

People Are Asleep They Wake Up When They Die



Emre Dorman, Ph.D.

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ACADEMIC INTEREST

Theology, Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion, Relationship between Religion and Science.

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For My Dear Sister Ebru Dorman

THE BEGINNING OF LIFE

THE TALE OF A LITTLE DROP OF LIQUID

OUR FIRST RACE...

I am a little drop of liquid that no one cares about, or is even aware of, although I contain many potentials. If only I could win this race, everybody would see who I am. I can't wait. It's as if I have been waiting for fifteen billion years for this moment. I am bored; I want to emerge.

I want to shout out, hey, here I am! Look at me, I've joined the world! But I'm still waiting. I'm bored. I have waited so long that I just have to win this race. I must swim hundreds of kilometres, overtake millions of rivals and come first. I deserve it.

OUR FIRST HOUSE...

I'm very tired but I'm going to win. There is a sign over there: "Fallopian Tube." This must be a tunnel. Maybe if I go through here I can find myself a shortcut. But what a long tunnel this is! I wonder where it opens out to. There's another sign! "Turn here for the womb." I must give it a shot. Something is pulling me.

Oh what a headache I have. What's happened to me? Where am I? It's so dark here. And quiet. Where are my friends? Isn't there anybody here? I'm left hanging on this wall. I'm bored. I must find a way out. Could this be the world I was dreaming of? But I had dreamt of a much better place.

I feel as if I'm undergoing a change; what's happening to me? Are those flashing lights before me? There's something

written, but I can't read it. No, wait, I think I can see it now. It says *Welcome to the pre-embryonic stage. We will host you for two weeks. Your cells will multiply in the meantime. We hope that these two weeks will be serene and comfortable for you.* Oh no, two weeks is so long. I've waited for billions of years but even that time seemed shorter than these two weeks.

Welcome to the embryonic stage. This stage, where the main organs begin to emerge from the layers of cells, will last six weeks. Six weeks? I can't believe it, what is this? I could barely wait out those two weeks, how can I wait for six weeks? This is never going to end.

You are in the fetal stage. We believe that you will enjoy this stage. You can lean back and watch the developments. In this stage your face, hands and feet will start to develop and you will feel that your external appearance will become clearer. You will be our guest for about thirty two weeks. Within this period you can serve yourself from our open buffet kitchen. You will be offered flavors you have never tried before. Hurrah, here we are! I'm in the right place. I can't believe it. But why thirty two weeks? Have I waited all this time to live only thirty two weeks? Is that how long my whole life is going to be? And then? I don't want to die so young. I haven't had enough of this world.

WELCOME TO YOUR TEMPORARY HOME...

I have been restless and in pain for a while. I think I have reached the end and I'm about to die. Wait, what are you doing? Stop pulling me. I'm talking to you. Get your hands off me, or I'll... Hey, I'm talking to you! Let go of my head. What do you want from me? I don't want to die, please

don't cut off my ties to life, don't take me away from this peaceful world.

Get that light out of my eyes! Who are these people? Why are they so happy? Hey, I'm talking to you: What are you laughing about? Has no one got any respect for dead people anymore? Where am I? How noisy is it here! Who are these people around me? They seem to be celebrating my death.

Hey, let go of my legs. Stop hitting my bum. Look, I'm going to scream at the top of my voice. You've asked for it. Whaaa! What is this, where did that sound come from, did it come from me? Let me try again. Whaaaa! What have you done to me? Who am I?

I understand that the world I'm going to live in is not my mother's tummy. The moment I thought I died, I was actually born into the real world. But I haven't got used to it yet. For some reason I find this place very distressful.

Of, it's very hot here. You have wrapped me up in such a way. I swear I'm fed up with it all. And stop pushing that nipple into my mouth. As if I didn't know how to feed myself. Was it you who fed me during those forty weeks?

That must be my mother. She has such loving eyes. And that must be my brother; he looks as if he's going to throttle me. What kind of a place is this? Can you please tell me why you took me away from my home?

I GO TO SCHOOL NOW...

Today I start school and I'm six years old. It's been six long years. I suddenly remembered those forty weeks I spent in my mother's tummy. I thought that my whole life would consist of those forty weeks. It has now been six long years since I opened my eyes onto this immense world.

And now I'm at school. I have met my school friends. There are only twenty of us in our classroom. For a moment I remembered the past. Those days when I overtook millions of my friends and came in first. Am I going to let these nineteen people be more successful than I? Of course not. I'm the best.

I'm tired of doing my homework, of getting up early in the morning and going to school. I don't want to study. And I don't like my teacher. She keeps getting mad at me. And breaks are so short. I can't play with my friends. This school is so boring.

My parents say that I should go to university too. Otherwise I won't be able to get a good job or a high salary. The way I look at it, there's at least another fifteen years before I graduate from university. That is going to take so long! This will be the end of me.

Today I'm graduating. I'm twenty-one years old. Now I can understand my parents much better. It's a good thing that I did as they said and I attended university. Now I have so many friends. They will all get good jobs. Maybe one day we can even work together. Now I need to get a job and save some money. Defne and I are in love and we want to get married.

A NEW JOB, A NEW WORLD...

It's been exactly a year. The search for a job has exhausted me, but I still haven't found one. I'm very unhappy. Did I study in vain, all those years? Does any of the knowledge I have acquired have any value at all? Let me have a look at my e-mails, to see if there's anything new. There it is! There is an e-mail from a company that interviewed me some time ago and they are calling me for a second interview. I'm so

excited. I need to look good and to prove myself. I must begin to prepare immediately.

How much? I must have misheard you. Is that the weekly pay, or is this a bad joke? A starting salary of 800 TL? I'm a university graduate. Plus I speak a foreign language.

I'm about to complete my first year in this company. I work an average of ten hours a day. And I spend two hours traveling to and from work. I don't think that Defne and I will ever be able to get married. But we love each other so much. I have to find a solution. What should I do? I'll talk to my boss and ask for a raise and I'll tell him that otherwise I will quit.

No, Sir, I didn't mean that. Of course, Sir, as you wish. Well, no, of course I want to continue working here. Yes, Sir, I'm going straight back to work. I have never felt so demeaned, so unhappy and desperate. I'm upset. This place is so boring. I need to find another job. I must start looking at job ads.

