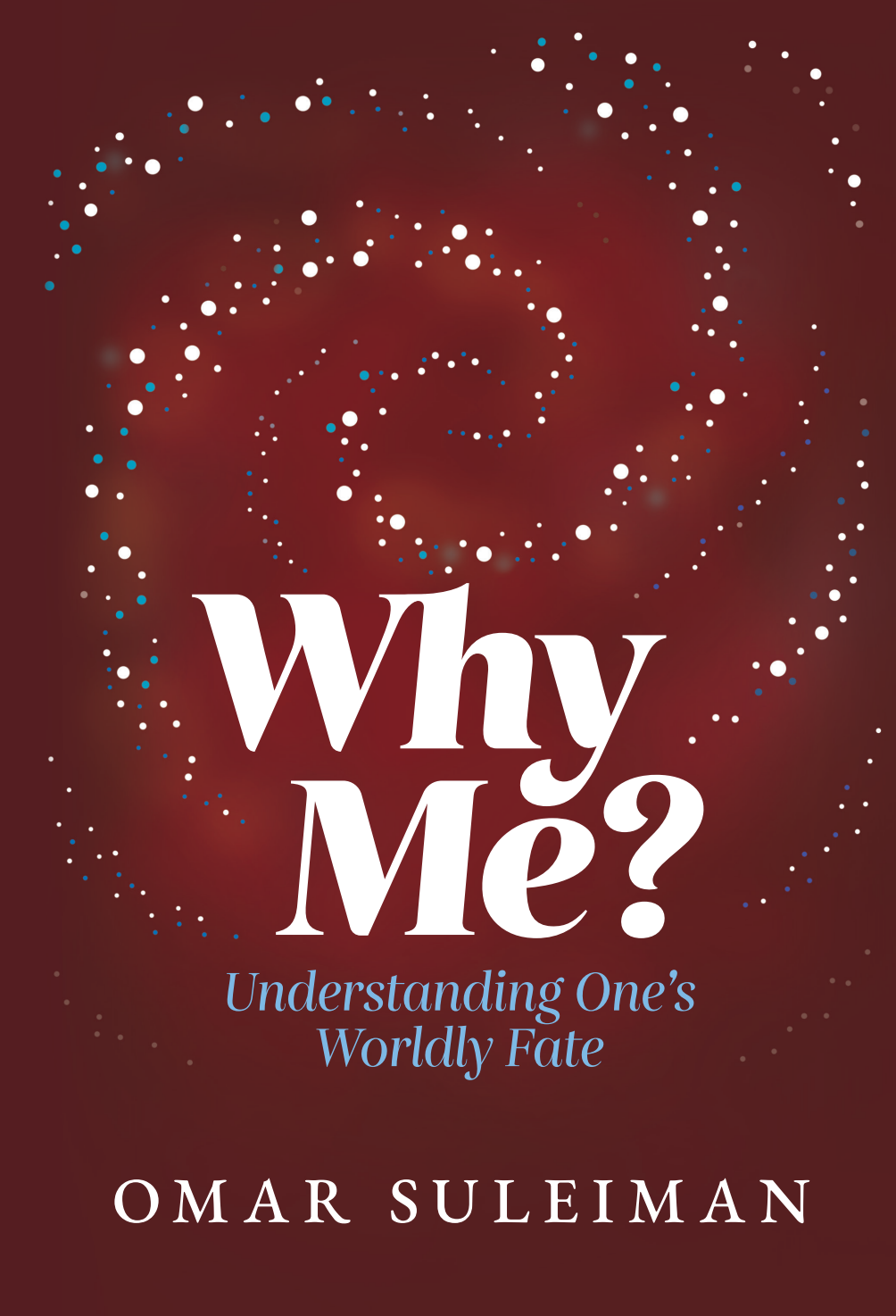

Why Me?
Understanding One's Worldly Fate
OMAR SULEIMAN

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Preface

By Dr. Zohair Abdul-Rahman

Believing in the Divine Decree (*al-Qadar*) is considered the 6th pillar of the Islamic worldview that includes belief in Allah, the Angels, the Books, the Messengers and the Last day. The Divine Decree includes belief that Allah has knowledge of all reality—past, present, future, alternative possibilities and that Allah is the only One who brings reality into existence through His Will. This pillar of faith is technically part of belief in Allah, since it is a belief about Allah. It has been singled out as its own pillar demonstrating how important this belief is to our lives. While people may focus on the abstract and philosophical elements of the relation of Divine Will to the human will, the real essence of this pillar lies in understanding its implications for our lives. It is the pillar of faith most commonly invoked in moments of tragedy and hardship. It is called upon in times of anxiety and fear when we confront our trauma. It gives us strength in the darkest and most difficult moments of our life.

