness and unimportance. It refers to such things as wealth, family, status, and success, which are thought to make for a good life, as nothing more than transitory and deceptive. In one verse, Allah says:

Know that the life of the world is merely a game and a diversion and ostentation, and a cause of boasting among yourselves and trying to outdo one another in wealth and children, like the plant-growth after rain, which delights the cultivators. But then it withers, you see it turning yellow, and then it becomes broken stubble. In the hereafter there is terrible punishment, but also forgiveness from Allah and His good pleasure. The life of the world is nothing but the enjoyment of delusion. (Surat al-Hadid, 20)

Another verse explains how people are blinded by illusion because of this earthly life:

Yet still you prefer the life of the world, when the hereafter is better and longer lasting. (Surat al-A'la, 16-17)

As this verse says, such people regard the life of this world as superior to the afterlife. Such a mistaken view causes them to turn away from faith in Allah and His Book. The Qur'an describes such people as "**those who do not expect to meet Us and are content with the life of the world and at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our Signs**" (Surah Yunus, 7) and reveals that they will find themselves in Hell's eternal agony. Surely, this imperfection does not mean that this world contains no beautiful things. On the contrary, Allah filled the world with beautiful things to remind us of Paradise. But mixed in with these beautiful things are the imperfection and ugliness of Hell.

The qualities of Paradise and Hell are mixed together here, for this world is really a place of testing. Thus believers can get an idea of those two places and, instead of getting caught up in this world's short and transitory life, can direct themselves toward the real, perfect, and endless life of the hereafter. As a result, the Qur'an describes the afterlife as each person's true and eternal land.

But despite this truth, many people think they can make a perfect life in this world. They view this life's imperfections and deficiencies (e.g., getting sick, becoming tired, and suffering from pain and worry) as

something totally natural. However, Allah has created all these imperfections with many hidden meanings, and people have to think seriously about these meanings and learn the appropriate lessons.

It could have been possible would never get sick or feel so tired that they would need to rest or sleep. They could have had so much stamina and energy that they would not feel fatigued. If Allah had willed, He could have created us without such flaws and deficiencies. But He created us with them so that we might understand that we are helpless and weak.

Each individual must come face to face with his or her helplessness and weakness at every moment of life. His body, upon which he lays so much value, constantly reminds him of his situation. When he wakes up every morning and starts his day, his face is swollen and distorted, his mouth has a bad taste, and there is an uncomfortable dirty feeling on his skin, hair, and body. If he does not clean himself carefully, he cannot leave this unpleasant state. This cleaning must be repeated several times during the day, because after a few hours have passed, the dirt returns. After not washing for a few days, his need to wash himself becomes all the more obvious, coming to a point where he makes those around him very uncomfortable.

The human body is not as strong or resilient as a stone or a piece of metal; rather, it is made of an extremely perishable material: flesh. The body is covered with a thin skin that could be torn at any moment by the slightest accident. Structurally speaking, flesh is very vulnerable. It can be wounded, bruised, and twisted by the slightest blow, and, with age, begins to lose its former youthfulness and becomes rough and wrinkled. After death, it starts to rot. A few weeks after burial, the body begins to disintegrate and be eaten by worms and bacteria, until finally it mixes with the soil and disappears.

As stated earlier, this shows us our frailty and reminds us that the imperfections in the world are specially created. Instead of flesh, human beings could have been created from much stronger and purer materials or could have been totally free of pain, illness, and vileness. However, all of these things were created to remind human beings of how poor and needy they are in relation to Allah, and to show them just how imperfect and deficient a place this world really is.

When we look at these imperfections, we can see our own frailty and understand the transitory nature of all people's earthly strength and values. Meanwhile, we also can understand that the people who we adore, try to please, or earn their respect and praise are as weak and imperfect as anybody else.

But as most people cannot understand this or see this world's great imperfection and flaws, they find satisfaction in this earthly life. Actually, this is the result of an extreme ignorance and lack of intelligence.

The morality of such people is described in the Qur'an as follows:

So turn away from him who turns away from Our remembrance and desires nothing but the life of the world. That is as far as their knowledge extends... (Surat an-Najm, 29-30)

Those who are unaware of this truth and bound by a passion for the life of this world are people without "knowledge," as the verse says.

But what is this "knowledge" that we must have in this matter? In truth, it is nothing less than the knowledge of Paradise, which Allah has promised to us. The most important steps toward this are to be well-versed in the Qur'an and to think seriously about what it says.

In the Qur'an, Allah described the believers' real homeland in these words:

The life of the world is nothing but a game and a diversion. The abode of the hereafter – that is truly Life, if they only knew. (Surah al-'Ankabut, 64)

One hadith records our Prophet (saas) as saying that Paradise is humanity's real abode, a place in which there will be no human imperfection:

A proclaimer will proclaim: "For you there is everlasting health, and you will never be sick. For you there is everlasting life, and you will never die. For you there is perpetual youth, and you will never get old. And for you there is everlasting bliss, and you will never be in want. (Muslim)

THE STATE OF THE PEOPLE OF PARADISE IN THIS WORLD

The Beautiful Lives of Believers in this World

The Qur'an promises believers the joy of an endless reward and eternal happiness. But one point often escapes attention: This good news, extending in endless time and into endless beauty, has already started for believers in this world, for since they have been promised Paradise in the world to come, they will be blessed in this world by Allah's grace and generosity. The Qur'an also says that believers who do good works will be given a good life in this world as well:

Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did. (Surat an-Nahl: 97)

In several places, the Qur'an proclaims that the good news announced in the verse above will be enjoyed by all sincere believers, the Prophets being the foremost among believers. For example, our Prophet (saas), who was given the good tidings of the highest ranks of Paradise in the Qur'an, was someone whom Allah made rich in this life: **"Did He not find you impoverished and enrich you?"** (Surat ad-Duha, 8). In addition, the Qur'an mentions the riches and possessions given to Prophets Dawud (as), Sulayman (as), Ibrahim (as), and Dhu'l Qarnayn (as) several times.

Giving blessings and beauty in this world as a reward and encouragement, as well as an indication to sincere believers of our Lord's grace and favor, is one of Allah's unchanging laws. Since wealth, splendor, and beauty are Paradise's most basic characteristics, Allah creates similar blessings here to remind His chosen servants of Paradise and to increase their ardor and desire to attain it. Therefore, just as unbelievers already begin their eternal anguish in this world, sincere believers begin to see the eternal beauty promised to them.

Believers live far from every spiritual anxiety and sorrow, because they remain in the awareness of Allah, Who created them, and so conform to His commands and prohibitions; because they live according to Islam, the religion that Allah was pleased to choose for humanity; and, most importantly, because they nurture hope and great expectations for the life to come. Above all, our Lord's assistance and support is with them, for: **"Allah sent down His serenity on His Messenger and on the believers"** (Surat at-Tawba, 26). Believers find a sense of comfort in the knowledge that Allah sees them in every prayer they observe, in every faithful work they perform, and in everything they do, both great and small, to gain His good pleasure. In addition, they also know that angels record their deeds in books and that they will be rewarded in the afterlife for what they have done. This is the sense of security that comes from their knowledge that Allah supports them with unseen hosts and angels, that they have a "succession of angels in front of them and behind them, in order to **"guard them by Allah's command"** (Surat ar-Ra'd, 11), that they will overcome the challenges they will face in Allah's way, and that they always have the joyful promise of Paradise. So, sincere believers, according to what Allah

revealed to the angels, will never be overcome with fear or excitement, for: **"I am with you, so make those who have faith firm"** (Surat an-Anfal, 12).

The Qur'an says that believers are **"those who say: 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then go straight"** (Surah Fussilat, 30). The angels descend on them and say: **"Do not fear and do not grieve, but receive the glad tidings of Paradise you have been promised"** (Surah Fussilat, 30). It also says that believers know that Allah **"imposes on no self any more than it can bear"** (Surat al-A'raf, 42).

They have a firm belief in destiny and that Allah makes and accomplishes everything. Thus they accept everything that happens to them as being from Allah, as the following verse says: **"Nothing can happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us"** (Surat at-Tawba, 51). Since they seek to please Allah, saying: **"Allah is enough for us and the Best of Guardians"** (Surah Al 'Imran, 173-174), no evil thing will touch them.

But because this world is a place of testing, believers will face difficulties, such as hunger, illness, and sleeplessness, an accident or material loss. They may go through even more difficulties and trials, such as those of poverty and constraint, as indicated in the following verse:

Or did you suppose that you would enter Paradise without facing the same as those who came before you? Poverty and illness afflicted them, and they were shaken to the point that the Messenger and those who had faith with him said: "When is Allah's help coming?" Be assured that Allah's help is very near. (Surat al-Baqara, 214)

Such trials did not sway the Prophets and the believers from their firm faith in our Lord, or from their determination to put the Qur'an's verses into practice. At the end of the verse, Allah promises believers that His assistance is already very near to them. In another verse, He states that:

Allah will give security, in their victorious Safe Haven, to those who had fear. No evil will touch them, and they will know no sorrow. (Surat az-Zumar, 61)

All believers know that difficulties are created to test their faith, and that if they are patient and submissive, these difficulties will be great opportunities for them to mature spiritually. In addition, these trials will become the source of their eternal reward in the afterlife. For this reason, they will submit to these difficulties and retain their well-being, happiness, or joy. These anxieties will not upset their spiritual balance or adversely affect their perception or determination. In fact, their enthusiasm will continue to grow, because they know that they will receive the reward for their patience and submission in His Presence.

For unbelievers, the situation is just the opposite. Those who deny the Qur'an suffer spiritual anguish in addition to the physical pain that they endure in this earthly life. The fear, sorrow, hopelessness, tension, pessimism, and other negative feelings that they experience here are just the beginning of the anguish they will suffer in Hell. Allah describes these people in the following verse:

When Allah desires to guide someone, He expands his breast to Islam. When He desires to misguide someone, He makes his breast narrow and constricted, as if he were climbing up into the sky. That is how Allah defiles those who do not believe. (Surat al-An'am, 125)

Allah reveals that He wills to forgive the sins and errors of those who stand in awe and reverence of His Glory, that He will reward His faithful and repentant servants with the finest blessings in this earthly life, and that they will find favor with Him. As we read in the Qur'an:

Ask your Lord for forgiveness, and then turn toward Him in repentance. He will let you enjoy a good life until a specified time, and will give His Favor to all who merit it. But if you turn your backs, I fear for you the punishment of a Mighty Day. (Surah Hud, 3)

In other words, seeking Allah's forgiveness and turning to Him in repentance are duties enjoined upon all faithful Muslims. These attitudes show that believers are aware of how helpless and weak they are before Allah, for they know their errors and shortcomings and are aware that they can make mistakes. Therefore, they desire Allah's mercy. As our Lord has said, He rewards such people here for their fine morality and gives them a good life until they die. In another verse, He describes the believers' earthly life in this way:

When those who have fear of Allah are asked, "What has your Lord sent down?" their reply is, "Good!" There is good in this world for those who do good, and the abode of the hereafter is even better. How wonderful is the abode of those who guard against evil. (Surat an-Nahl, 30)

When all of this life's beauties are compared with the land to come, they become completely valueless. Therefore, if a goal is to be chosen, it can only be the life of the world to come. Allah increases the blessings of those believers who, already in this world, have set their hearts on the life to come.