Nothing, nothing, nothing! There are no job ads for me. I need to find another way to make money. I need to be stronger and richer than my boss. I can see that if you don't have money no one respects you in this world. All I want is a house and a car. I want to marry Defne and set up a family. I want to have children. What else can one want from life?

I finally managed to get a job with a better salary. But now I miss the working conditions of my previous job. I don't have any time for anything but work. What am I, a modern time slave? Why do they push people so much?

It's been eight years since I graduated from university. I am twenty-nine years old now. I am not as restless as I used to be. I feel more mature now. The only thing that makes me happy is that Defne and I will be able to get married. Soon

I'll go and ask her family for her hand. I'm so happy. Now I must start looking for a house.

WE ARE GETTING MARRIED...

I have spent the last three months looking for a house. I'm completely exhausted. There is a place that we have finally agreed on but it's not a very nice. It's old and quite commonplace. We need to get lots of furniture, accessories, chandeliers and curtains.

I want the very best as well, my love, but these prices are so much better, can't we get these, they serve the same purpose, don't they? Why should we spend more money for no reason at all? All that fighting and arguing, but we are finally married. And we have our own home.

Our expenses have increased. Our income does not meet our expenses anymore. I need to find another job. With a higher salary. And Defne says that we keep going to the same place for our vacation. Last year Mete and Esra spent their holiday abroad, why can't we? I think she's right, I need to find another job. I need to earn more money if I want to live a better life. But how am I going to do it?

My mother says that I'm spoiling the girl. She says that we need to be careful with our money. That she and my father lived from hand to mouth to bring up my brother and me. They made great sacrifices so that I could study. But I can't tell her that times have changed and people have greater needs now. Maybe she is right. But am I the only who is in the wrong? What is it that I want from this life after all, only a house and a car, nothing else.

WE HAVE FINALLY REACHED OUR FORTIES...

Last Friday I turned 40. I have a good job, a marriage that goes well on the whole, a house and a car. Defne and I had a child, his name is Ali. The little rascal is so sweet; he looks like me when I was little. We play together and he makes me forget about my hectic schedule in the office. Defne thinks that the time has come to get her a car too. She says it's difficult without a car, but her request comes just as I was finishing paying off the first. Now we'll have to start paying for this one. Oh well, a second car is really a necessity and so we'll just have to find some way to pay for it.

Ali is growing up. Our house is small and we just don't have enough room. And he can't go out and play in the street surrounded with these huge buildings. We have to move somewhere else. We haven't finished paying for Defne's new car. As soon as we do, we'll move to a new house.

Ali is beginning school. Defne says that all her friends send their children to private schools and that her child needs to go to a private school to get a good education. She's right. Ali is everything to us after all. We have devoted our whole life to him. He should get a good education. But I'll never forget the shock I had when I heard about the tuition these private schools are demanding. I'm not joking; it really was a terrible shock. This means yet another burden on our shoulders, but what can we do? This is life, what else can we expect from it? Our only aim is for our children to have a comfortable life and be happy.

THE END OF A LIFE SPENT RUNNING AROUND...

I'm pushing my fifties. I feel the exhaustion of a lifetime weighing down on my shoulders. It's as if the years are passing so much faster now! I can't stop time any more.

It's slipping through my hands. We have moved into a new house. Ali is attending school...

Today my heart acted up for the first time and I went to see a doctor. The doctor said life has tired me out and that I need to rest. But the house still isn't paid off and I just don't have the luxury of resting yet. I'll rest when I retire.

When I was little my problems were small as well. I feel like saying well I've grown up, so what? I have always felt that something was missing from my life but I never knew what it was. I probably looked for happiness in all the wrong places. I suddenly remembered that first stage of my life. The very first one. Before I received that first slap on my bum. What an easy life I had then. A life of such luxury and ease. And I had no problems whatsoever. Whereas this life is so full of anxiety. Come to think of it, that tiny, dark room was probably where I felt best. It was warm, serene and comfortable.

According to my calculations, as I am now 60 years old, by sleeping 8 hours a day I have spent 20 years of my life at sleep, and by working an average of 8 hours a day I have spent 20 years at work. And the remaining 20 years I spent eating, drinking, loitering around, sitting in traffic, watching TV, surfing the internet and having fun. For a moment I stopped and asked myself: "Have I really lived my life?" or "Did I exist to live life like this?" And why do I ask myself such a question at the end of a life that has been wasted? Life really is like a short fable. "Once upon a time" and that's it.

AND THE END...

Where am I? What is this? Why is it so dark? Are there no lights? Where is everybody? What are these planks? Who threw all this soil onto me? What has happened to me? It's

so dark and so quiet here. Where is my family? Where are my friends? Is there no one here?

The majority of people drift within life like leaves in the wind. Most people hold on so tightly to life that they not only forget that one day they will die, they also make no preparations regarding their afterlife. But life is like the striking of a match between the darkness of the mother's womb and the darkness of underground. The moment it is struck it is about to be extinguished.

In terms of our life on earth, it is possible to develop as many different stories as there are people on earth. But regardless of the protagonists, there will be no change in the fact that people begin life in the form of a small drop of liquid and end it underground. In other words there are different stories that all share the same beginning and the same end.

In what ways are you different? How would you like your story to be and how would you like it to end? Confront yourself before you confront death.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We created the human being from a certain kind of mud. Subsequently, we reproduced him from a tiny drop, that is placed into a well protected repository. Then we developed the drop into a hanging embryo, then developed the hanging embryo into a bite-size fetus, then created the bite-size fetus into bones, then covered the bones with flesh. We thus produced a new creature. Most blessed is God, the best Creator. Later on, you die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be resurrected.

23 The Believers (Al-Mu'minûn) 12-16

A LIFE UNQUESTIONED IS NOT WORTH LIVING

*Sometimes I get this strange feeling;
What am I doing in this wretched world?*

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

PEOPLE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT A PURPOSE. All people set certain purposes within their lives, even if we may consider them futile or worthless. They always endeavor to achieve something. They are always in a quest for something; they hanker for something. Quite often they do not even question their purposes, or what their achievements will bring or take away from their lives. They are influenced by their environments. They adopt ideals that are set by society. They do not question them. They feel an intense interest and curiosity for many worldly things. They are curious about a number of things regardless of whether they are of any use to them and they never stop and ask themselves “Why do I exist?” or “Is there a reason to my existence?” How many of us have ever questioned our lives? Who am I? Why do I exist? Is there a reason to my existence? I know that my existence is not forever, but what will happen after I die? We pass away from this life without asking ourselves such questions.