Knowing that everything is in Allah's Hands and that He, alone, is in control of every situation is a sobering thought amidst the storms of fears, worries, sadness and depression. Then realizing that the One who is in control is also *Ar-Raḥmān* (The exceedingly Merciful), *Al-Wadūd* (The Most loving),

Is it complicated?

Al-Qadar is easy to understand. However, there is a layer that is beyond our human capacity to comprehend. This is not because the concept is irrational, but because our intellects are limited. When our phones cannot capture the brilliance of the night sky, it is not due to a deficiency in the light from the moon, but rather a deficiency in the camera that attempts to capture it. Our minds are the camera and the light from the moon is the light from Divine Decree.

We cannot imagine a cube in 4-dimensions nor can we imagine a colour that we have never seen—but that does not mean they do not have a reality. When it comes to belief in *Qadar*, the relationship between the Will of Allah and the will of the human being is beyond fathoming by our intellect. We are told not to delve into these questions as ultimately it will only yield conjecture and eventually become a means of division.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to us while we were arguing about the divine decree. Then, the Prophet became angry until his face was red, as if a pomegranate were bursting from his cheeks. The Prophet said, "With this I have commanded you? With this I was sent to you? Verily, the people before you were destroyed when they argued over this matter. I am determined for you not to argue over it." [iii]

iii *Jami' at-Tirmidhī*, 2133.

What does belief in *Qadar* entail?

To appropriately grasp this concept we will highlight the four key principles.

1. Allah knows everything

> ***"Do you not know that Allah knows whatever is in the heaven and the earth? Indeed, that (knowledge) is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allah, is easy."*** [v]

The omniscience of Allah is affirmed in several places in the Qurān and Sunnah. His knowledge is written in a record called the *"Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ"* (the Preserved Tablet).[vi] There is a ḥadīth that elaborates on this concept,

> ***'Ubadah ibn al-Samit reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, "Verily, the first to be created by Allah was the pen. Allah told it to write, so it wrote all that will exist until forever."*** [vii]

Therefore anything that happens in your life, Allah knew it was going to happen before it happened, and it was all written. A common expression that is used is "the pen has dried" referring to the fact that our destiny was written before we were even born.

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v *al-Hajj*, 22:70
vi *al-Burūj*, 85:22
vii *Jami' al-Tirmidhī*, 3319

Introduction to *Qadar*

By Dr. Zohair Abdul-Rahman

Our lives are filled with moments that define us. Moments of pure joy that create memories for years to come. But there are also moments of hardship that eat away at our thoughts, relationships, and sometimes even our faith.

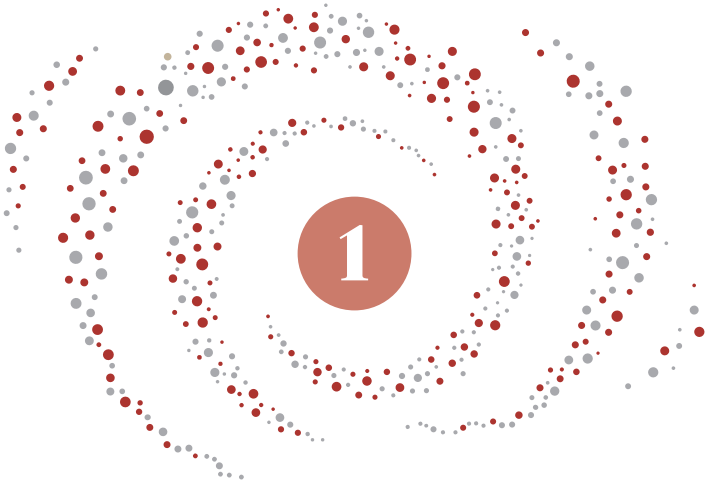
It can be hard to sit with the cards we're dealt with. Is my life entirely my own if it's already been written for me? 'Why am I struggling with this hardship, while others have it so easy?', 'Why is this happening? Why now? Why me?' Or, the opposite: 'Why do some people struggle with immense pain, while I am given many blessings?'

