

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

Monthly Bulletin of International
Community of Submitters

www.masjiduntucson.org



Published by Masjid Tucson
Rabi I 1424

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QUESTIONS: A Learning Tool

Questions are an important part of our whole learning process. The New American Dictionary defines a question as “an expression of inquiry that invites or calls for a reply.” From earliest childhood we are asking questions, the most common being: “why?” The answers we receive from parents and friends help us understand the world around us. Much of what we learn in school is taught through questions and answers. Students ask for explanations, then teachers ask a series of questions to test how much knowledge the students have taken in. It seems important, then, to pay attention to questions and use them as a means of learning.

There are well over 800 questions contained in the Quran. Some are as simple as: “*What did you lose?*” (12:71) and some may sound simple but are really complex, such as: “*Which of your Lord’s marvels can*

you deny?”—a question that is asked 31 times in Sura 55. All are thought-provoking, as questions are meant to be; they make us think about God. Therefore, it’s important to spend a little time pondering some of the questions God poses.

God asks: *Why do they not reflect on the camels and how they are created?* (88:17) A seemingly simple question, but when we actually do reflect on the amazing creature, the camel, we see how complex is God’s creation and that’s what God really wants us to contemplate.

The reflection continues: *And the sky and how it is raised. And the mountains and how they are constructed. And the earth and how it is built.* (88:18-20) This leads me to look at several other questions for our reflection.

Have they not seen all the things created by God? (16:48) *Do the*

unbelievers not realize that the heaven and the earth used to be one solid mass that we exploded into existence? And from water we made all living things. Would they believe? (21:30) *Have they not looked at the sky above them, and how we constructed it and adorned it, without a flaw?* (50:6)

And perhaps the most important question about our creation:

Do you not realize that God has created the heavens and the earth for a specific purpose? If He wills, He can remove you, and substitute a new creation in your place. This is not too difficult for God. (14:19-20)

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In 2:245 and 57:11, God asks: *Who would like to loan God a loan of righteousness, to have it multiplied for him manifold, and end up with a generous recompense?* This is

very amazing when we take the time to think about it. God is the One who gives us our righteousness (47:17 & 74:56), yet He's offering us the opportunity to lend to Him something that was always His to begin with, AND He will reward us for it! Who wouldn't want to take advantage of a deal like that?

God asks: *Have you seen the one whose god is his own ego? Will you be his advocate? Do you think that most of them hear, or understand? They are just like animals; no, they are far worse.* (25:43-4) This is God's reminder of how important it is for us to kill our egos.

He goes on in 45:23 to give us more to reflect upon. *Have you noted the one whose god is his ego? Consequently, God sends him astray, despite his knowledge, seals his hearing and his mind, and places a veil on his eyes. Who then can guide him, after such a decision by God? Would you not take heed?* This final question is perhaps the most important: *Would you not take heed?*

In Sura 56, God asks a series of questions that bear looking at.

56:58-59: *Have you noted the semen that you produce? Did you create it, or did we?* In God's system, humans produce the semen which allows for the creation of new life. But do we have any control over how that semen is produced, how much, how active? It all comes from God.

56:63-64: *Have you noted the crops you reap? Did you grow them, or did we?* God allows us to plant seeds and work the soil and water the crops and reap the harvest. But do we really have any control over whether the plants grow strong or die? It's a miracle and a gift from God that we stick a little dried up seed into the ground and from that grows a tree bearing delicious fruit for us to enjoy.

56:68-69: *Have you noted the water you drink? Did you send it down from the clouds, or did we?* Part of our ability to grow the plants comes from the water that God sends

down. We can't make water from nothing. We can seed the clouds and sometimes produce rain, but if there are no clouds, we can't create them. God drives the winds which bring the clouds which produce the rain. Without that water all living things on earth would die. Yet we turn on a faucet and take for granted that water will come out—cold when we want it, hot when we want it. We need to remember to appreciate the true source of that water.

56:71-72: *Have you noted the fire you ignite? Did you initiate its tree, or did we?* When we want a fire for warmth or light, we can just strike a match and start that fire burning. But isn't it amazing that the green tree becomes the fuel for that fire, but not until it dies and dries up. Without the tree and its cycle of life, we would have nothing to burn.