In fact, no other questions are as important as these in life. Next to the questions and answers that will define one’s eternal life, questions and answers regarding worldly life, which passes by in a flash, are of no importance whatsoever. All questions and answers related to our worldly life become meaningless when one dies and they are of no use at all. Questions such as which investment is more profitable, whether foreign exchange or gold will appreciate, what

this year's fashion or popular colors will be or who will win the derby become completely meaningless.

*Man cannot come back from
the grave but can amend a mistake.*

Aleksandr Soljenitsin

In Socrates' words, an unquestioned life is not worth living. According to Socrates, most people do not question the fact that they are part of a world inhabited by other people and dominated by social values. That is why people accept social ideals and values as they are. It is the social atmosphere surrounding them that defines what is right and wrong, what is good or bad or what is moral or immoral. People endeavor to live in harmony with their environment's expectations. Many people even choose their professions from among alternatives that are exalted or respected by society. According to Socrates people only pursue material things. They seek wealth; they attempt to achieve pleasure or glory and they forget the spiritual dimension of their existence. They get carried away by their physical desires without questioning whether their personal objectives are really of value or not. That is why their lives are neither in their hands, nor in their control. Their choices are defined by external factors. It is inevitable that such a situation will lead people to unhappiness. Most do not consider that humans are humans because of the care they show in terms of their souls and their spiritual nature. If they fail to do this, they will be unhappy and feel that something is missing because they behave contrary to their spiritual nature.

As we can see from Socrates' approach, in all periods of history the majority of people pursue similar whims and they give priority to physical desires and ambitions rather than spiritual feelings. How many of these people whose main purpose is to achieve happiness in this world are actually

really happy? When people's happiness depends entirely on physical things, are they able to be really satisfied with what they achieve and to consider it sufficient? Or do they always aim for more, raise their objectives a little more and continue to live without questioning their lives?

A useless life is an early death.

Goethe

Life becomes meaningful when people do useful things both for this world and for the afterlife and they add value to life. We are all born as humans, but very few of us are able to be righteous people and lead a meaningful life before we die. Even a flower exudes beauty with both its color and its scent. But most people believe that life consists of breathing, eating and having fun and they leave this world without being even as useful as a flower.

*Dying is not the worst thing in our lives
What's worse is to die before one's death...*

Yahya Kemal

Anybody who wishes a life spent in vain to last even longer, wishes simply to continue leading a life without a purpose. A life like that is not worth living.

*If your life has been useless and in vain,
why are you afraid of losing it?
Why do you want to live longer?*

Montaigne

“PLEASE DON’T REMIND ME OF DEATH”

Those who do not understand life do not wish to remember death, because remembering death shows them that the life they lead does not comply with their mental conscience.

Tolstoy

MANY PEOPLE RECOGNIZE GOD’S EXISTENCE, but when we look at the life they lead, we see that they practically behave as if God did not exist. Practically none of the decisions they take concerning their lives present any measures or values related to how God would like them to live. Whenever religious subjects and therefore the reality of death are brought up, some people act indifferently, as if they were never going to die and some wish to change the subject. In fact, let alone death itself, some people do not like even to talk about death and they suggest talking about nicer things. But death, even if not talked or thought about, is an inevitable truth.

Like the people resurrected on the Day of Judgment who say **“Woe to us. Who resurrected us from our death? (36 Ya-Sin 52)** some people attempt to avoid this truth and to forget about death, as if to say leave us alone in our state of indolence, don’t wake us up, don’t remind us, don’t disturb us. **They believe that thinking about death will ruin their present moment. But in fact, it is through death that life acquires meaning. And even if you forget about death, death does not forget about you. When the time comes, it gets you.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Say, "The death that you are trying to evade will catch up with you sooner or later. Then you will be returned to the Knower of all secrets and declarations, then He will inform you of everything you had done."

62 Friday (Al-Jumu'ah) 8

We see that people do not wish to be reminded about death and that they find a number of excuses not to remember it. There are many reasons for fearing death. These reasons generally arise from people's fear of being deprived of what they own in this world, of their loved ones and of life, and from the guilty conscience deriving from not leading a life that complies with God's orders. It is probably because of reasons like these that some researchers have shown that people who are not religious are more afraid of death. We notice also that different tendencies exist in coping with the fear of death. When we look at this subject from a scientific point of view, we can summarize the situation as follows:

People who are not religious see death as the natural conclusion of life and focus all their attention on their life in this world, on worldly pleasures and pursuits. They therefore adopt a defense reaction before the truth of death. There are two main reasons for this: the first is a form of behavior that can be referred to as "masking" where people become wholly absorbed in their daily routine and busy themselves to the degree that they do not have time to think about death. The second is the behavior of "repression," where people attempt to neutralize the concept of death by removing it from their consciousness. On the other hand,

it is true that religious people tend to keep the idea of death alive in their consciousness and do not avoid confronting the reality of death. Nevertheless, while the belief in afterlife is a source of comfort, it can still be also a source of worry and anxiety.¹

There was a saying we once liked very much and adopted as a slogan: **"People are asleep. They wake up when they die."** This was indeed true of so many people around us. They seemed to have plunged into a state of indolence and they kept running around, pursuing only worldly affairs. They kept turning and tossing in their beds, like spoiled children who did not want to get up early in the morning and go to school. They seemed not to want to wake up. They seemed to be saying that they did not want to have their sleep and their peace spoiled. **Whereas people have so much time to sleep when they are buried underground. It is now that people should be awake, in order to get prepared for the afterlife.**

Some people are disturbed and troubled by the Quranic verse placed above the main entrance to the Zincirlikuyu Cemetery in Istanbul: "Every person tastes death." They do not want to see this warning on a road that they pass through every day. But if one must feel troubled, being troubled in this world is much better than suffering endless pain and unease.

A sorrowful call from the minaret announces a death people line up to pray at the funeral... How admirable! But still no one believes in death! Neither those carrying the coffin, nor those digging the earth...