Your story doesn't start with your parents, grandparents or even your ancestors. Your story starts with a pen.

سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْقَلَمَ فَقَالَ لَهُ اكْتُبْ.
قَالَ رَبِّ وَمَاذَا أَكْتُبُ قَالَ اكْتُبْ مَقَادِيرَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تَقُومَ السَّاعَةُ

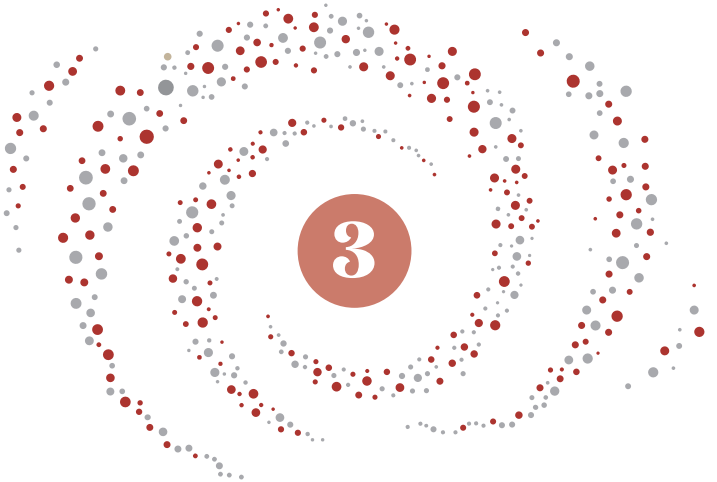
Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit said, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: "The first thing Allah created was the pen. He said to it: Write! It asked: What should I write, my Lord? He said: Write what was decreed about everything until the Last Hour comes.[xv]

xv *Sunan Abī Dawūd*, 4700



Where was I before I was born?

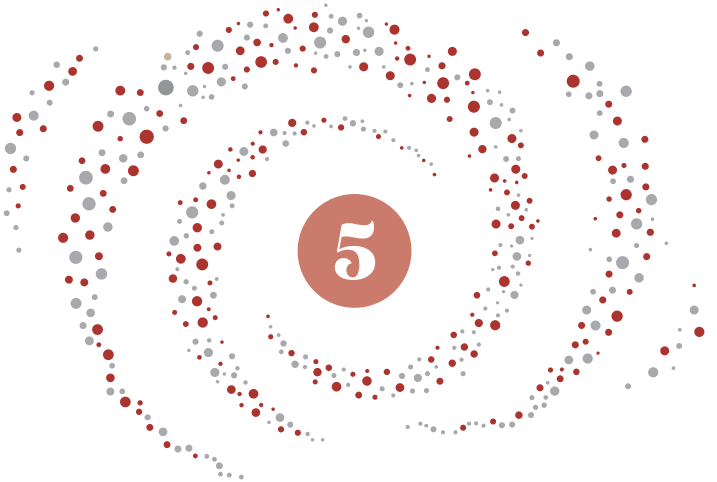
Our lives are defined by pivotal pure moments that define us and shape our identities. It is these precious moments which generate formative memories that will be cherished throughout one's lifetime. At the same time, our lives are scarred with times of hardship and adversity that bruise our conscience, relations, ties of friendship, and our connection with Allah ﷻ. There is no doubt that the objective factors of life can sometimes be debilitating. For, if our lives have already been written and predetermined for us, can we truly say that we own our lives? Why is it that some people go



What happened on my birth day?