In their prayers, believers pray for the world to come and ask Allah for blessings and good in this life. Examples of such prayers are given in the following verses:

When you have completed your rites, remember Allah as you used to remember your forefathers – or even more. Some people say: "Our Lord, give us good in this world." They will have no share in the hereafter. Others say: "Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the hereafter, and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire." They will have a good share from what they have earned. Allah is swift at reckoning. (Surat al-Baqara, 200-202)

In the Qur'an, those faithful servants of Allah who sincerely believe in Him are said to be made heirs of this world. Surely His promise is true and will come to pass. One verse states:

Allah has promised those of you who believe and do right actions that He will make them successors in the land, as He made those before them successors; (that He) will firmly establish for them their religion (Islam), which He is pleased to give them; and, in place of their fear, security. "They worship Me, not associating anything with Me." As for those who do not believe after that, such people are deviators. (Surat an-Nur, 55)

GOOD NEWS

In an earlier section, we mentioned that those sincere believers who give themselves to Allah will enjoy His blessings in this life before they enter Paradise. One of the most important blessings is the promise of good news to believers. Several verses speak of Allah's promise of Paradise and the announcement of this good news to believers as follows:

Their Lord gives them the good news of His mercy and good pleasure, and Gardens where they will enjoy everlasting delight. (Surat at-Tawba, 21)

There is good news for them in the life of the world and in the hereafter. There is no changing the words of Allah. That is the great victory! (Surah Yunus, 64)

The hearts of those believers who have hope in this good news trust that their good works will find favor in Allah's sight, that the blessings they await are close at hand, and are filled with contentment.

The Qur'an states that believers will receive the good news also from angels. Those faithful servants who sincerely believe in Allah and associate nothing with Him, who carefully obey the Qur'an's commands and counsel, and are eager to live according to its moral teaching, may hope for this joyful news. Certainly, this news is an indescribable joy for all believers who ardently desire Paradise. As we read in the Qur'an:

The angels descend upon those who say: "Our Lord is Allah," and then go straight: "Do not fear or grieve, but receive the glad tiding of Paradise that you have been promised. We are your protectors in the life of the world and the hereafter. You will have there all that your selves could wish for. You will have there everything that you demand. Hospitality from the One Who is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surah Fussilat, 30-32)

Allah has also entrusted the prophets with announcing this good news. In Surat al-Ahzab, 47, Allah commands the Prophet (saas) to proclaim that believers will receive an immense reward from Him; In Surat Ya Sin, 11, He reveals him that "those who obey the Qur'an and stand in awe of the Most Gracious will receive pardon and an excellent reward; and Surat az-Zumar, 17 announces that those who shun the worship of false gods and turn toward Allah will have good news. And in Surat Yunus, 2, Allah tells His Messenger to **"give good news to those who believe, that they are on a sure footing with their Lord."**

When we look at the common characteristics of the believers, those described in the above verses as those given the good news of Paradise, we see that they are sincere people who are extremely close to Allah, acknowledge their weakness, obey the Qur'an and the Prophet, and fear Allah.

ALLAH'S PROMISE

To those who will come into His Presence as believers, Allah gives the promise of Paradise, wherein they will remain forever. As there is no doubt that this promise will be fulfilled, those who believe with certainty will never doubt its truth. Moreover, if they have surrendered their souls to Him as believers, they know that their sins will be forgiven and that they will be accepted into Paradise. The following verse makes this clear:

Gardens of Eden which the All-Merciful has promised to His servants in the Unseen. His promise is always kept. (Surah Maryam, 61)

The fact that Allah has promised Paradise to believers brings them an indescribable joy and enthusiasm. They know that Allah wills Paradise for His faithful servants, and that He has made them its heirs. Here is another verse that mentions this promise:

Is someone to whom We have promised good and who then obtains it like someone to whom We have given enjoyment in the life of the world and then, on the Day of Rising, is one of those brought to punishment? (Surat al-Qasas, 61)

If Allah has promised Paradise to any individuals, they will attain eternal blessings with Allah's permission. And when believers enter Paradise, they will certainly express their thanks to Allah in this way:

They will say: "Praise be to Allah Who has fulfilled His promise to us and made us the inheritors of this land, letting us settle in Paradise wherever we want. How excellent is the wage of those who work." (Surat az-Zumar, 74)

Believers who have been given the good news several times during their earthly lives, and to whom Allah has promised Paradise, will receive at the end of their lives that for which they hoped. Finally, that long-awaited moment will come. The place that they have contemplated throughout their lives, prayed to attain, and striven to be worthy of is Paradise – "the best place to be," and "the most beautiful of all goals." This perfect place was prepared for believers, and its doors are opened to them.

The following verse gives a unique view about their entrance into Paradise:

Gardens of Eden that they will enter, and all of their parents, wives, and children who have acted honorably. Angels will enter in to welcome them from every gate: "Peace be upon you because of your steadfastness! How wonderful is the Ultimate Abode!" (Surat ar-Ra'd, 23-24)

They will be welcomed into Paradise "**with greetings and [words of] peace**" (Surat al-Furqan, 75), and enter there "**in peace, in complete security!**" (Surat al-Hijr, 46). There is only one thing left to do: to discover the beauties of this eternal land prepared for believers and endowed with every kind of blessing.

THOSE WHO ARDENTLY HOPE FOR PARADISE: THE PARTY OF ALLAH

Allah has inscribed faith upon such people's hearts, will reinforce them with a spirit from Him, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him. Such people are the party of Allah. Truly it is the party of Allah who are successful. (Surat al-Mujadala, 22)

Those believers to whom Allah has announced His promise of good news have important qualities, as revealed in the Qur'an:

They believe and do right actions. (Surat al-Baqara, 25)

They fear Allah. (Surah Al 'Imran, 15)

They spend for the cause of Islam in times both ease and hardship. (Surah Al 'Imran, 134)

They control their rage. (Surah Al 'Imran, 134)

They pardon other people.(Surah Al 'Imran, 134)

After they act indecently or wrong themselves, they remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their wrong actions. (Surah Al 'Imran, 135)

They do not knowingly persist in doing wrong actions. (Surah Al 'Imran, 135)

The obey Allah and his Messenger. (Surat an-Nisa', 13)

They keep up prayer, spend in charity, believe in and support Allah's messengers. (Surat al-Ma'ida, 12)

They are truthful. (Surat al-Ma'ida, 119)

They leave their homes for the cause of Allah and strive in Allah's way with their souls and possessions. (Surat at-Tawba: 20)

They do good. (Surah Yunus, 26)

They humble themselves before their Lord. (Surah Hud, 23)

They repent of their sins. (Surah Maryam, 60)

They honor their trusts and contracts. (Surat al-Mu'minin: 8)

They safeguard their prayers. (Surat al-Mu'minin: 9)

They compete with one another in the doing of good deeds. (Surah Fatir, 32)

They are Allah's chosen servants. (Surat as-Saffat, 40)

They believe in the Qur'an. (Surat az-Zukhruf, 69)

They say "our Lord is Allah" and thereafter stand firm in their faith. (Surat al-Ahqaf, 13)

They are heedful. (Surah Muhammad, 15)

They turn toward Allah with their whole heart. (Surah Qaf, 32)

They stand in awe of the Most Gracious, although He is beyond the reach of human perception, and come unto Him with a heart returning in repentance. (Surah Qaf, 33)

They are the doers of good. (Surat adh-Dhariyat, 16)

They ask for Allah's forgiveness before the dawn. (Surat adh-Dhariyat, 18)

They are the forerunners. (Surat al-Waqi'a, 10)

They always keep their word and fear a day whose evil will spread far and wide. (Surat al-Insan, 7)

They give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives. (Surat al-Insan, 8)

They give the appropriate respect to the Messenger of Allah. (Surat al-Hujurat, 3)

AN EASY PASSAGE TO THE NEXT WORLD

Those the angels take in a virtuous state. They say: "Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you did." (Surat an-Nahl: 32)

Death in a Virtuous State

Up to this point, we have seen that sincere believers live a good life in this world, are not overcome with fear or pessimism, and have a healthy and comfortable spiritual life. Since those who believe seek Allah's pleasure, we learn from the Qur'an that they have won His special assistance, support, and protection; their misdeeds will be removed from them and that they will be rewarded according to the best of what they did; and they will not be wronged. Since they "purchase" the next life in exchange for this life, they have made what the Qur'an calls a "good bargain." Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him.

But what will happen to them at the end of their lives? Where and when will Allah meet them at the hour He has appointed for their death? Neither believers nor unbelievers know where and when they will die. This fact is explained in Surah Luqman in these words:

Truly Allah has knowledge of the Hour, sends down abundant rain, and knows what is in the womb. And no self knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no self knows in what land it will die. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Surah Luqman, 34)

Together with this, the Qur'an informs us how death will come to believers, how their souls will be taken, and what will happen at the moment of death. As far as we know, believers experience death as a very gentle passage, like a momentary change in dimension. Just like the person whom Allah causes to be "as dead during his sleep" (Surat az-Zumar, 42) and wakes up the next morning to a new day, when believers die, they will be taken out of the worldly dimension and pass to the next dimension (Certainly Allah knows the truth.)

Allah announced this gentle and easy passage in Surat an-Nazi'at, 2, where He points to the appointed angels and says "**those who draw out gently.**"

Another verse tells about the angels' conversation when they come to take a believer's soul:

Those the angels take in a virtuous state. They say: "Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you did." (Surat an-Nahl, 32)

The following verse describes a believer's death:

The greatest terror will not upset them, and the angels will welcome them: "This is your Day, the one that you were promised." (Surat an-Anbiya', 103)

Clearly, believers who have led a good life in this world will have a beautiful and easy death, and their life in the next world will begin when they are met by angels. From that moment on, all of their relations with this world will cease, and they will be sent to an appointed place where they will come before Allah's Presence. As it was from the beginning, so it continues: comfort and ease await all believers.

AN EASY ACCOUNTING

After the believers' souls are taken gently by angels comes the moment of accounting, when all human beings will come before our Lord's Presence with all that they have done.

The course of events begun on the Day of Rising will continue with the resurrection of everyone who has ever lived with a new body and their gathering around the flames of Hell. Later, all of the witnesses will be brought in, each person's book of deeds will be opened, and everyone will account for what he or she did in the world. After this, all believers will be saved from the flames of Hell by Allah's mercy and taken to Paradise. The Qur'an describes the end of the world and the believers' state on that day in some detail.

The end of the world begins with the first blow of the trumpet. The world and the universe will be destroyed forever, mountains will break into pieces, the seas will boil, and the sky will be destroyed...

With the second blow, human beings will be resurrected and gather in one place to account for their actions. Everything they did, no matter how small, will be revealed to witnesses and to the one giving the account. This moment will bring a deadening shame to unbelievers, but joy and excitement to believers, for the Qur'an refers to that day as the **"Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who had faith along with him"** (Surat at-Tahrim, 8)

Allah promises: **"We will certainly help Our Messengers and those who believe both in the life of this world and on the Day the witnesses appear,"** (Surah Ghafir, 51)

On the last day, sincere believers will receive the book of their worldly deeds on their "right side." Their accounting will be easy, as the Qur'an says, and they will be considered worthy enough to enter Paradise.