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

1 Hayati Hökelekli, **Din Psikolojisi**, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, Ankara 2003, pp. 99-100.

In the words of the Roman thinker Seneca, death is not like those unimportant subjects that are not worth thinking about and asking people to “think about death” means inviting them to reflect on freedom:

Death is not unimportant, like a good or bad haircut. It is not evil, but it has an evil appearance. The wish to live and the fear to disintegrate are innate in everybody. Ignorance is one of the reasons why we fear death. We are afraid of what we do not know. We should strengthen our soul and enable it to draw closer to death and to face death without fear. Little children and people with a weak intellect do not fear death. It would be a shame if our mind was not able to provide us with the confidence that beings unable to reason are equipped with. Asking people to “think about death” means inviting them to reflect on freedom. People who comprehend death forget that they are slaves.²

Those who are inspired by aphorisms regarding happiness and success in this world and they hang them on their walls, never think that none of these are as real and permanent as death. No one can know where and in what state one will be when death comes to get him. For example people can die while committing a sin or a crime. Or people can be driving under the influence and they can put an end both to their life and to that of others. People can hurt other people. Since we cannot know **when death will get us and in what state we will be, we must all be mindful about the lives we lead!**

2 Cited by Müfit Selim Saruhan, ‘İslam Filozof ve Düşünürlerinde Ölüm Korkusu ve Tedavisi’, A.Ü.İ.F.D., Vol 47, Issue 1, p. 90.

For since we must certainly die, of necessity a man must be found doing something, either following the employment of a husbandman, or digging, or trading, or serving in a consulship or suffering from indigestion or from diarrhea. What then do you wish to be doing, when you are found by death? I for my part would wish to be found doing something which belongs to a man, beneficent, suitable to the general interest, noble.

But if I cannot be found doing things so great, I would be found doing at least that which I cannot be hindered from doing, that which is permitted me to do, correcting, myself, cultivating the faculty which makes use of appearances, laboring at freedom from the affects, rendering to the relations of life their due.

If death surprises me when I am busy about these things, it is enough for me if I can stretch out my hands to God and say: "The means which I have received from Thee for seeing Thy administration and following it, I have not neglected: I have not dishonored Thee by my acts: see how I have used my perceptions, see how I have used my preconceptions: have I ever blamed Thee? have I been discontented with anything that happens, or wished it to be otherwise? have I wished to transgress the relations? That Thou hast given me life, I thank Thee for what Thou have given me: so long as I have used the things which are Thine, I am content; take them back and place them wherever Thou mayest choose; for Thine were all things, Thou gavest them to me." Is it not enough to depart in this state of mind, and what life is better and more becoming than

*that of a man who is in this state of mind? And what end is more happy?*³

Epictetus

Imagine that you owe your bank and that your house has therefore been mortgaged. You receive statements from bank officials regarding the payments expected from you. But you ignore and tear up all these notifications and you continue to live your life without thinking of the mortgage on your house. But there is a reality that you are disregarding. Regardless of whether you ignore it or you do not attach any importance to it, the mortgage on your house continues to exist. The bank can evict you at any moment and put your house on sale. Similarly, even if you live without thinking of death, the reality of death never changes and it can seize your life at any moment. **Do not forget that neither your body, nor your life belong to you. They all belong to their real owner. There is a mortgage on you.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

With God is the knowledge regarding the Hour (*end of the world*). He is the One who sends down the rain, and He knows the contents of the womb. No soul knows what will happen to it tomorrow, and no one knows in which land he or she will die. God is Omniscient, Cognizant.

31 Luqmān (Luqmān) 34

When people who live their life without being aware that one day they will die, who ignore God's commands and do not wish to die suffer torment in the afterlife, they will look for ways to die.

³ Epictetus, **Söylevler** [Discourses], transl. Birdal Akar, Şule Yayınları, İstanbul 2010, (4,10).

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

In fact, they have disbelieved in the Hour (Day of Resurrection), and we have prepared for those who disbelieve in the Hour a flaming Hell. When it sees them from afar, they will hear its rage and fuming. And when they are thrown into it, through a narrow place, all shackled, they will declare their remorse. You will not declare just a single remorse, on that day; you will suffer through a great number of remorsees. Say, "Is this better or the eternal Paradise that is promised for the righteous? It is their well deserved reward; a well deserved destiny."

25 The Statute Book (Al-Furqān) 11-15

Those people who are aware that they will die one day buy themselves a cemetery lot so that they will not be unattended when they die and that the site of their grave is known. There is no doubt that they are right. But most people still preoccupy themselves with where they sleep in this world and forget about the real truth. **Although they arrange for a place for themselves, unfortunately they do not prepare themselves for that place.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Every person tastes death, then you receive your recompense on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever misses Hell, barely, and makes it to Paradise, has attained a great triumph. The life of this world is no more than an illusion.

3 The Amramites (Āli-'Imrān) 185

EVERYBODY IS AT EQUAL DISTANCE FROM DEATH

*The share of all who die is three to four meters of shroud
But the real purpose is to take one's last breath in faith.*

How can I be sure that I will be alive tomorrow?

The coffin of a young man was just carried by.

Your corpse will be shouldered by four people

You will account for everything you did.

You may rely on your youth and think "It's still early",

But you may not even be able to say goodbye as you go.

Ahmet Mahir Pekşen

DEATH IS CLOSER TO US THAN WE CAN IMAGINE, even though the majority of people are not aware of this. There is no guarantee that people who exert themselves for this world, as if they were never going to die, will be able to fulfill their daily plans, let alone plans regarding the future. When we leave home in the mornings, there is no guarantee that we will be able to return home, to eat our favorite dish, or see our loved ones once again. Or that we will be able to go on that summer holiday that we booked early, so that it would be more economical, or to achieve whatever it is that we long for, hoping that time will past faster. We may not be able to live in the house we want so much, to drive the car we like or to lead the wealthy life we long for. There is no doubt that all such things depend on probabilities. They may or may not happen.

There is only one thing that we have in common with all other living beings: death! Death makes all living beings common. Death abolishes all advantages and renders everybody equal. It makes no distinction among people. It does not make an appointment before it comes. And it is not a

probability, as it is in some songs. It happens for sure. Indeed, though you may not be aware of it, while you are reading these lines, a few people have died somewhere on earth. According to researchers, on average, every second one person passes away. By the time you finish this book, hundreds more will have died. Is there any reason why we should not be one of those people?