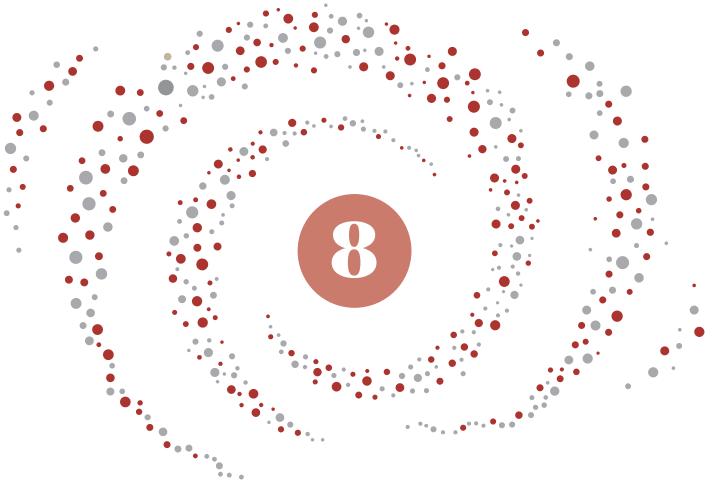
You entered this world in a cold, unclothed, confused, and vulnerable state. Despite these early limitations, Allah ﷻ provided you immediate moral and physical support through your caregivers, who provided you comfort with their warm hands, nourished you with milk, and ensured that your body could grow despite the dangers around you. Allah ﷻ ensured that you were allotted your sustenance even before your birth, and prior to your helpless existence.

Every day and every penny that a person will earn in this world was already decreed for them by Allah's command when they were still a fetus inside their mother's womb.



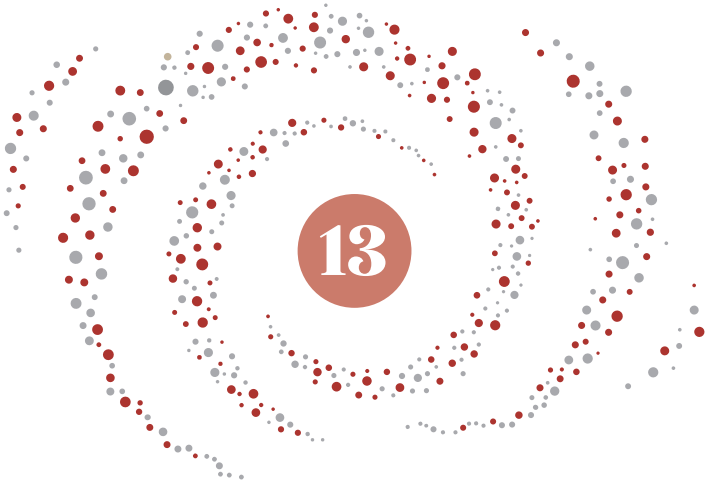
What shaped my personality?

By their intrinsic nature, children vary in their behavioural patterns and temperaments. Parents recognize this reality best, and can almost instinctively identify differences between them from the start. Some are loud and brimming with external energy, some are shy and composed, while others lie somewhere in between. Allah ﷻ has allotted every one of us a myriad of different traits and qualities, which have implications for our spiritual and mental endurance. But ultimately, how we cultivate these talents and endowments is in our hands.



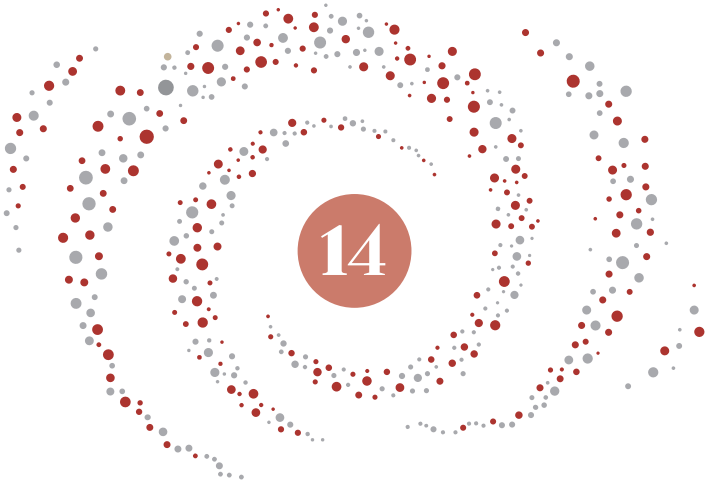
Why am I rich or poor?