As for him who is given his Book in his right hand, he will say: "Here, come and read my Book!" (Surat al-Haqqa, 19-22)

Believers, who are to receive what our Lord has promised, are excited and happy on **"the Day of Timeless Eternity"** (Surah Qaf, 34), and their state is described as follows:

As for him who is given his Book in his right hand, he will be given an easy reckoning and return to his family joyfully. (Surat al-Inshiqaq: 7-9)

When they have given their account, believers experience the joy of being saved. One verse says: **"Enter them [Gardens and Springs] in peace, in complete security!"** (Surat al-Hijr, 46) This is also described in another verse:

O self at rest and at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleasing and well-pleased! Enter among My servants! Enter My Paradise. (Surat al-Fajr, 27-30)

By then, Allah has forgiven the sins of those servants upon whom He has mercy, transformed their wrong actions into good, and given them permission to enter Paradise. These servants say:

..."If my people only knew how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored ones!"
(Surah Ya sin, 26-27)

In another verse, Allah announces this good news to the people of Paradise:

This is the Day when the sincerity of the sincere will benefit them. They will have Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever and ever. (Surat al-Ma'ida, 119)

My servants, you will feel no fear today; you will know no sorrow. (Surat az-Zukhruf, 68)

In another verse, Allah informs us that **"Paradise will be brought up close to the righteous, not far away"** (Surah Qaf, 31)

THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF PARADISE

"What is the example [i.e., description] of Paradise promised to the righteous like? It has rivers flowing under it, and its foodstuffs and cool shade never fail. That is the final fate of those who have done their duty. But the final fate of the disbelievers is the Fire." (Surat ar-Ra'd, 35)

Natural beauty and greenery are among Paradise's wonderful blessings. Mansions built in gardens, right next to springs, are another beauty. Paradise, in which there is **"neither burning sun nor bitter cold"** (Surat al-Insan, 13), has such a pleasant climate that no one is made uncomfortable. It contains no exhausting sweaty heat or freezing cold. In Paradise, Allah will admit believers into **"cool, refreshing shade"** (Surat an-Nisa', 57)

The expression "refreshing shade," along with revealing that the climate will be comfortable and just as a person would want it, points out that Paradise's environment and conditions have been designed to give the human spirit true satiety and comfort. Every thing and condition in Paradise will be just as a believer desires.

One of the natural beauties most mentioned by Allah in the Qur'an is that of "outpouring water" (Surat al-Waqi'a, 31).

As we observe in this earthly life, the human spirit derives great pleasure from water, especially flowing water. Lakes, rivers, waterfalls, and streams flowing in a forest all speak to the human spirit. All artificial pools and fountains in mansions, residences, estates, and villa gardens, as well as artificial and natural streams, arise from this longing for the spiritual aesthetic.

The main reason why these esthetic views are so pleasurable is because the human spirit has been created for Paradise. These beauties are described elsewhere, as follows:

In them [two other Gardens] are two gushing springs. (Surat ar-Rahman, 66)

The sight and sound of flowing water comfort and gladden the human heart. The sight and sound of water falling from above give pleasure and are a means whereby people can give thanks to Allah and praise His name. Especially if the water flows in the hills, among trees and greenery or runs over stones, it is a really impressive sight. It either collects in the place where it falls, or forms pools and flows from one place to another. Continually flowing water is a sign of endless and inexhaustible plenty.

As we learn in Surat al-Hijr, 45: **"The heedful will be amid Gardens and Springs."** Another verse reads: **"The heedful will be in shady nooks by springs"** (Surat al-Mursalat, 41)

The "shady nooks" may be special spaces created so that believers can sit and observe all of this beauty. (Allah knows best) As with mansions, these shady nooks also are placed in high places so that the people in Paradise can view the beauty below and see its many details. Shady nooks offer special pleasure to believers. For example, people are served various kinds of food and fruits there, come together there and hold pleasurable

conversations, and enjoy themselves there. Their being placed next to springs, spaces that give pleasure to the human soul, adds to their attractiveness. From these springs flow delicious waters.

Another natural beauty is the gardens. For example, the "**lush Meadows of the Gardens**" mentioned Surat ash-Shura, 22 have been prepared only for believers. One of their particular features is the harmony of natural beauty contained therein. Within them grow a never-ending variety of plants, similar to the most delicate and sweet-smelling ones on Earth, and several species of animals, both known and unknown to us.

The gardens are adorned with various fruit and other types of trees, plains of "**deep viridian green**" (Surat ar-Rahman, 64) plants and flowers, and, in some places, pools and fountains. Surat al-Waqi'a also mentions "**fruit-laden lote-trees with thorns removed**" and "**[banana] trees layered [with fruit]**" (28-29).

By reflecting upon all of these things, we can form a general view of Paradise. Some of its characteristics remind us of things in this world; others are unique blessings and beauties of Paradise that no one has ever seen or known, and that our minds cannot imagine or express. We must be aware that beautiful things and surprises are waiting for believers in Paradise, things and surprises prepared by Allah's infinite knowledge and beyond our imagination. As Surat ash-Shura, 22 tells us: "**They will have whatever they wish for with their Lord. That is the great favor,**" everything in Paradise, including all of its natural beauties, are brought into being in accordance with a believer's own desire and pleasure. In other words, Allah allows a believer's imagination a role in forming Paradise's environment as a favor from Him.

ENDLESS DELIGHT

Eat and drink with relish for what you did.(Surat al-Mursalat, 43)

The Qur'an announces that the people of Paradise are blessed with the finest food and various drinks. But since these people require no nourishment, we can understand that such food and drink have been created only to give pleasure.

This food resembles the food of this world. The people of Paradise will express this similarity in the following way:

Give the good news to those who believe and do right actions, that they will have Gardens with rivers flowing under them. When they are given fruit there as provision, they will say: "This is what we were given before." But they were only given a simulation of it. They will have there spouses of perfect purity, and will remain there timelessly, forever. (Surat al-Baqara, 25)

Many foods in this world address people's appetites and give pleasure by their appearance and taste. Of course Allah can easily create similar foods in Paradise to give pleasure to believers. But, unlike with earthly food, there will be no need to worry about gaining weight, cholesterol, overeating, and so on, for Allah tells them: **"Eat and drink with relish for what you did"** (Surat al-Mursalat, 43). Being able to eat and drink beyond any reckoning is a delightfully pleasant reward.

In order to attain Paradise, people are tested in this earthly life. Believers show great effort and zeal in order to please our Lord, for they turn to Him sincerely, thank Him continually, pray to Him, and repent of their sins. As a reward, Allah offers them the blessings of Paradise.

Leading all of the food mentioned in the Qur'an is meat. In Paradise, Allah gives believers **"any kind of fruit and meat that they desire"** (Surat at-Tur, 22), and will offer them **"any bird-meat they desire"** (Surat al-Waqi'a, 22). Moreover, their food will **"never run out"** (Surah Sad, 54), because believers will **"enter Paradise, provided for in it without any reckoning"** (Surah Ghafir, 40).

They will be able to eat as much as they want, for the amount and types of food available will never decrease, and no one will be forced to stop eating due to being full or feeling sick.

Fruit is perhaps the food most often mentioned in the Qur'an. In Paradise, believers receive whatever type of fruit they desire. The Qur'an describes this:

Its shading branches will droop down over them, its ripe fruit hanging ready to be picked. (Surat al-Insan, 14)

Thus, we understand that fruits of Paradise grow on trees in natural surroundings and that believers can easily pick and eat them. Surat al-Waqi'a 28-29 mentions **"fruit-laden lote-trees with thorns removed"** and **"[banana] trees layered [with fruit]"**, meaning that the fruit can be obtained easily due to Paradise's infinite blessings.

The fruit is so plentiful that the tree branches cannot bear its weight, and it is easy to reach because the branches bend down to the ground.

This fruit may be offered freely on golden and silver trays and tastefully designed plates to believers, who are sitting on thrones and conversing with one another. Certainly all seeds and traces of rot and bruising that annoy people in this world have been removed, as befits Paradise. All fruits are offered to believers freely, with their eye-catching beauty and without blemish.

Fruit also adds further color and aesthetic beauty to Paradise. The sight of trees laden with all sorts of colorful fruits lends even more beauty to the wonderful landscape. The predominant color is green, and within that green are yellows, oranges, and reds that form a beautiful view that strikes the human eye. As an indication of Allah's mighty artistry, this view is another cause for thanksgiving.

Certainly, many kinds of drinks are also desirable. For instance, Surat as-Saffat, 45 mentions **"a cup from a flowing spring passing round among them."** In Paradise, believers are given **"the choicest sealed wine to drink, whose seal is musk"** (Surat al-Mutaffifin, 25-27). As these verses state, whatever they drink is also sweet-smelling and, of course, this wine is unlike any earthly wine.

The people who drink it will not become intoxicated or have their awareness impaired. Allah says that these drinks will be offered in glasses. They will not cause headaches, a loss of control of themselves, or any alteration in their minds. Young men whom Allah appointed for this service freely offer these drinks.

WHERE BELIEVERS LIVE IN PARADISE

Allah has promised the men and women of the believers Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever, and fine dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. And Allah's good pleasure is even greater. That is the great victory. (Surat at-Tawba: 72)

As we said earlier, the houses where believers live their earthly lives are "**places in which Allah has permitted to be built and in which His name is remembered**" (Surat an-Nur, 36), places that are cared for and kept spotlessly clean according to Allah's command. Houses in Paradise are like these, in that they are incomparably refreshing places in which Allah is remembered and offered thanksgiving.

In the same way as these beautiful houses and mansions may be built amid natural beauty, it is also possible that they may have been built in outstandingly modern cities with aesthetically beautiful architecture and superior technology.

The houses mentioned in the Qur'an are generally built amid natural beauty, as the following verse informs us:

But those who heed their Lord will have mansions raised upon mansions high, beneath which running waters flow. That is Allah's promise. Allah does not break His promise. (Surat az-Zumar, 20)

Mansions located in high places, with views around and below them, provide a detailed panorama that allows their inhabitants to perceive many beautiful things at the same time.

The Qur'an mentions that water runs below those mansions built in high places. Thus, in order to see this view, the mansions may contain sitting-rooms with picture windows or with glass on all four sides. In such mansions, "designed to provide the human spirit with the greatest amount of pleasure possible, believers lounge on their thrones, enjoy the best fruits and drinks and, as they look down from above, derive pleasure from looking at one beautiful view after another.

The mansions are designed and furnished with the highest quality materials and the most harmonious colors, and feature comfortable armchairs and thrones facing each other. As "**gold-encrusted thrones**" (Surat al-Waqi'a, 15) and "**thrones lined up**" (Surat at-Tur, 20) maintain, thrones are symbols of wealth, splendor, and power.

Believers, to whom Allah has granted Paradise's eternal blessings, have been found worthy of such beauty. Sitting and reclining on their thrones, and surrounded by unimaginable beauty, they continually remember Allah. The Qur'an states:

They will enter Gardens of Eden, where they will be adorned with gold bracelets and pearls, and where their clothing will be of silk. They will say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed all sadness from us. Truly, our Lord is Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Thankful: He Who has lodged us, out of His favor, in the Abode of Permanence, where no weariness or fatigue affects us." (Surah Fatir, 33-35)

Reclining upon soft couches, believers **"gaze around them"** (Surat al-Mutaffifin, 23). Just seeing Paradise's magnificent views and beauties is a feast for the eyes and a great blessing. This will be an enjoyable banquet for believers to behold.

To share these beauties and pleasures with all believers, regardless of when they led their earthly existence, is a blessing that can be realized fully only in Paradise. For example, to sit on facing thrones and converse with Musa (as), 'Isa (as), or with pious believers and the Prophet's Companions, as well as to remember Allah with them, is not a pleasure that the world can grant; this pleasure belongs only to Paradise.