*Don't think of today, yesterday is gone,
but is there a tomorrow? Don't trust in your youth,
are all those who die, old?*

Ebû Tûrâb Nahşebi

Everybody is at equal distance from death. Even a prisoner about to be executed by a firing squad is no closer to death than somebody who is sitting at home reading a newspaper and sipping tea. Even that prisoner, whose imminent death seems certain, may not be executed for a variety of reasons. For example a major earthquake may happen at that moment. Or enemy planes may bomb the prison camp and the prisoner may escape. At that very moment, somebody who is sunbathing on the beach or watering a garden may die.

*For from the very beginning of our existence
in this dying body, there is never a moment when
death is not at work in us.*

Augustine

No doubt this scenario may be different. While the prisoner waiting on death row may be executed, the man watering the garden may continue living. But when we look at these two examples, the only difference is that the death of one is considered more certain than that of the other, rather than that they are more or less close to death. For example, a grandchild who travels to see his grandfather who is at his

deathbed may die before his grandfather, as a result of a traffic accident. **Everything is possible. People may consider themselves close to death or distant from it. Some things in life may or may not happen. But death is for sure and it will inevitably happen to everybody.**

*They look at the horizon, death is far away
But the coffin waits, like a ship to be launched...*

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

Whether people live a long or a short life does not change the fact that one day they will die. Moreover, the length of life is related entirely to our perception. Some butterflies have a life of only 24 hours. Their birth and death happen within one day. On the other hand, plane trees can live several centuries and turtles can live up to 200 years. When compared with eternity, human life is of no value whatsoever. People may think that they live a long life, but when their life comes to an end and they are resurrected in the afterlife, they realize that their existence on earth lasted only as long as that of butterflies.

Aristotle tells us that there are certain little beasts upon the banks of the river Hypanis that live just a single day: those that die at eight in the morning are considered to have died young; those that die at five in the evening, in their decrepitude. Who wouldn't find it laughable to consider which of the two is in weal or woe? The long and the short of our lives, in comparison with eternity, or yet with the duration of mountains, rivers, stars, trees, and even of some animals, is no less ridiculous.⁴

Montaigne

4 Montaigne, **Denemeler** [Essays], trans Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, p. 71.

Seeing numerous people die on TV dramas and films may trivialize death in your eyes. But death in real life is not the way it is in TV dramas and films. It is not a reenactment. It is an irreversible truth. When you see the death notices on page three of a newspaper or the obituaries in the inner pages, you may trivialize it thinking that it is not you or a loved one who has died. Or it may not mean much to you when thousands of people suddenly die as a result of natural disaster such as a tsunami, an earthquake or a flood anywhere in the world that is far from you. The deaths of those in a region that is in the midst of continuous clashes or a war may constitute simply a newsflash for you. But the fact that you are not one of the people who die as a result of these events does not mean that you are distant from death. **If man exists, death does as well. Every breath taken is half life, half death. That is how close death is to us.**

Some people may say things like “one cannot live thinking continuously of death,” “life would become unbearable” or “one would fall into depression.” Such things depend on those people’s view of death and on the type of life they lead. If people have lived their life paying regard to God’s approval, thinking about death will come as naturally to them as eating and drinking. They will not feel any uneasiness. On the contrary, they will ask the Lord for the best of both life and death. **They will smile before death just as mothers do when handed their newborn baby. They will consider death as a new life.**

When the situation is this real and clear, death is not something to be avoided; on the contrary it is to be kept in mind continuously and to be prepared for. According to Al-Ghazâlî death is a reality that there are no doubts about and everything that will happen is close to man. Augustine, on the

other hand, says that everybody is at equal distance from death.

*It befits a man who feels that death is close to think only of death, to refer to it, to act in accordance, to concern himself with it, to reflect on it, to wait for it, to consider himself among the dead and equal to them. **Everything that will happen is close. And what is distant will not happen.***⁵

Ghazâlî

*Certainly there is no one who is not nearer it this year than last year, and tomorrow than today, and today than yesterday, and in a short while than now, and now than a short while ago. For whatever time we live is deducted from our whole term of life, and that which remains is daily becoming less and less; so that our whole life is nothing but a race towards death, in which no one is allowed to stand still for a little space, or to go somewhat more slowly, but all are driven forwards with an impartial movement, and with equal rapidity.*⁶

Augustine

Some people may lead their life in a natural environment, far from stress, in order to live a longer life. They may eat a healthy diet and exercise in order to live a longer and healthier life. There is no doubt that everybody should take care of their health. But no matter what kind of a life they lead, whether soon or late, death will still be its inevitable end. Because of death time seems short to man. Death suddenly appears before you when you least expect it. **That is why**

5 Cited by Faruk Karaca, **Ölüm Psikolojisi**, Beyan Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p 65.

6 Cited by Kaan H. Ökten, **Ölüm Kitabı**, Agora Kitaplığı, İstanbul 2010, p 141.

no death is ever early or late. It simply happens when it should. When the life conferred to a servant of God comes to an end, others see that person as young or old.

Death is a sherbet that everybody will taste.

Shrouds are suits that everybody will wear.

Coffins are vehicles that everybody will travel in.

Graves are doors that everybody will pass through.

Anonymous

GOODS AND PROPERTIES MAY BE OWNED BY SOME, BUT WHO WERE THEY OWNED BY FIRST?

*Whatever you do, death is by our side,
You sleep, you wake up and it's there.
Who knows where, when, at what age
Your reign on that throne-like coffin rest
Will last no more than a prayer.*

Cahit Sıtkı Tarancı

HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT of the fact that the wealth or the possessions presently owned by some people have been owned by numerous other people before them and that right now no trace is left of any of them? A vast number of civilizations have emerged and disappeared since the world has come into existence. A vast number of cities and monumental structures have been built. There were the Seven Wonder of the World, built before the common era: the Pyramid of Cheops, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Artemis, the Statue of Zeus, the Colossus of Rhodes, the Lighthouse of Alexandria and the Mausoleum of Mausolus. Except for the Pyramid of Cheops, have any of the others survived? Have they not all disappeared? Just as the present seven wonders will one day disappear...