Facing financial difficulties can be a devastating experience, as one naturally feels that the pillars of support that they erected for their family are at the verge of collapsing. Frustration at one's plight sometimes causes one to pose questions, such as whether others are well-off because they work harder and if it is one's own fault for their lack of financial success. Is it possible to understand and appreciate the blessings embedded in *rizq* (provision) even if we are personally financially hampered? The answer is in the affirmative, for everything can be appreciated through a single truth: Allah ﷻ has already decreed every penny and cent that you will earn in this life, and you should exercise full trust and dependence on His Decree.



Will I ever find true love?

Does the concept of love at first sight exist in Islam? Is there really such a thing as true love? Does Islam accept the notion of soulmates? These questions are quite naturally and intuitively posed by many Muslims, who wonder whether their marital relationships have been set in the Divine Decree. The answers for these questions can be found in the generality of the Islamic evidences, which all provide an affirmative answer.



Why were hurtful people put in my life?

Throughout the course of our respective lifetimes, we will cross paths with people who will break our hearts and fill our minds with sadness. We may face betrayal and indignation from our close loved ones and family members, which naturally will cause one to ask why Allah ﷻ placed such people in our paths and why we have to face mental and spiritual damage from individuals who apparently share so

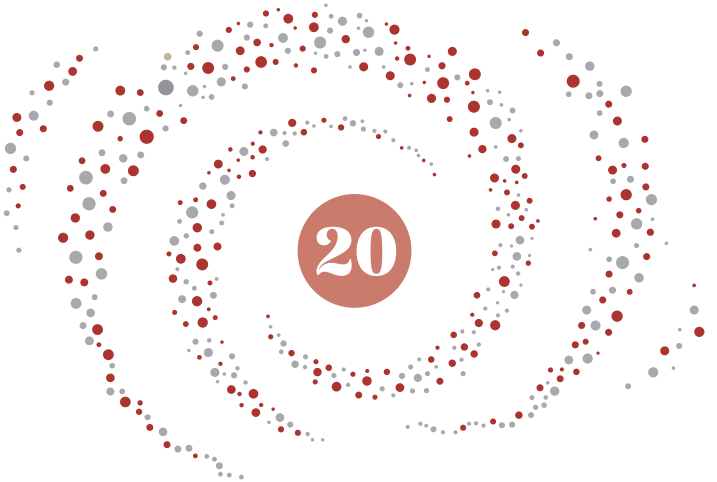
Notwithstanding His grandeur, power, and majesty, Allah ﷻ inscribed the following words on His Throne: "My mercy overcomes My anger." Moreover, He sent His final Prophet ﷺ to the entire creation as a mercy of the worlds. This edict was upheld to the extent that the Prophet ﷺ inscribed his own sword—an object used for war and fighting—with a motto of mercy. From these aforementioned points, one internalizes a pertinent prophetic reality, which is that one must have the fortitude to curb one's answer and treat all people with grace, even those who imposed a wrong or injustice upon them. The spirit of forgiveness is perhaps most clearly exemplified in the story of Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ, who pardoned his brothers for their wrongful conduct towards him, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who exonerated the people of Quraysh for their persecution and torture of the Muslims. They were the best of people who were forced to endure harms meted by the worst of people, yet they persevered with smiles on their faces. This golden standard was emulated by the great Companion Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq ﷺ, who forgave a man by the name of Misṭaḥ ibn Athathah ﷺ who partook in the vicious slander against his pure daughter. At first, Abū Bakr ﷺ swore that he would no longer provide Misṭaḥ ﷺ his generous material support and financial assistance. But then Allah revealed the following verse:

وَلْيَعْفُوا۟ وَلْيَصْفَحُوٓا۟ ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ

"Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not love to be forgiven by Allah?"[93]