In Paradise, everything believers desire will be created and brought to them by special servants appointed for that task. The Qur'an informs us that:

Circulating among them will be youths like hidden pearls. (Surat at-Tur, 24)

Believers, whom Allah has made worthy of Paradise, are highly select and valuable persons. The fact that they are in a position of **"high honor"** (Surat as-Saffat, 42) shows the value that Allah places upon them. The servants mentioned above, who attend immediately to the believers' every wish and give them free and interrupted service, are described in the Qur'an as ageless young men:

Ageless youths will circulate among them, serving them. Seeing them, you would think them scattered pearls. (Surat al-Insan, 19)

These servants, whose sole purpose is to attend to the believers' wishes, and the fact that the blessings are freely offered with such perfect service, are other examples of glorious beauty. The gadgets used in this service also have great value and are of high quality, for:

Platters and cups of gold will be passed around among them, and they will have there all that their hearts desire and in which their eyes find delight. You will remain in it timelessly, forever. (Surat az-Zukhruf, 71)

While in this world, believers attend to many things, among them getting as close as possible to the blessings of life in Paradise. We can learn about the magnificent material used for clothing there. Allah teaches people in this world to wear fine clothing, as stated in:

O Children of Adam! We have sent down clothing to you to conceal your private parts, and fine apparel. But the garment of the fear of Allah – that is the best! That is one of Allah's Signs, so that hopefully you will pay heed. (Surat al-A'raf, 26)

In Surat al-A'raf, 31, Allah urges believers to wear clean and fine clothing: **"O Children of Adam! Wear fine clothing in every mosque. Eat and drink, but do not be profligate. He does not love the profligate."** Therefore, the clothing worn in Paradise will be several times more splendid and stylish than worldly clothing. The Qur'an especially mentions two kinds of material found in Paradise: silk and brocade. For example, it states

that believers will wear "**fine silk and rich brocade, face to face with one another**" (Surat ad-Dukhan, 53). In this world, these two materials are rare, expensive, and of high quality. Such clothing will give great aesthetic pleasure both to the person wearing them and the one who sees them being worn. The beauty and splendor of this clothing only enhances the perfection of those who wear it.

Of course, the material and clothing found there is not limited to these two, for Allah, Who granted these great rewards, will clothe the people of Paradise in many more beautiful garments made of many more beautiful materials. He can create clothing styles and materials that are unknown to us in this world.

The Qur'an tells us that this beautiful clothing is ornamented with jewelry to enhance its attractiveness. Gold and silver bracelets and pearls are mentioned specifically, as in the following verses:

Allah will admit those who believe and do right actions into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, where they will be adorned with gold bracelets and pearls, and where their clothing will be of silk. (Surat al-Hajj, 23)

They will wear green garments of fine silk and rich brocade. They will be adorned with silver bracelets. And their Lord will give them a pure draught to drink. (Surat al-Insan, 21)

As this verse maintains, beautiful jewelry complements fine clothing, and both offered for the pleasure of believers.

The basic quality of the materials in Paradise is their varied delicacy and striking beauty, both of which are reflections of Allah's eternal knowledge and artistry. For example, thrones are inlaid with precious stones and arranged carefully in high places; clothing is made of silk and brocade, and adorned with gold and silver ornaments.

Allah has given many details about Paradise in the Qur'an, but the expressions that He has used allow believers to use their imagination open. In Paradise, (Allah surely knows best) every believer will have all kinds of blessings, views, and places especially designed for his or her own pleasure. Of course, apart from the blessings announced in the Qur'an, Allah has prepared many more surprises for believers, whom He has made worthy of Paradise.

SPOUSES OF THE PEOPLE OF PARADISE

But as for those who have faith and do right actions, We will admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever and ever. In them, they will have spouses of perfect purity... (Surat an-Nisa', 57)

Paradise is a magnificent place of eternal life that Allah has prepared as a reward for His faithful servants. As we saw earlier, the Qur'an describes Paradise by telling of the houses people will live in, the food and drink they will enjoy, the clothes they will wear, and of all the beautiful things to be found there. In Paradise, just as in this world, life continues to be lived. Of course that life is far too wonderful to be compared to this life, but there are some general similarities. For this reason, when believers pass from this earthly life to the afterworld, they encounter no shock or strangeness and thus will adapt easily.

Their new eternal life in Paradise will be similar to the one they lived here. In other words, they will have the best food and drink, the finest clothing, splendid homes, and spouses. As the Qur'an says, they will enter Paradise together with the spouses that Allah has presented to them as a blessing, and they will be welcomed with a joyful celebration. (Surat az-Zukhruf, 70)

The Qur'an describes the women of Paradise as "**spouses of perfect purity**" (Surat an-Nisa', 57). In addition, all of this world's deficiencies, worries, and needs are completely absent in Paradise: "**Indeed, We have produced them [i.e., the women of Paradise] in a [new] creation.**" (Surat al-Waqi'a, 35) This new creation will have all of the excellent things appropriate to Paradise.

When we consider a creation suitable for the perfections of Paradise, these general characteristics of women in Paradise come to mind: Their hair is always clean and shiny, their skin is smooth and clear, and delightful aromas come from their bodies. (Allah surely knows best.)

Another feature of the women given in marriage to believers in Paradise is that they are "**of equal age**" (Surah Sad: 52) who were created only for their husbands. They are mentioned in the Qur'an as having "**eyes reserved for them alone.**" (Surat as-Saffat, 48)

Another verse says in this regard:

In them are maidens with eyes for them alone, untouched before them by either man or jinn. (Surat ar-Rahman, 56)

The fact that they are mentioned "**as if they were [delicate] eggs, well protected**" (Surat as-Saffat, 49) or "**dark-eyed maidens like hidden pearls**" (Surat al-Waqi'a, 23) leads us to believe that they were created and preserved for their husbands alone. The word "hidden" indicates that they are as difficult to obtain as they are valuable to possess. Their being compared to an egg or a pearl may indicate that their skin is smooth and shiny. (Allah knows the truth.)

The desire that a man feels for a woman who belongs only to him, and who shows him interest and affection, gives the human spirit much pleasure. Of course, the source of this strong feeling must be created in the believer's spirit according to the norms of Paradise. The human spirit takes great delight in fine conversation, courtesy, and being complemented. So, in Paradise this desire can be obtained with women who **"limit their glances to their own mates"** (Surat ar-Rahman, 56). In Surat ar-Rahman, 70, Allah describes these women of Paradise as **"sweet, lovely maidens."**

As **"secluded in cool pavilions"** in Surat ar-Rahman, 72 indicates, the wives of believers exist only for their husbands. Likewise, **"untouched before them by either man or jinn"** emphasizes their virginity. Surat al-Waqi'a, 36, which proclaims that **"[We] made them purest virgins"** strengthens this idea. Allah describes believers and their wives in Paradise, in shady nooks and reclining on their thrones, as people who **"are busy enjoying themselves"** (Surah Ya Sin, 55-56).

There, all believers have their own wives, who have been created wonderfully and with all of the qualities that a person could desire. The fact that they are **"devoted, passionate, of like age"** (Surat al-Waqi'a, 37) shows that the women are bound by a passion and affection based not on the ignorant worldly impulse to "make a profit and trust in the future," but only on Allah's consent.

By **"sweet, lovely maidens"** (Surat ar-Rahman, 70), Allah points out that the beauty of women's faces is another characteristic of Paradise. The shining inner beauty in their faces reflects the pureness of their spirit. This expression could mean that they have a face that is symmetrical, original, flawless, and smooth. This originality could be hidden in their eye color, nose structure, or in their eyebrows, jaw, and cheekbones. In short, it could be in every detail of their facial construction. The verse **"We will marry them to maidens with large, [beautiful] eyes"** (Surat at-Tur, 20) draws attention to one detail: their large eyes.

Indeed, engaged in conversation while sitting on thrones or opposite each other in the shades, the focus of attention will be a person's face. While speaking with someone, we look at his or her face. Engaged in good conversation with a beautiful-faced woman speaking of interesting things in a beautiful place where Allah is remembered will give a person indescribable pleasure.

Of course, the perfection of these women is not limited to their faces, for they are created from head to toe with a wonderful variety. Surat an-Naba', 33, mentioning the beauty of their bodies, says **"nubile maidens of similar age."** Another verse also draws attention to the fact that they are of the same age: **"Beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, (companions) of equal age"** (Surah Sad, 52). Since age, as understood in the common worldly sense, is of no consequence in the eternal life, this verse shows that each of them will be of a suitable age for the other.

The Qur'an compares women to **"rubies and coral"** (Surat ar-Rahman, 58). These elegant and valuable stones, which are so pleasing to the eye, are used in the Qur'an to stress these women's striking beauty. We can imagine that comparing the women to rubies and coral is meant to describe their bright and pure complexion.

Due to these terse comparisons and essential descriptions, believers can understand how great a reward Allah has prepared for them. Thus, they pray even more to attain Allah's good pleasure and mercy, to be received into His Paradise, and exert great effort to attain it.

Allah has not revealed all of Paradise's blessings in the Qur'an, for they are beyond any human being's ability to imagine and conceive. In Paradise, Allah offers believers countless blessings that the eye has never seen and the ear has never heard.

A PARADISE BEYOND THE IMAGINATION

They will have there all that their hearts desire and in which their eyes find delight. You will remain in it timelessly, forever. (Surat az-Zukhruf: 71)

We can get a general idea of what Paradise is like from the fact that the blessings of Paradise are similar to those in this world (Surat al-Baqara, 25) and from the descriptions and comparisons found in the Qur'an. Allah said in the Qur'an that He **"will admit them into Paradise, which He has made known to them."** (Surah Muhammad, 6)

So we can, with Allah's permission, glean some information while still living this earthly life. However, Allah bestows this knowledge only to give us "an idea of what Paradise is like, for in reality its beauty and blessings are beyond our conception. For example, the verse **"in it there are rivers of water that will never spoil, and rivers of milk whose taste will never change, and rivers of wine, delightful to all who drink it, and rivers of honey of undiluted purity"** (Surah Muhammad, 15) shows us that Paradise contains excellences that cannot be compared with things in this world. A hadith also indicates this unimaginable beauty:

Allah said: "I have prepared for My pious servants things which have never been seen by an eye, nor heard by an ear, or (even) imagined by a human being." (Muslim)

In one verse, Allah says that believers will live in Paradise as His welcome guests:

But those who heed their Lord will have Gardens through which rivers flow, to live in for ever as a welcome from Allah. What is with Allah is better for those who are truly good. (Surah Al 'Imran, 198)

In this verse, Allah describes Paradise as a place of celebration. The end of the world, passing the test, and reaching one's true homeland is certainly a reward worth celebrating. This celebration's duration, dimensions, and content will be too glorious to compare with anything on Earth.

An eternal life full of such never-ending blessings brings a joy that belongs only to Paradise: not to grow tired. Believers in Paradise speak of this excellence as **"no weariness or fatigue affects us"** (Surah Fatir, 35).

Of course, this includes mental fatigue. People living under this world's prevailing conditions tire easily, because their bodies are created weak. When they get tired, their minds begin to get cloudy, they lose concentration and find it hard to think and conceptualize. But this does not happen in Paradise, for its people's minds are always open, and their consciousness is clear so that they can perceive Allah's blessings perfectly and take pleasure from them. Since this sense of fatigue, which comes from the world's imperfections, is eliminated, believers can have the uninterrupted benefit of endless blessings. People will find perfect joy in Paradise's blessings and go from one blessing to another.