Kings and emperors, noble families, dynasties dominated lands: Alexander once reigned on lands that extended from Macedonia to India. Then there is Istanbul, think of all the civilizations it has been the cradle of: the Romans, the Byzantines, the Ottomans. The world was once ruled from the Topkapi Palace. When important foreign kings came to the palace their knees trembled. Now people come from all over

the world to visit its museum. How did all that sovereignty and splendor disappear? You may rule over the world, but if you cannot rule over death, what good is your temporary dominance over property?

Who knows how many families and people have lived in the waterside mansion that we see when we stroll along the coast and that we wish we could live in. Those people have been replaced by others, just as the present dwellers will be replaced by others. In Yunus Emre' words: **“Goods and properties may be owned by some, but who were they owned by first? Goods and properties are nothing but fallacies. Just for you to idle yourselves with”**.

Death teaches people that even their life does not belong to them. It is therefore meaningless to think that people who do not even own their own lives should own material objects.

God is the only one to dominate everything. He has command and force over all possessions. He owns both goods and property, and he is the first owner and the only inheritor. People, on the other hand, are the owners of transitory wishes as well as of limited breaths. The only thing that they can own, when they plunge into a worldly life, is transitory worldly bounties that consist only of little games and trivial things when compared with eternal life.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Say, “Our God: possessor of all sovereignty. You grant sovereignty to whomever You choose, You remove sovereignty from whomever You choose. You grant dignity to whomever You choose, and commit to humiliation

whomever You choose. In Your hand are all provisions.
You are Omnipotent.

3 The Amramites (Āli-‘Imrān) 26

SHROUDS HAVE NO POCKETS

Our elders always say “shrouds have no pockets.” Most of us know this saying and repeat it to others. Yes but, how many of us lead our life consciously aware of its meaning? Let us stop and think for a moment: there are so many people who, although aware that this transitory, worldly life will come to an end, lead their life as if they were never going to die and although they know that shrouds have no pockets, fall prey to ambitions, dissatisfaction, selfishness and meanness, as if they could possibly take along loads of possessions when they die.

Let death appear before your eyes every day, and you will never have anything contemptible in your thoughts or crave anything excessively.

Epictetus

Just like spiritual things, material things also befit sincere people who have a heartfelt attraction to God. While some people see wealth as a necessity for their own glory, to make a show of, to own everything they want and to feel superior to others, for true believers wealth is simply an instrument to be used to carry out good deeds in the name of God. True believers know that they only act as caretakers and that the only real owner of all possessions who has dominion of all is God. That is why they do not fall prey to unnecessary ambitions and become prisoners of material things. They behave as befits Muslim people. They do not demean or humiliate people. They use whatever they have in the name of God

and share their possessions with people in need. It is only people like this to whom it befits to be wealthy and own material things.

Let us imagine that we are traveling by plane. Let us say that the pilot announces that the plane may crash at any moment and that anything of any weight must be thrown out. There is no doubt that anybody who realizes the severity of the situation and does not treasure their possessions as much as they treasure their own life will consent to have all baggage thrown out, or even to distribute all their possessions to people in need in order to save their life. Well then, does our life in any way differ from such a situation? When we are sitting down, is there less of a probability that we encounter death than there is when we fly in the sky?

It is generally natural to think this way. But are there any guarantees that while we are eating or drinking we will not suddenly choke to death or that our heart will not suddenly run out of blood because of a small blocked vein? Does the fact that everybody is able to breathe in any way decrease the perfection of the act of breathing? Let us imagine that we are short of breath for a moment; do you not think that we would be ready to give up everything we own, just to be able to breathe easily, like we did before? **Do we need to fear that the plane will crash or to face storm waves in the middle of the sea to take refuge in God and remember that the world is transitory?**

When the great sovereign Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi realized that the moment had come to leave this world, he summoned the Sheikh ul-Islam and said to him: "How large a shroud is needed when a man dies?" "Six yards, my Lord." Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi asks for a spear and a shroud. Then he summons a soldier: "Hang this shroud

on the spear. Walk around the streets of Baghdad and say: People of Baghdad! Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, ruler of countries and owner of great wealth, is unable to take anything other than this shroud when he leaves this false world and goes into the eternal world, take example!”

We must have attended numerous funerals. Have any of you ever seen anything but a shroud on the person whose body lies in the coffin? Are the titles, positions, fame and glory that people leave behind them when they die of any good to them? **Whether the head of a state, a wealthy business man or a commoner, everybody leaves their fame and glory, titles and possessions behind. The prayers are performed for a man or a woman, and that is it.**

The heads of the dead should be checked in the grave to see if there is any difference between king and slave?

Mahmud Ghaznavi

Is there any sense to the houses, cars, spouses, friends, relatives, bank accounts, gold and shares in the stock exchange that are left behind? At that point none of these matter anymore. **Apart from the duties as a servant of God and the good deeds that people carry out and the devotion that they show during their lifetime, there are no other guarantees that can be taken along and be of benefit.** Even their life, which they refer to as “mine” does not belong to them, but to He who gave it to them. And they do not own their possessions either, which they also refer to as “mine,” because those now belong to their inheritors, and will then belong to other people. People leave this world in the state in which they arrived in it. Just as they did not bring anything, they are not able to take anything away either.

*From our mother's womb to the market
To buy a shroud and return to our grave.*

Yunus Emre

People are mean and dissatisfied and they keep forgetting this truth: their physiological and biological capacity is quite limited. For example, even if they set up a table with all kinds of food, they still cannot eat more than their fill. If they have more than one of the same thing, they cannot use it at the same moment. They cannot drive more than one car or live in more than one house. Even if they had more than twenty rooms, they could not live in more than one at once, or sleep in more than one bed. The areas they occupy are only as large as their bodies. **For instance, even if people possessed thousands of hectares of land, the area they will cover when they die will still be only as large as their body. And their shrouds will be the length of their bodies.**

How can you undertake your journey to death, if you carry loads of ambition and greed? You need to lessen your load, if you want to fit into your grave.

Abdurrahman Câmî

Yes, shrouds have no pockets and the only thing that people can take along is the record of deeds. The only possession that they can get away with is the kindness they have shown and the good deeds that they have done. If the life that they lead in the world was in line with God's commands, they would not exchange a single good deed for the whole wealth in the world. They would not regret not having enjoyed any of the pleasures of the world. They have understood where the real meaning lies and what is worth achieving. They sincerely wish to do good deeds while alive, to fill their record of good deeds with good deeds and to stay away from evil.