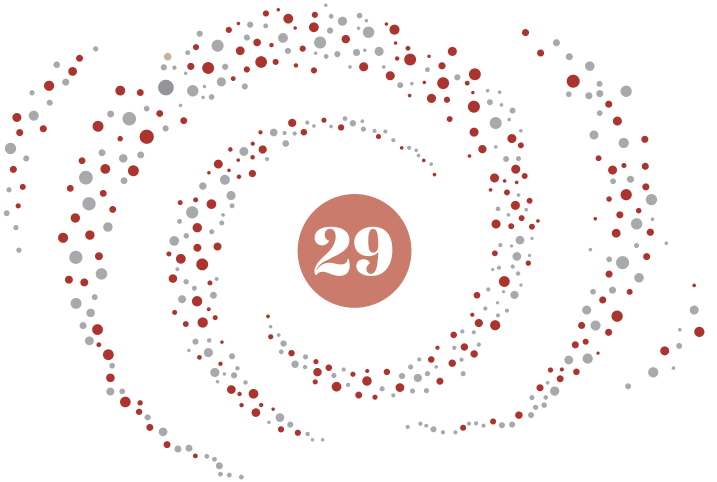
[93] *al-Nūr*, 24:22.

As Muslims, we should aim to follow the path of our pious predecessors by evaluating any of our potential past misdeeds and trying to rectify them in any way possible through repentance and the commission of good deeds.



Why is everything falling apart?

Nothing in this life is stable. Times of happiness sometimes become converted into moments of sadness, and good trends become replaced with difficult currents. But there are some critical moments in life where everything seems to fall apart, and not even a semblance of stability remains. At such damaging junctures, a person may become hopeless and feel that even the smallest of their blessings are being taken away from them. Naturally, a person afflicted with such a trial may ask: "Why is Allah ﷻ depriving me of all the means of support and stability that I have? Why can I not be given a little bit of support?"



When life comes full circle

It is time to bid farewell to the departing soul. Its short stay over in this world is complete, and its appointed moment for reuniting with its Lord and the realm of the unseen has come. As the Angels carry the soul of the righteous person up into the heavens, the deceased's family prepare its dead body for the prescribed funeral rites. One beautiful verse of the Qur'an illustrates how Allah ﷻ and His Angels eagerly await the ascent of the pious believer's soul after they pass away:

Some scholars have also reported that during the burial process, there is a special Angel that supervises the funeral rites and watches over it just as there is an Angel that accompanies a person before they are born. In this regard, ʿAmr ibn Dīnār ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ مَيِّتٍ يَمُوْتُ إِلَّا وَرُوْحُه فِيْ يَدِ مَلَكٍ يَنْظُرُ إِلى جَسَدِه كَيْفَ يُغَسَّلُ وَكَيْفَ يُكَفَّنُ وَ كَيْفَ يُمْشى بِه وَ يَجْلِسُ فِيْ قَبْرِه

"Not a single person dies except that his soul is in the hand of an Angel who observes his body, how it is washed, how it is shrouded, and how it is carried. It then enters into the grave to make sure that it is buried properly."[153]

The great Imam Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qābiṣī ﷺ reconciles the narrations which state that the soul will ascend to Paradise with those that affirm that it can see the events on Earth. In essence, he states that when the righteous souls ascend to the heavens and reach Allah ﷻ, He will say to them: "Go and see your place in Paradise." They will thus be provided the priceless opportunity to journey throughout the areas and levels of Paradise for the duration needed for washing their body.[154] This is one of the wisdoms being washing the dead body, since it purifies it and allows it to reach the level of cleanliness needed for entering and scouring the gardens of Paradise. This is analogous to how the heart of the blessed Prophet ﷺ was washed by Jibrīl ﷺ so that he could

153 al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tadhkirah,* p. 238.

154 al-Qurṭubī, *al-Tadhkirah,* p. 238.

You will never understand why you're here if you don't know the One who brought you here. You will never understand why you were blessed with something, if you don't know what it means to be a blessing yourself. You will never understand why you're in pain, if you don't believe in the virtue of patience. You will never make sense of this life, if you don't believe in an afterlife. You will never know who you are, if you don't know who you want to become. You will never know where you are going, if you don't know where you came from.

We live in a world full of suffering which is meant to wake us from our slumber. But if we constantly dwell on what we feel has missed us, we may be missing out on a far greater sense of purpose and self-worth. A life with less confusion and more certainty. A life of meaning where we learn to live in harmony with divine decree, so that we could get to know our Lord who created us and our stories.

You may have asked before, why me? But have you ever asked, why ***not*** me?



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