In an environment with no fatigue or boredom, Allah rewards believers by creating **"whatever they wish"** (Surat ash-Shura, 22; Surat al-Furqan, 16; Surat az-Zumar, 34). There, they have everything that their hearts want. In Surat al-Kahf, 35, Allah says that He will give believers more than they can desire or imagine, and that these blessings will be increased several-fold in Paradise. One hadith paints the beauty of Paradise as follows:

I asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Of what was the creation made?" He replied: "Of water." We asked: "(As for) Paradise, what is its foundation?" He said: "One brick of gold and one brick of silver. Its mortars are of musk of strong scent, its stones are pearls and emeralds, and its soil is of saffron. Whoever enters it will be in bliss and not in want, live in bliss and not die, their clothes will not get old, and their youth will not end." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi)

Allah, Who created human beings, certainly knows better than they what their hearts desire, and so will create these things for believers as a reward in Paradise. The Qur'an announces some of these blessings; the rest are left to the pleasure and desire of the believers' imagination. Generally speaking, all believers delight in the same things, with only slight differences in details. A person can ask the Lord for blessings that appear impossible under this world's conditions, or for blessings of which they have no knowledge. Another verse describes the incomparable beauty of these things:

Platters and cups of gold will be passed around among them, and they will have there all that their hearts desire and in which their eyes find delight. You will remain in it timelessly, forever. (Surat az-Zukhruf, 71)

From this verse, we can understand that believers expect surprises in Paradise; that they will be pleased with, and derive pleasure from, what they see. They also feel happiness when they see the pleasure and happiness experienced by other believers.

Also, we must not forget that one of the greatest blessings of Paradise is protection from the agonies of Hell (Surat ad-Dukhan, 56). All of these things provide a great means of thanksgiving for believers, who can see Hell when they desire and speak with its inhabitants. The Qur'an describes how believers give thanks to Allah, as follows:

They will say: "Beforehand we used to live in fear among our families. But Allah was gracious to us and safeguarded us from the punishment of the searing wind. Beforehand we certainly used to call upon Him because He is the All-Good, the Most Merciful." (Surat at-Tur, 26-28)

In the Qur'an, Allah uses different names when referring to the gardens of Paradise, such as Gardens of Eden, Gardens of Refuge, Gardens of Firdaws, and Gardens of Delight. These names may express the different sections in which various pleasures are to be experienced. (Allah knows the truth.) It is also possible that Paradise may have various degrees or different sections. We can infer this from the following verse:

But as for those who come to Him as believers, having done right actions, they will have the highest ranks. (Surah Taha, 75)

The Qur'an describes Paradise as: "Wherever you look, you will see pleasure and great dominion." (Surat al-Insan, 20)

The following hadith indicates that every detail found in Paradise holds great beauties and blessings: *"There is no tree in Paradise that does not have a trunk of gold"* (Tirmidhi). Every corner is furnished with countless blessings, thanks to Allah's incomparable knowledge. These things are prepared only for believers, whom Allah forgives in His mercy and accepts into His Paradise.

In the Qur'an, Allah describes the believers' state in Paradise as follows:

We will strip away any rancor in their hearts – brothers, resting on couches face-to-face. (Surat al-Hijr, 47)

Remaining in them timelessly, forever, with no desire to move away from them. (Surat al-Kahf, 108)

THE HIGHEST BLESSING: ALLAH'S GOOD PLEASURE

Allah has promised the men and women of the believers Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever, and fine dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. And Allah's good pleasure is even greater. That is the great victory. (Surat at-Tawba, 72)

Earlier, we looked at the dazzling blessings found in Paradise. The picture that emerges is one of letting people experience the greatest pleasures and delights of the five senses.

But the biggest blessing of all is Allah's good pleasure, and the joy and happiness a believer feels when he or she wins it. As one hadith also relates: "*Allah would say to the inmates of Paradise: 'I shall cause My pleasure to alight upon you' "* (Muslim). Moreover, being content with everything that Allah has given and offering Him continual thanksgiving brings a noble contentment. The Qur'an draws our attention to this, as follows:

Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the Great Victory. (Surat al-Ma'ida, 119)

The most striking expression of what believers feel when they win Allah's good pleasure is that He will manifest Himself to them in a way that they can see Him. This is impossible in the world because, as the Qur'an says: "**Eyesight cannot perceive Him**" (Surat al-An'am, 10) But according to the Qur'an, in the next life and in a certain way Allah will manifest Himself to His believing servants. Only Allah knows how this will happen. But we are informed in the Qur'an that the believers' "**faces that Day will be radiant, gazing at their Lord**" (Surat al-Qiyama, 22-23) and "**Peace! A word from a Merciful Lord**" (Surah Ya sin, 58) will be heard. Believers will be "**on seats of honor in the presence of an All-Powerful King**" (Surat al-Qamar, 55).

In other words, the greatest possible blessing that believers can have is the deep sense of Allah's mercy and will. By winning His good pleasure, they experience a joy and a happiness that cannot be compared with any material blessing.

Actually, it is Allah's will that gives value to Paradise's other blessings. The same blessings may exist on Earth to a certain extent, but they have no meaning for believers as long as they surpass the limits Allah established.

Believers should think carefully about this extremely important point. The real thing that gives a blessing its value is something far beyond its intrinsic pleasure and delight, for its real value lies in the fact that Allah "granted" it. Believers who use the blessing and thank Allah for it feel that they have received Allah's gift; that the Lord loves, protects, and looks after them; and gives them a taste of His mercy. They take real joy from this.

A blessing is not an end; rather, it is a means to an end. As its purpose is to encourage men and women to offer greater thanksgiving to Allah, all of Paradise's blessings have only one goal: To lead believers to offer eternal thanksgiving to Allah. This is what gives them their value. In short, the blessings of Paradise are no more than a means whereby believers can approach Allah and attain the indescribable joy of winning His eternal friendship, love, and approval. This is why Allah's good pleasure is the greatest blessing of Paradise and far above all other material pleasures.

Let us consider one of Paradise's most striking blessings, one that is frequently mentioned in the Qur'an: beautiful women, who represent the height of the aesthetic idea. Just to be with them is a great blessing. The Qur'an describes the beauty of their faces, their skin, and even their bosoms. With these magnificent women, one of Allah's greatest material blessings – sexuality – can be experienced eternally in the most wonderful way. In the same manner, unmarried women will be married to young palace servants. This also is a free gift to them from Allah.

However, what makes these women so valuable is not merely their beauty, but the fact that they are known to be a gift from Allah. Indeed, the greatest pleasure that can be had is that which comes from receiving the love, closeness, grace, and benevolence of the Giver. No matter how valuable a gift may be, Allah's gift is more valuable for the pleasure it gives in being deemed worthy to be of the gifts of Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and in receiving it.

Accordingly, if they were not Allah's gifts, all blessings would lose their meaning for a believer. Prophet Yusuf's (as) great nobility orients a believer's moral sense in that direction. The Qur'an tells how the wife of an Egyptian governor, desired Yusuf (as) and even forced herself on him. We are told that Yusuf (as) found her attractive, but avoided this forbidden relationship due to Allah's sign to him. When she continued to press him, he preferred to go to prison rather than to commit adultery. He said: **"My Lord, prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do"** (Surah Yusuf, 33).

The fact that he found the prison's extremely difficult conditions preferable to what the governor's wife wanted him to do shows the importance that a believer places upon Allah's good pleasure. To act in such a manner and to know that you have gained His approval is the most important thing in a believer's heart. If material blessings present themselves to a believer in a way that goes against Allah's good pleasure, they lose their value.

In Paradise, all material blessings are approved by Allah. He especially created beautiful women and gives them as a gift to believers. Houses, food, natural beauty, and everything else are blessings that Allah offers, and this is what makes them valuable.

Thus, the human heart can be satisfied only in Paradise, for it was created to serve Allah and takes pleasure only in His generously given gifts. In this world, it takes refuge in places that are reminiscent of Paradise; that is, in places whose blessings are used with thanks and in a way that gains Allah's good pleasure. This is why Paradise on Earth, the ideal long cherished by unbelievers and atheists, is impossible. If you were to take things in this world that resemble Paradise's material beauties and gather them in one place, they would have no meaning without Allah's approval. Moreover, He may also destroy the pleasure that might be derived from such material beauties.

In short, Paradise is a gift of Allah and is valuable only because of that. The people of Paradise experience eternal happiness and joy because **"they are honored servants"** (Surat an-Anbiya', 26).

The wisest word that can be spoken there is a word that praises Allah's mighty name: **"Master of Majesty and Generosity"** (Surat ar-Rahman, 78).

CONVERSATIONS IN PARADISE

They will say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed all sadness from us. Truly our Lord is Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Thankful: He Who has lodged us, out of His favor, in the Abode of Permanence, where no weariness or fatigue affects us." (Surah Fatir, 34-35)

The Qur'an contains detailed accounts of conversations among believers, to whom Allah has given an exalted position in Paradise. These conversations are important, because they provide a good example for believers in this life. The verses: **"They will hear no idle talk in it, nor any call to sin. All that is said is: 'Peace! Peace!'"** (Surat al-Waqi'a, 25-26) show the importance of avoiding empty talk. Elsewhere, the same point is expressed as:

They will hear no idle talk nor any lying there, as a recompensation from your Lord, a commensurate gift. (Surat an-Naba', 35-36)

Now, let us look at every word of wisdom in the conversations taking place in Paradise.

After giving their account, believers are sent to Paradise in groups. The gates of Paradise are opened for them, and they are greeted by the gatekeeper, who says to them:

..."Peace be upon you! You have done well, so enter it timelessly, forever." (Surat az-Zumar, 73)

In another verse, it is said that angels who will come in to welcome them from every gate will say to them:

"Peace be upon you because of your steadfastness! How wonderful is the Ultimate Abode!" (Surat ar-Ra'd, 24)

Believers answer:

"Praise be to Allah, Who has fulfilled His promise to us and made us the inheritors of this land, letting us settle in the Garden wherever we want. How excellent is the wage of those who work!" (Surat az-Zumar, 74)

"Beforehand we used to live in fear among our families. But Allah was gracious to us and safeguarded us from the punishment of the searing wind. Beforehand we certainly used to call upon Him because He is the All-Good, the Most Merciful." (Surat at-Tur, 26-28)

"Praise be to Allah, Who has guided us to this! We would not have been guided had Allah not guided us. The Messengers of our Lord came with the Truth." (Surat al-A'raf, 43)

This verse continues:

It will be proclaimed to them: "This is your Garden, which you have inherited for what you did." (Surat al-A'raf, 43)

In another verse, the believers' thanksgiving in Paradise is described as:

Their call there is: "Glory be to You, O Allah!" Their greeting there is: "Peace!" The end of their call is: "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!" (Surah Yunus, 10)

Another verse says:

They will say: "Praise be to Allah, Who has removed all sadness from us. Truly our Lord is Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Thankful: He Who has lodged us, out of His favor, in the Abode of Permanence, where no weariness or fatigue affects us." (Surah Fatir, 34-35)

The conversation between believers in Paradise is related as follows:

They will turn to one another, asking each other [about their past lives]. One of them will say: "I used to have a friend who would say to me: 'Are you one of those who say that it is true, that after we have died and are turned to dust and bones, we will face a Reckoning?'"

[And] he will add: "Would you like to look [and see him]?"