When they are resurrected after death and they are held in account for all the blessings and opportunities they had while alive, because of that sense of shame, fear and regret, they wish they could return to the world, to spend all their wealth for the sake of good deeds.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

You shall give from our provisions to you before death comes to you, then you say, "My Lord, if only You could delay this for a short while! I would then be charitable and join the righteous!" God never delays the appointed time of death for any soul. God is fully Cognizant of everything you do.

63 The Hypocrites (Al-Munaafiqoon) 10-11

People are not that foreign to the shrouds they are wrapped up with when they die. Just as we all wear shrouds when we die, when we were born we were swaddled wrapped in a blanket. Maybe this tells us that we will leave this world just as we came into it and that we are not permanent. The beginning and the end are the same. The only difference is that when we were born they put us in our mother's lap, and when we die underground, and we leave with our sins this world we came to without any sins.

This is death and it does not distinguish between kings or fools; it swallows everyone with the same appetite.

Victor Hugo

Most people in this world boast about their possessions or because they are so and so's son or nephew. Most people are respected because they are so and so's son or nephew. Have you ever encountered anybody who says "I'm a servant

of God. God is my Lord. I rely on him and trust in him” or who says “I belong to my Lord”? Have you ever seen anybody who is proud of their Lord, rather than of being so and so’s nephew? But in the afterlife you will be treated according to the degree to which you have acted as a servant to God, rather than whose son or nephew you are. **Whoever you may be, you cannot escape your fate.**

*Do not give up your love for the sake of the world
You cannot escape death*

*Don’t boast that you are so and so
You cannot escape death either*

*Alexander too, came and wondered in this world
He destroyed the throne of Darius*

*He swam across the oceans with a dolphin
He could not escape death either*

*The bard Yunus says that fortunes are nothing but straw
Solomon picked up his crown and throne and left*

*Healers were not able to cure his ailment
He could not escape death either*

Yunus Emre

OTHER PASSIONS, OTHER DREAMS

Death is the condition of your creation: death is your ferment. Escaping from it is escaping yourself. The being you enjoy is equally shared between life and death. The day you are born you start living and dying.

Montaigne

WE NEVER QUESTION OUR LIFE and we live without reflecting on the reality of death. How is it that we can live such careless and comfortable lives? How is that while people carefully choose all kinds of details regarding their worldly lives, for example the type of house where they will live in, their furniture and accessories, the wall color, the kitchen and bathroom cupboards, the tiles, the curtains and chandeliers, and they worry and want to have the very best, and they think of which dress will go best with which shoes or which color goes best with which other color, they can live without thinking of the real truth that they should be paying attention to? Are those small details so important? Or is it that, in Plato's words, **"To attach great importance to small things may cause one to attach little importance to greater things"**? Is human life so worthless? So worthless that it can be spent for the sake of things that are not worth it...

If you have left behind no work to save you in the after-life do not rely on the works you have left behind in the mortal world.

Said-i Nursî

The major reason for this most probably is that what the majority of people attach most importance and value to is transitory material things that belong to the worldly life. And when it is material things that people attach importance to naturally these things are placed at the center of life and people are transformed into empty bodies that are directed by this center. God not only created man, He also equipped him with all kinds of blessings and opportunities. And the most important of these blessings is faith.

God granted so much grace to faith that death, obviously the opposite of life, became the instrument through which one passes over to life.

Augustine

God has announced himself to people. He has asked people to be good servants and good people. Those who do not place God in the center of their life are bound to pursue small and worthless things. Because life can only acquire meaning if its focus is God. Anything that is transitory has no meaning or value next to eternity.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

God is the One who increases the provision for whom-ever He wills, or withholds it. They have become pre-occupied with this life, and this life, compared to the Hereafter, is nil.

13 The Thunder (Al-Ra'ad) 26

People who do not question the reason of their existence, who are content to live, see, hear, eat, drink and speak and never think of the reason of all this and of much more, end up getting carried away with a variety of passions and dreams

and deviating from the reason of their existence. They demonstrate an impatient and carefree love for what they receive and they prefer limited and transitory blessings to those that are eternal and endless. God shows us the beauty of this world so that we can imagine the beauty of the after-life and understand how perfect they can be, and not so that we can waste our time with them and forget about God.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Indeed, you love this fleeting life.

While disregarding the Hereafter.

75 Resurrection (Al-Qeyaamah) 20-21

IT'S GOOD TO COMPETE, BUT FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

Most of the best known television stations now broadcast an increasing number of competitions. Some are based on general knowledge, some on courage and taking risks, some on singing and dancing skills and some on other abilities. People forget that their purpose on this world is to live for God and to compete with others in carrying out good deeds in His name and they use their bodies, minds and world views to compete with each other for the sake of other passions and other feelings.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Each of you chooses the direction to follow; you shall race towards righteousness. Wherever you may be, God will summon you all. God is Omnipotent.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 148

Most people find it difficult to accept that God has prescribed a number of prayers that are beneficial for people and will help them achieve a spiritual satisfaction, and out of the belief that it is of no visible use, they do not feel the least fondness for these prayers. Although some people consider it too hard to fast, in other words to go without food and water during certain parts of certain days as prescribed by God, they see fighting for their lives on a remote island, under difficulties and adversities and winning an award as a great ambition and an adventure. People who take all kinds of risks and force their bodies, would look for a way out if they were asked to risk their life for God. And many people who carry out numerous weight loss diets to look good and be admired by others, who bend down and straighten up to work their muscles in gyms to acquire a strong and aesthetically pleasing appearance cannot take the trouble to perform prayers, which are a small sign of being a servant of God and of submission to Him and they consider it unnecessary to prostrate themselves before God.

Some people cannot take the trouble to carry out good deeds in the name of God or they come up with excuses to avoid them, but they are ready to do anything that pleases their own desires. Some people are ready to roast for hours on a beach under the sun in order to look beautiful, but when it is necessary to provide a service in the name of God or do a good deed they cite the heat as an excuse. The answer that the Quran provides for such cases is very striking and unsettling:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The sedentary rejoiced in their staying behind the messenger of God, and hated to strive with their money

and their lives in the cause of God. They said, “Let us not mobilize in this heat!” Say, “The fire of Hell is much hotter,” if they could only comprehend.