Finally, the very important questions in verses 56:81-82: *Are you disregarding this narration? Do you make it your business that you disbelieve?* How important it is to carefully consider all the things God has put into the Quran and study and learn from them. *Why do they not study the Quran carefully? Do they have locks on their minds?* (47:24) *We made the Quran easy to learn. Does any of you wish to learn?* (54:17)

Many of the questions God poses are negative, such as 61:2 *O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?* and 71:13 *Why should you not strive to reverence God?* and 6:21 *Who is more evil than one who lies about God, or rejects His revelations?* This is a common way to make someone think about a topic, to present it in the negative. It clearly shows the wisdom of the positive. And if the student is too dense to understand the difference, the teacher will frequently pose increasingly negative questions, perhaps finally throwing up his hands and asking, "Why can't you see? Are you crazy?" In His own way, God does this too. In 74:49 God asks: *Why are they so averse to this reminder?* Ending many verses, God asks: *Do you not understand?* And finally, because

we seem so hopelessly wrapped up in idol worship and our own opinions, God challenges: *What is wrong with your logic? Do you have another book to uphold? In it, do you find anything you want?* (68:36-38)

In many cases God asks a question and then provides the answer. Again, this is a valuable teaching tool for students to learn from. In 83:8 God asks: *Do you know what Sijjeen is?* followed in verse 9 with *A numerically structured book.* 86:2 asks: *Do you know what Al-Taareq is?* with the answer in the next verse: *The bright star.* In 104:5 we read: *Do you know what the Devastator is?* and the answer is in verse 6: *God's blazing Hellfire.* These are terms or phrases that we would not be able to understand without God's clarification. More important for our consideration is 7:99: *Have they taken God's plans for granted? None takes God's plans for granted except the losers.* We need to ask ourselves whether we're sincere in our worship and our appreciation or if we're just giving lip service to submission. Then God leaves no room for doubt about the correct answer.

Sura 27, starting with verse 60, has a series of verses that begin with the question: *Who is the One...?* When I read these verses I always comment on how beautiful they are and how much I enjoy reading them. It's also important to reflect on the questions. *Is it another god with God?*

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Questions

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We need to really stop and think about that and make sure all of our thoughts, our words and our actions clearly show that we recognize God ALONE as the Creator and the One who's doing everything.

Since there are so many questions in the Quran this article could go on forever. It wasn't meant to cover every single one, only to point out a

few and more importantly to encourage everyone, when you read a question in the Quran, to pay attention, reflect on it and hopefully learn from it. The asking and answering of questions can be a valuable teaching tool if we let it.

Shall we treat those who believe and lead a righteous life as we treat those who commit evil on earth? Shall we treat the righteous as we treat the wicked? (38:28)

Do they not see that every day on earth, brings them closer to the end, and that God decides their life span, irrevocably? He is the most efficient Reckoner. (13:41)

Do the people think that they will be left to say, "We believe," without being put to the test? (29:2)

Why do they not reflect upon this scripture? Do they not realize that they have received something never attained by their ancestors? (23:68)

Do you not see that God has committed in your service everything in the heavens and the earth, and has showered you with His blessings - obvious and hidden? Yet, some people argue about God without knowledge, without guidance, and without the enlightening scripture. (31:20)

Lydia K.

ADVERSITY

A daughter complained to her father about her life and how things were so hard for her. She did not know how she was going to make it and wanted to give up. She was tired of fighting and struggling. It seemed that as one problem was solved a new one arose. Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil.

In one he placed carrots, in the second he placed eggs, and the last he placed ground coffee beans. He let them sit and boil, without saying a word. The daughter sucked her teeth and impatiently waited, wondering what he was doing.

In about twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He fished the carrots out and placed them in a bowl. He pulled the eggs out and placed them a bowl. Then he ladled the coffee out and placed it in a mug.

Turning to her he asked. "Darling, what do you see?"

"Carrots, eggs, and coffee," she replied. He brought her closer and

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ISSN 1089-053X

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God willing, we are looking forward to meeting our family of submitters.

Masjid Tucson

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Translated From the Original

Rashad Khalifa, Ph. D.

Library Edition

Index, Appendices, 570 pages

English only

ISBN 1-881893-05-7

\$15.00

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