So he will look down and see him in the midst of the Blazing Fire and say: "By Allah, you almost ruined me! If it were not for the blessing of my Lord, I would surely be [now] among those who are given over [to suffering]. But then [Omy friends in Paradise,] is it [really] so that we are not to die [again,] beyond our previous death and we shall never [again] be made to suffer? Truly this is the Great Victory!" (Surat as-Saffat, 50-60)

As we see from these verses, believers are aware that they have arrived at this final happy end only by Allah's merciful will. Their consciences are keen, and they remember the past. Perhaps their whole lives are shown to them in detail, where they see the members of their intimate circle trying to make them deviate from the right path. And they understand that if Allah had not protected them with His endless grace, they could have followed the wrong path. Believers who come to this awareness give thanks to Allah in Paradise, just as they did in the world.

The verses below tell about the words spoken between the people of Paradise and those in Hell, and give expression to the latter group's sorrow:

In Gardens they will ask the evildoers: "What caused you to enter Saqar [Hell]?"

They will say: "We were not among the prayerful, and we did not feed the poor. We plunged with those who plunged, and denied the Day of Judgment until the Certainty came to us." The intercession of those who intercede will not help them. (Surat al-Muddaththir, 40-48)

So, the people in Hell confess the evil that they did during their earthly lives, and understand that there is no escape from their new abode. Another such conversation is related in these verses:

The Companions of Paradise will call out to the Companions of Hell: "We have found that what our Lord promised us is true. Have you found that what your Lord promised you is true?" They will say: "Yes, we have!" Between them a herald will proclaim: "May the curse of Allah be upon the wrongdoers, those who bar access to the Way of Allah, desiring to make it crooked, and reject the hereafter." (Surat al-A'raf, 44-45)

The Companions of Hell will call out to the Companions of Paradise: "Throw down some water to us, or some of what Allah has given you as provision." They will say: "Allah has forbidden them to the disbelievers." (Surat al-A'raf, 50)

So, the suffering of those in Hell increases several fold. In addition to the many pains they endure, they can see the blessings of Paradise and speak with the people there. However, they cannot attain the blessings that those people enjoy, and it is too late to be sorry. This spiritual suffering is described in another verse:

On the Day when those who were unbelievers are exposed to the Fire, [it will be said to them]: "You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life, and enjoyed yourself in it. So today you are being repaid with the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the earth without any right, and for being deviators." (Surat al-Ahqaf, 20)

So, disbelievers are imprisoned forever in Hell as a "reward" for the evil that they committed during their earthly lives. But believers have found their perfect happiness and salvation.

SOME SUPERSTITIONS ABOUT PARADISE

The verses depicting Paradise awake in the reader today the same sense of grandeur, quality, beauty, richness, bounteousness, well-being, and prosperity as they did 14 centuries ago. All of the values associated with Paradise have been desired by people of every period of history and of every social class. For example, the gold, silver, and precious jewels in Paradise, as described in the Qur'an, are even more in demand today than they were in the past.

The Qur'an also mentions that silk will be found in Paradise. Today, either as clothing or for decorative purposes, silk is preferred as a high quality material. At the same time, it is a symbol of wealth and grandeur. All of the precious things used to describe Paradise are far more valuable today than they were 1,400 years ago.

Again, the beautiful residences, palaces, and mansions mentioned in the Qur'an are luxurious places desired by everyone regardless of when they live. Today's villas and mansions are all of this category, and are marks of distinction, quality, and wealth.

Similarly, the thrones, couches, and cushions of Paradise form a part of the most comfortable and grand interior decoration. This kind of aesthetically beautiful furnishing is today displayed in the grandest of places.

Allah is the owner of all material things, and it belongs to His glory to find His beloved servants worthy of all of these beautiful things, both in this life and the next.

Does Paradise Contain Things Not Mentioned in the Qur'an?

The Qur'an describes Paradise through examples and comparisons taken from this world, for people can imagine something unknown only in terms of that which is known to them. However basic the description might be, it gives a certain idea. The Qur'an's detailed and subtle descriptions of Paradise's blessings show us that these blessings and beauties are superior to the best, most beautiful, and highest quality things to be found in this world.

The Qur'an describes Paradise by giving examples of the most desirable, high quality, and rarest things. For example, women with large dark eyes have a rare quality that gives them an extremely aesthetic and attractive appearance. Therefore, women in Paradise have large, dark gazelle-like eyes. This does not mean that no women there have green, blue, or brown eyes, but only serves to emphasize the excellent quality of Paradise and Allah's statement that the finest things here are much finer there. To give another example: The Qur'an says that every kind of fruit is present in Paradise. But, in various verses, bananas and figs are generally singled out more often as the preferred fruits. Of course, these fruits are two blessings chosen from the infinite abundance of all fruits in Paradise.

The announcement that everything desired by everyone exists in Paradise for their pleasure and to fulfill their hearts' desire is enough to express the idea that Paradise's blessings are infinite and far beyond human imagination. Everyone understands the Qur'an to the degree of his or her faith, intelligence, and sincerity. Thus disbelievers who read it with ill-intentions will understand the verses about Paradise according to their own sterile ideas. However, Paradise's superior beauty is evident to anyone who thinks about such verses with an

open and intelligent awareness. Allah displays a perfect design even in the smallest details of this world; surely, it would be easy for Him to create far more excellent things than these.

Indifference

Some people are indifferent to Paradise, saying: "If it comes; fine. If it doesn't, that's fine too." However, in the afterlife there are only two possibilities: Paradise or Hell. There is no option to go to a place in between.

It is clear that someone who does not appreciate Paradise as is due, who does not long for or desire to attain it, is unworthy of it and will never be admitted to it. There is only one place for such a person to go: Hell. For this reason, being indifferent to Allah's greatest grace and gift to believers and not desiring to enter it, as well as persisting in this attitude is one of the clearest signs that he or she belongs among the people of Hell.

THE EVOLUTION DECEPTION

In the present day, there are people who live in a manner far removed from Allah, and who even reject faith and deny the existence of Allah for their own ends. On account of their blindness and mindless fearlessness, they try to influence others and turn them away from Allah. They have put forward a whole range of inconsistent ideas and twisted ideologies by which to do this. One of these is the theory of evolution.

The Ideological Collapse Of Darwinism

The aspect of Darwinism that stops it from being a claim of interest only to the scientific world and makes it of great importance to society as a whole is its ideological dimension. The answer it gives to the question of how living things, including mankind, came into existence makes Darwinism the basis of a number of philosophies, worldviews and political ideologies.

Here, we shall consider the relationship between Darwinism and materialist philosophy. Materialist philosophy, or "materialism," is a system of thought going as far back as ancient Greece. Materialism rests on the assumption that matter is the only thing that exists. According to materialist philosophy, matter has always existed, and will continue to do so for all time. Again according to this philosophy, nothing exists beyond matter.

Naturally, materialism is also reflected in the political arena, with communism indisputably taking pride of place in this regard. Karl Marx (1818-83) and Friedrich Engels (1820-95), regarded as the founders of communism, were also the founders of dialectical materialism. In any case, communism is nothing more than materialist philosophy adapted to the social sciences by Marx and Engels.

Communism is today regarded as an ideology consigned to the wastes of history, whereas the fact is that it is still exceedingly influential. The destructive effects of this ideology can still be felt in many countries.

This is where Darwinism assumes great importance. Since Darwinism, or the theory of evolution, maintains that living things were not created but came into being by chance, it has received a wide acceptance among materialist ideologies, and has been adopted as the "basic foundation" of communism in particular. All the main communist ideologues have accepted the theory word for word, and have based their ideologies upon it.

In a letter to Friedrich Engels in 1860, for instance, Karl Marx said of Darwin's book that "This is the book which contains the basis in natural history for our view."¹ In another letter the following year, this time to Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-64), Marx said: "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history."² Similarly Mao Tse Tung, the founder of Chinese communism, openly stated that "The foundations of Chinese socialism rest on Darwin and the theory of evolution."³

Thus the intellectual struggle against communism must be aimed at materialist philosophy and, therefore, the theory of evolution. It is also clear that the wide acceptance of the theory of evolution in society will further nourish materialism as well as communism.

The Scientific Collapse of Darwinism

Although this doctrine goes back as far as ancient Greece, the theory of evolution was advanced extensively in the nineteenth century. The most important development that made it the top topic of the world of science was Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859. In this book, he denied that God created different living species on Earth separately, for he claimed that all living beings had a common ancestor and had diversified over time through small changes. Darwin's theory was not based on any concrete scientific finding; as he also accepted, it was just an "assumption." Moreover, as Darwin confessed in the long chapter of his book titled "Difficulties of the Theory," the theory failed in the face of many critical questions.

Darwin invested all of his hopes in new scientific discoveries, which he expected to solve these difficulties. However, contrary to his expectations, scientific findings expanded the dimensions of these difficulties. The defeat of Darwinism in the face of science can be reviewed under three basic topics:

1) The theory cannot explain how life originated on Earth.

2) No scientific finding shows that the "evolutionary mechanisms" proposed by the theory have any evolutionary power at all.

3) The fossil record proves the exact opposite of what the theory suggests.

In this section, we will examine these three basic points in general outlines:

The First Insurmountable Step: The Origin of Life

The theory of evolution posits that all living species evolved from a single living cell that emerged on the primitive Earth 3.8 billion years ago. How a single cell could generate millions of complex living species and, if such an evolution really occurred, why traces of it cannot be observed in the fossil record are some of the questions that the theory cannot answer. However, first and foremost, we need to ask: How did this "first cell" originate?

Since the theory of evolution denies creation and any kind of supernatural intervention, it maintains that the "first cell" originated coincidentally within the laws of nature, without any design, plan or arrangement. According to the theory, inanimate matter must have produced a living cell as a result of coincidences. Such a claim, however, is inconsistent with the most unassailable rules of biology.

"Life Comes from Life"

In his book, Darwin never referred to the origin of life. The primitive understanding of science in his time rested on the assumption that living beings had a very simple structure. Since medieval times, spontaneous generation, which asserts that non-living materials came together to form living organisms, had been widely

accepted. It was commonly believed that insects came into being from food leftovers, and mice from wheat. Interesting experiments were conducted to prove this theory. Some wheat was placed on a dirty piece of cloth, and it was believed that mice would originate from it after a while.

Similarly, worms developing in meat was assumed to be evidence of spontaneous generation. However, it was later understood that worms did not appear on meat spontaneously, but were carried there by flies in the form of larvae, invisible to the naked eye.

Even when Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*, the belief that bacteria could come into existence from non-living matter was widely accepted in the world of science.

However, five years after the publication of Darwin's book, Louis Pasteur announced his results after long studies and experiments, that disproved spontaneous generation, a cornerstone of Darwin's theory. In his triumphal lecture at the Sorbonne in 1864, Pasteur said: "*Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from the mortal blow struck by this simple experiment.*"⁴

Advocates of the theory of evolution resisted these findings for a long time. However, as the development of science unraveled the complex structure of the cell of a living being, the idea that life could come into being coincidentally faced an even greater impasse.

Inconclusive Efforts in the Twentieth Century

The first evolutionist who took up the subject of the origin of life in the twentieth century was the renowned Russian biologist Alexander Oparin. With various theses he advanced in the 1930s, he tried to prove that a living cell could originate by coincidence. These studies, however, were doomed to failure, and Oparin had to make the following confession:

Unfortunately, however, the problem of the origin of the cell is perhaps the most obscure point in the whole study of the evolution of organisms.⁵

Evolutionist followers of Oparin tried to carry out experiments to solve this problem. The best known experiment was carried out by the American chemist Stanley Miller in 1953. Combining the gases he alleged to have existed in the primordial Earth's atmosphere in an experiment set-up, and adding energy to the mixture, Miller synthesized several organic molecules (amino acids) present in the structure of proteins.

Barely a few years had passed before it was revealed that this experiment, which was then presented as an important step in the name of evolution, was invalid, for the atmosphere used in the experiment was very different from the real Earth conditions.⁶

After a long silence, Miller confessed that the atmosphere medium he used was unrealistic.⁷

All the evolutionists' efforts throughout the twentieth century to explain the origin of life ended in failure. The geochemist Jeffrey Bada, from the San Diego Scripps Institute accepts this fact in an article published in *Earth* magazine in 1998:

Today as we leave the twentieth century, we still face the biggest unsolved problem that we had when we entered the twentieth century: How did life originate on Earth?⁸

The Complex Structure of Life

The primary reason why the theory of evolution ended up in such a great impasse regarding the origin of life is that even those living organisms deemed to be the simplest have incredibly complex structures. The cell of a living thing is more complex than all of our man-made technological products. Today, even in the most developed laboratories of the world, a living cell cannot be produced by bringing organic chemicals together.

The conditions required for the formation of a cell are too great in quantity to be explained away by coincidences. The probability of proteins, the building blocks of a cell, being synthesized coincidentally, is 1 in 10950 for an average protein made up of 500 amino acids. In mathematics, a probability smaller than 1 over 1050 is considered to be impossible in practical terms.

The DNA molecule, which is located in the nucleus of a cell and which stores genetic information, is an incredible databank. If the information coded in DNA were written down, it would make a giant library consisting of an estimated 900 volumes of encyclopedias consisting of 500 pages each.

A very interesting dilemma emerges at this point: DNA can replicate itself only with the help of some specialized proteins (enzymes). However, the synthesis of these enzymes can be realized only by the information coded in DNA. As they both depend on each other, they have to exist at the same time for replication. This brings the scenario that life originated by itself to a deadlock. Prof. Leslie Orgel, an evolutionist of repute from the University of San Diego, California, confesses this fact in the September 1994 issue of the *Scientific American* magazine:

It is extremely improbable that proteins and nucleic acids, both of which are structurally complex, arose spontaneously in the same place at the same time. Yet it also seems impossible to have one without the other. And so, at first glance, one might have to conclude that life could never, in fact, have originated by chemical means.⁹

No doubt, if it is impossible for life to have originated from natural causes, then it has to be accepted that life was "created" in a supernatural way. This fact explicitly invalidates the theory of evolution, whose main purpose is to deny creation.

Imaginary Mechanisms of Evolution

The second important point that negates Darwin's theory is that both concepts put forward by the theory as "evolutionary mechanisms" were understood to have, in reality, no evolutionary power.

Darwin based his evolution allegation entirely on the mechanism of "natural selection." The importance he placed on this mechanism was evident in the name of his book: *The Origin of Species, By Means of Natural Selection...*

Natural selection holds that those living things that are stronger and more suited to the natural conditions of their habitats will survive in the struggle for life. For example, in a deer herd under the threat of attack by wild animals, those that can run faster will survive. Therefore, the deer herd will be comprised of faster and

stronger individuals. However, unquestionably, this mechanism will not cause deer to evolve and transform themselves into another living species, for instance, horses.

Therefore, the mechanism of natural selection has no evolutionary power. Darwin was also aware of this fact and had to state this in his book *The Origin of Species*:

Natural selection can do nothing until favourable individual differences or variations occur.¹⁰

Lamarck's Impact

So, how could these "favorable variations" occur? Darwin tried to answer this question from the standpoint of the primitive understanding of science at that time. According to the French biologist Chevalier de Lamarck (1744-1829), who lived before Darwin, living creatures passed on the traits they acquired during their lifetime to the next generation. He asserted that these traits, which accumulated from one generation to another, caused new species to be formed. For instance, he claimed that giraffes evolved from antelopes; as they struggled to eat the leaves of high trees, their necks were extended from generation to generation.

Darwin also gave similar examples. In his book *The Origin of Species*, for instance, he said that some bears going into water to find food transformed themselves into whales over time.¹¹

However, the laws of inheritance discovered by Gregor Mendel (1822-84) and verified by the science of genetics, which flourished in the twentieth century, utterly demolished the legend that acquired traits were passed on to subsequent generations. Thus, natural selection fell out of favor as an evolutionary mechanism.

Neo-Darwinism and Mutations

In order to find a solution, Darwinists advanced the "Modern Synthetic Theory," or as it is more commonly known, Neo-Darwinism, at the end of the 1930's. Neo-Darwinism added mutations, which are distortions formed in the genes of living beings due to such external factors as radiation or replication errors, as the "cause of favorable variations" in addition to natural mutation.

Today, the model that stands for evolution in the world is Neo-Darwinism. The theory maintains that millions of living beings formed as a result of a process whereby numerous complex organs of these organisms (e.g., ears, eyes, lungs, and wings) underwent "mutations," that is, genetic disorders. Yet, there is an outright scientific fact that totally undermines this theory: Mutations do not cause living beings to develop; on the contrary, they are always harmful.

The reason for this is very simple: DNA has a very complex structure, and random effects can only harm it. The American geneticist B.G. Ranganathan explains this as follows:

First, genuine mutations are very rare in nature. Secondly, most mutations are harmful since they are random, rather than orderly changes in the structure of genes; any random change in a highly ordered system will be for the worse, not for the better. For example, if an earthquake were to shake a highly ordered structure such as a building, there would be a random change in the framework of the building which, in all probability, would not be an improvement.¹²

Not surprisingly, no mutation example, which is useful, that is, which is observed to develop the genetic code, has been observed so far. All mutations have proved to be harmful. It was understood that mutation, which is presented as an "evolutionary mechanism," is actually a genetic occurrence that harms living things, and leaves them disabled. (The most common effect of mutation on human beings is cancer.) Of course, a destructive mechanism cannot be an "evolutionary mechanism." Natural selection, on the other hand, "can do nothing by itself," as Darwin also accepted. This fact shows us that there is no "evolutionary mechanism" in nature. Since no evolutionary mechanism exists, no such any imaginary process called "evolution" could have taken place.

The Fossil Record: No Sign of Intermediate Forms

The clearest evidence that the scenario suggested by the theory of evolution did not take place is the fossil record.

According to this theory, every living species has sprung from a predecessor. A previously existing species turned into something else over time and all species have come into being in this way. In other words, this transformation proceeds gradually over millions of years.

Had this been the case, numerous intermediary species should have existed and lived within this long transformation period.

For instance, some half-fish/half-reptiles should have lived in the past which had acquired some reptilian traits in addition to the fish traits they already had. Or there should have existed some reptile-birds, which acquired some bird traits in addition to the reptilian traits they already had. Since these would be in a transitional phase, they should be disabled, defective, crippled living beings. Evolutionists refer to these imaginary creatures, which they believe to have lived in the past, as "**transitional forms.**"

If such animals ever really existed, there should be millions and even billions of them in number and variety. More importantly, the remains of these strange creatures should be present in the fossil record. In *The Origin of Species*, Darwin explained:

If my theory be true, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all of the species of the same group together must assuredly have existed.... Consequently, evidence of their former existence could be found only amongst fossil remains.¹³

Darwin's Hopes Shattered

However, although evolutionists have been making strenuous efforts to find fossils since the middle of the nineteenth century all over the world, no transitional forms have yet been uncovered. All of the fossils, contrary to the evolutionists' expectations, show that life appeared on Earth all of a sudden and fully-formed.

One famous British paleontologist, Derek V. Ager, admits this fact, even though he is an evolutionist:

The point emerges that if we examine the fossil record in detail, whether at the level of orders or of species, we find – over and over again – not gradual evolution, but the sudden explosion of one group at the expense of another.¹⁴

This means that in the fossil record, all living species suddenly emerge as fully formed, without any intermediate forms in between. This is just the opposite of Darwin's assumptions. Also, this is very strong evidence that all living things are created. The only explanation of a living species emerging suddenly and complete in every detail without any evolutionary ancestor is that it was created. This fact is admitted also by the widely known evolutionist biologist Douglas Futuyma:

Creation and evolution, between them, exhaust the possible explanations for the origin of living things. Organisms either appeared on the earth fully developed or they did not. If they did not, they must have developed from pre-existing species by some process of modification. If they did appear in a fully developed state, they must indeed have been created by some omnipotent intelligence.¹⁵

Fossils show that living beings emerged fully developed and in a perfect state on the earth. That means that **"the origin of species," contrary to Darwin's supposition, is not evolution, but creation.**

The Tale of Human Evolution

The subject most often brought up by advocates of the theory of evolution is the subject of the origin of man. The Darwinist claim holds that modern man evolved from ape-like creatures. During this alleged evolutionary process, which is supposed to have started 4-5 million years ago, some "transitional forms" between modern man and his ancestors are supposed to have existed. According to this completely imaginary scenario, four basic "categories" are listed:

1. Australopithecus
2. Homo habilis
3. Homo erectus
4. Homo sapiens

Evolutionists call man's so-called first ape-like ancestors *Australopithecus*, which means "South African ape." These living beings are actually nothing but an old ape species that has become extinct. Extensive research done on various *Australopithecus* specimens by two world famous anatomists from England and the USA, namely, Lord Solly Zuckerman and Prof. Charles Oxnard, shows that these apes belonged to an ordinary ape species that became extinct and bore no resemblance to humans.¹⁶

Evolutionists classify the next stage of human evolution as "*homo*," that is "man." According to their claim, the living beings in the *Homo* series are more developed than *Australopithecus*. Evolutionists devise a fanciful evolution scheme by arranging different fossils of these creatures in a particular order. This scheme is imaginary because it has never been proved that there is an evolutionary relation between these different classes. Ernst Mayr, one of the twentieth century's most important evolutionists, contends in his book *One Long Argument* that "particularly historical [puzzles] such as the origin of life or of *Homo sapiens*, are extremely difficult and may even resist a final, satisfying explanation."¹⁷

By outlining the link chain as *Australopithecus* > *Homo habilis* > *Homo erectus* > *Homo sapiens*, evolutionists imply that each of these species is one another's ancestor. However, recent findings of paleoanthropologists have revealed that *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* lived at different parts of the world at the same time.¹⁸

Moreover, a certain segment of humans classified as *Homo erectus* have lived up until very modern times. *Homo sapiens neandarthalensis* and *Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern man) co-existed in the same region.¹⁹

This situation apparently indicates the invalidity of the claim that they are ancestors of one another. A paleontologist from Harvard University, Stephen Jay Gould, explains this deadlock of the theory of evolution, although he is an evolutionist himself:

What has become of our ladder if there are three coexisting lineages of hominids (*A. africanus*, the robust australopithecines, and *H. habilis*), none clearly derived from another? Moreover, none of the three display any evolutionary trends during their tenure on earth.²⁰

Put briefly, the scenario of human evolution, which is "upheld" with the help of various drawings of some "half ape, half human" creatures appearing in the media and course books, that is, frankly, by means of propaganda, is nothing but a tale with no scientific foundation.

Lord Solly Zuckerman, one of the most famous and respected scientists in the U.K., who carried out research on this subject for years and studied *Australopithecus* fossils for 15 years, finally concluded, despite

being an evolutionist himself, that there is, in fact, no such family tree branching out from ape-like creatures to man.

Zuckerman also made an interesting "spectrum of science" ranging from those he considered scientific to those he considered unscientific. According to Zuckerman's spectrum, the most "scientific"—that is, depending on concrete data—fields of science are chemistry and physics. After them come the biological sciences and then the social sciences. At the far end of the spectrum, which is the part considered to be most "unscientific," are "extra-sensory perception"—concepts such as telepathy and sixth sense—and finally "human evolution." Zuckerman explains his reasoning:

We then move right off the register of objective truth into those fields of presumed biological science, like extrasensory perception or the interpretation of man's fossil history, where to the faithful [evolutionist] anything is possible – and where the ardent believer [in evolution] is sometimes able to believe several contradictory things at the same time.²¹

The tale of human evolution boils down to nothing but the prejudiced interpretations of some fossils unearthed by certain people, who blindly adhere to their theory.

Technology in the Eye and the Ear

Another subject that remains unanswered by evolutionary theory is the excellent quality of perception in the eye and the ear.

Before passing on to the subject of the eye, let us briefly answer the question of how we see. Light rays coming from an object fall oppositely on the eye's retina. Here, these light rays are transmitted into electric signals by cells and reach a tiny spot at the back of the brain, the "center of vision." These electric signals are perceived in this center as an image after a series of processes. With this technical background, let us do some thinking.

The brain is insulated from light. That means that its inside is completely dark, and that no light reaches the place where it is located. Thus, the "center of vision" is never touched by light and may even be the darkest place you have ever known. However, you observe a luminous, bright world in this pitch darkness.

The image formed in the eye is so sharp and distinct that even the technology of the twentieth century has not been able to attain it. For instance, look at the book you are reading, your hands with which you are holding it, and then lift your head and look around you. Have you ever seen such a sharp and distinct image as this one at any other place? Even the most developed television screen produced by the greatest television producer in the world cannot provide such a sharp image for you. This is a three-dimensional, colored, and extremely sharp image. For more than 100 years, thousands of engineers have been trying to achieve this sharpness. Factories, huge premises were established, much research has been done, plans and designs have been made for this purpose. Again, look at a TV screen and the book you hold in your hands. You will see that there is a big difference in sharpness and distinction. Moreover, the TV screen shows you a two-dimensional image, whereas with your eyes, you watch a three-dimensional perspective with depth.

For many years, tens of thousands of engineers have tried to make a three-dimensional TV and achieve the vision quality of the eye. Yes, they have made a three-dimensional television system, but it is not possible to

watch it without putting on special 3-D glasses; moreover, it is only an artificial three-dimension. The background is more blurred, the foreground appears like a paper setting. Never has it been possible to produce a sharp and distinct vision like that of the eye. In both the camera and the television, there is a loss of image quality.

Evolutionists claim that the mechanism producing this sharp and distinct image has been formed by chance. Now, if somebody told you that the television in your room was formed as a result of chance, that all of its atoms just happened to come together and make up this device that produces an image, what would you think? How can atoms do what thousands of people cannot?

If a device producing a more primitive image than the eye could not have been formed by chance, then it is very evident that the eye and the image seen by the eye could not have been formed by chance. The same situation applies to the ear. The outer ear picks up the available sounds by the auricle and directs them to the middle ear, the middle ear transmits the sound vibrations by intensifying them, and the inner ear sends these vibrations to the brain by translating them into electric signals. Just as with the eye, the act of hearing finalizes in the center of hearing in the brain.

The situation in the eye is also true for the ear. That is, the brain is insulated from sound just as it is from light. It does not let any sound in. Therefore, no matter how noisy is the outside, the inside of the brain is completely silent. Nevertheless, the sharpest sounds are perceived in the brain. In your completely silent brain, you listen to symphonies, and hear all of the noises in a crowded place. However, if the sound level in your brain was measured by a precise device at that moment, it would be seen that only a complete silence prevails there.

As is the case with imagery, decades of effort have been spent in trying to generate and reproduce sound that is faithful to the original. The results of these efforts are sound recorders, high-fidelity systems, and systems for sensing sound. Despite all of this technology and the thousands of engineers and experts who have been working on this endeavor, no sound has yet been obtained that has the same sharpness and clarity as the sound perceived by the ear. Think of the highest-quality hi-fi systems produced by the largest company in the music industry. Even in these devices, when sound is recorded some of it is lost; or when you turn on a hi-fi you always hear a hissing sound before the music starts. However, the sounds that are the products of the human body's technology are extremely sharp and clear. A human ear never perceives a sound accompanied by a hissing sound or with atmospherics as does a hi-fi; rather, it perceives sound exactly as it is, sharp and clear. This is the way it has been since the creation of man.

So far, no man-made visual or recording apparatus has been as sensitive and successful in perceiving sensory data as are the eye and the ear. However, as far as seeing and hearing are concerned, a far greater truth lies beyond all this.

To Whom Does the Consciousness That Sees and Hears within the Brain Belong?

Who watches an alluring world in the brain, listens to symphonies and the twittering of birds, and smells the rose?

The stimulations coming from a person's eyes, ears, and nose travel to the brain as electro-chemical nerve impulses. In biology, physiology, and biochemistry books, you can find many details about how this image forms in the brain. However, you will never come across the most important fact: Who perceives these electro-chemical nerve impulses as images, sounds, odors, and sensory events in the brain? There is a consciousness in the brain that perceives all this without feeling any need for an eye, an ear, and a nose. To whom does this consciousness belong? Of course it does not belong to the nerves, the fat layer, and neurons comprising the brain. This is why Darwinist-materialists, who believe that everything is comprised of matter, cannot answer these questions.

For this consciousness is the spirit created by Allah, which needs neither the eye to watch the images nor the ear to hear the sounds. Furthermore, it does not need the brain to think.

Everyone who reads this explicit and scientific fact should ponder on Almighty Allah, and fear and seek refuge in Him, for He squeezes the entire universe in a pitch-dark place of a few cubic centimeters in a three-dimensional, colored, shadowy, and luminous form.

A Materialist Faith

The information we have presented so far shows us that the theory of evolution is incompatible with scientific findings. The theory's claim regarding the origin of life is inconsistent with science, the evolutionary mechanisms it proposes have no evolutionary power, and fossils demonstrate that the required intermediate forms have never existed. So, it certainly follows that the theory of evolution should be pushed aside as an unscientific idea. This is how many ideas, such as the Earth-centered universe model, have been taken out of the agenda of science throughout history.

However, the theory of evolution is kept on the agenda of science. Some people even try to represent criticisms directed against it as an "attack on science." Why?

The reason is that this theory is an indispensable dogmatic belief for some circles. These circles are blindly devoted to materialist philosophy and adopt Darwinism because it is the only materialist explanation that can be put forward to explain the workings of nature.

Interestingly enough, they also confess this fact from time to time. A well-known geneticist and an outspoken evolutionist, Richard C. Lewontin from Harvard University, confesses that he is "first and foremost a materialist and then a scientist":

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, so we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.²²

These are explicit statements that Darwinism is a dogma kept alive just for the sake of adherence to materialism. This dogma maintains that there is no being save matter. Therefore, it argues that inanimate, unconscious matter created life. It insists that millions of different living species (e.g., birds, fish, giraffes, tigers, insects, trees, flowers, whales, and human beings) originated as a result of the interactions between matter such

as pouring rain, lightning flashes, and so on, out of inanimate matter. This is a precept contrary both to reason and science. Yet Darwinists continue to defend it just so as "not to allow a Divine Foot in the door."

Anyone who does not look at the origin of living beings with a materialist prejudice will see this evident truth: All living beings are works of a Creator, Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Knowing. This Creator is Allah, Who created the whole universe from non-existence, designed it in the most perfect form, and fashioned all living beings.

The Theory of Evolution is the Most Potent Spell in the World

Anyone free of prejudice and the influence of any particular ideology, who uses only his or her reason and logic, will clearly understand that belief in the theory of evolution, which brings to mind the superstitions of societies with no knowledge of science or civilization, is quite impossible.

As explained above, those who believe in the theory of evolution think that a few atoms and molecules thrown into a huge vat could produce thinking, reasoning professors and university students; such scientists as Einstein and Galileo; such artists as Humphrey Bogart, Frank Sinatra and Luciano Pavarotti; as well as antelopes, lemon trees, and carnations. Moreover, as the scientists and professors who believe in this nonsense are educated people, it is quite justifiable to speak of this theory as "the most potent spell in history." Never before has any other belief or idea so taken away peoples' powers of reason, refused to allow them to think intelligently and logically and hidden the truth from them as if they had been blindfolded. This is an even worse and unbelievable blindness than the Egyptians worshipping the Sun God Ra, totem worship in some parts of Africa, the people of Saba worshipping the Sun, the tribe of Prophet Ibrahim (as) worshipping idols they had made with their own hands, or the people of the Prophet Musa (as) worshipping the Golden Calf.

In fact, Allah has pointed to this lack of reason in the Qur'an. In many verse, He reveals in many verses that some peoples' minds will be closed and that they will be powerless to see the truth. Some of these verses are as follows:

As for those who do not believe, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sealed up their hearts and hearing and over their eyes is a blindfold. They will have a terrible punishment. (Surat al-Baqara: 6-7)

... They have hearts with which they do not understand. They have eyes with which they do not see. They have ears with which they do not hear. Such people are like cattle. No, they are even further astray! They are the unaware. (Surat al-A'raf: 179)

Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say: "Our eyesight is befuddled! Or rather we have been put under a spell!" (Surat al-Hijr: 14-15)

Words cannot express just how astonishing it is that this spell should hold such a wide community in thrall, keep people from the truth, and not be broken for 150 years. It is understandable that one or a few people might believe in impossible scenarios and claims full of stupidity and illogicality. However, "magic" is the only possible explanation for people from all over the world believing that unconscious and lifeless atoms suddenly decided to come together and form a universe that functions with a flawless system of organization, discipline, reason, and consciousness; a planet named Earth with all of its features so perfectly suited to life; and living things full of countless complex systems.

In fact, the Qur'an relates the incident of Prophet Musa (as) and Pharaoh to show that some people who support atheistic philosophies actually influence others by magic. When Pharaoh was told about the true religion, he told Prophet Musa (as) to meet with his own magicians. When Musa (as) did so, he told them to demonstrate their abilities first. The verses continue:

He said: "You throw." And when they threw, they cast a spell on the people's eyes and caused them to feel great fear of them. They produced an extremely powerful magic. (Surat al-A'raf: 116)

As we have seen, Pharaoh's magicians were able to deceive everyone, apart from Musa (as) and those who believed in him. However, his evidence broke the spell, or "swallowed up what they had forged," as the verse puts it.

We revealed to Musa, "Throw down your staff." And it immediately swallowed up what they had forged. So the Truth took place and what they did was shown to be false. (Surat al-A'raf: 117-119)

As we can see, when people realized that a spell had been cast upon them and that what they saw was just an illusion, Pharaoh's magicians lost all credibility. In the present day too, unless those who, under the influence of a similar spell, believe in these ridiculous claims under their scientific disguise and spend their lives defending them, abandon their superstitious beliefs, they also will be humiliated when the full truth emerges and the spell is broken. In fact, Malcolm Muggeridge, an atheist philosopher and supporter of evolution, admitted he was worried by just that prospect:

I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has.²³

That future is not far off: On the contrary, people will soon see that "chance" is not a deity, and will look back on the theory of evolution as the worst deceit and the most terrible spell in the world. That spell is already rapidly beginning to be lifted from the shoulders of people all over the world. Many people who see its true face are wondering with amazement how they could ever have been taken in by it.