9 Ultimatum (Barā’ah) 81

People find all kinds of excuses to live their life as they wish and they keep postponing what they should actually be doing. But when we come into this world, we are not given any documents informing us of our expiration date, in other words of our lifetime. Therefore every person who is born potentially faces the reality of death at any moment. But when people die, the things that they have done in this world are of no use to them, indeed they may constitute a burden and a problem in terms of their reckoning.

Because they exert themselves for this world as if they were never going to die, people do not find the time and the opportunity to exert themselves for their afterlife as if they were going to die tomorrow and they therefore waste away the short life that they are given. Furthermore, many people die without having obtained most of the material things that they devote their life to. In other words, though they make the same effort, very few people are able to obtain the things they desire. Even if they develop excessive ambitions and become wholly absorbed in them, they are not able to be rewarded in a worldly sense for all their efforts.

What if I were to stop this passerby, pulling him by his jacket and ask him: Do you know that you are going to die?

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

So many people have lived thinking that the world consists only of material things and of a full life and they have passed away without ever questioning their existence or what will happen to them in the end. What can the purpose of life be? Traveling? Having fun? Excessive consumption? Shopping? Ambitions? Passions? A career? Status? A title? Fame and glory? This is what people are continuously being bombarded with. This materialist mentality and the addiction to consumption are injected surreptitiously through mass media. Have you ever thought how many people possessed status, fame and glory, pursued so fervently and made the main purpose of life, and that none of them are now alive? Think of all the people who have been prime ministers or ministers in their countries, who have managed major companies or have played in many films and become world-wide stars. On the internet pages of both public bodies and private companies, next to the organization's history there are headings such as our founders, our presidents or our directors. If you examine any of these organizations, you will see that people who have occupied these positions for many years at one point have had to hand them over to others. Just like the ones who occupy those positions now will one day hand them over to others. All those actors whose films people queued for forty years ago are now either in old people's homes or underground. The same will happen to actors who are famous today. Death is the only inevitable reality for people.

*All the world's a stage, and all the men and women
merely players. They have their exits and their en-
trances.*

William Shakespeare

“I cannot believe he died.” “He cannot have died.” “Death does not befit you.” “He played a last trick on us and he died.” Some people say such things because they think that death is baffling. You probably have attended many funerals. Have you ever heard anybody say: “He has passed away; if only he had done more for his afterlife while he was alive and he had avoided committing all those sins.” Most certainly there are people who see things this way, but the majority will agree that whatever the age of the person who passed away – indeed even if the person was quite old – they passed away prematurely, that they were not able to live life to their fullest, that they were not able to see some of the places they wanted to see, or they were not able to rise enough in their career or to see their grandsons’ circumcision. So the emphasis is always on this world. But in the hereafter, when people who have rejected God’s verses in the Quran are confronted with the mistakes they made during their life in this world, they regret the life that they led, they let out a deep sigh and say **“Oh, I wish I were dust.” (78 The Event (Al-Naba’) 40)** rather than having led a life as people.

When you were born, you cried while those around you laughed for joy. Lead your life so that when you die those around you will cry but you will smile your way into the afterlife.

Necmeddîn-i Kübrâ

101 THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU DIE

*We must make ready for death before
we make ready for life.*

Seneca

NOWADAYS IT IS VERY FASHIONABLE to list places to visit, to see or live in, films to watch, adventures to take before dying. Books of this kind are among bestsellers all over the world. Thank God people at some point become aware of the inevitable reality of death. However, instead of taking measures for the afterlife, they fall into the trap of thinking “Since we come into this world only once, we must have as much fun and pleasure as possible.”

Certain hobbies that should only add some color to life have now become practically the main purpose of life. People should stop and ask themselves this question: What are the real things that I should do before I die? Is it 101 places to visit? Or is it 1001 films to watch? What would one lose by not visiting those places or not watching those films? Or are people in the afterlife called into account regarding the places they have gone to and the films they have watched? And if they are asked if they have worried about their afterlife, as well as about the places to be visited, what would they reply?

Within the sphere of permissibility, there is no reason for censuring people who benefit from a certain amount of worldly attractions, who go sightseeing, or who observe God’s art and witness the superiority of his creation. But deviating from the real purpose and considering these as things that one should definitely do before dying is an act

of complete indolence. The people who carry out these researches may have all the good will in the world, and indeed, our criticism is directed at the development of such concepts, rather than at people's intentions. Numerous people who do not ask themselves whether there is anything that they should do for God or for their afterlife are curious about hundreds and even thousands of things to do before dying and these make them forget about the purpose of life. If we think about the things that we have wished for ourselves and the things we have wished for God and for our afterlife up to this moment and up to this age, and we review and compare them, what emerges will be a pathetic picture. When people, who owe each and every breath they take to their Creator, appear before Him with a long list of debts and need to account for their life, the places they have visited will not be of any use to them. The only things of use to people are the good deeds they perform and the duties they fulfil as a servant of God.

The great results from the less, strong from weak, slow from swift, heat from cold, and in like manner life from death...

Socrates

Let us imagine that we travel to a distant country and we take a connecting flight. When we land in the airport where we will change flights we do not open our suitcases or make plans to stay here. We know that this is not the place that our final flight will take us to. Our worldly life is like the airport where we wait to reach the life that is our final destination. The only difference is that our plane will depart exactly when it should but that we do not know when that time is. Our plane does not break down and it is never delayed. It is therefore difficult to understand, when the situation is

so obvious, how people can become so attached to a world that is a kind of waiting hall and that they know that they will need to leave soon.

Before it is too late, we need to ask ourselves “What are the things that I really need to do before I die?” While we exert ourselves to carry out all kinds of worldly things and to derive pleasure from them, we must not postpone good deeds intended for our afterlife. Just as it is with our worldly affairs, there is no guarantee that we will be able to fulfill our deeds that are intended for our afterlife. We may suddenly face death and not find an opportunity to fulfill them. That is why we must give priority to deeds intended for our afterlife.

The great rendezvous, if I knew where and when... The wood of my coffin, if I knew which tree it comes from...

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

THE FIRE SUMMONS YOU...

In their worldly life, people make preparations in accordance with where they are going. They check the climate and general conditions of their destinations and take along the things that they will need. You would never go to sea with a boat without oars or go out without an umbrella if you saw that it was pouring with rain, because you would know that you would need these. But these same people do not make any preparations according to the place where they want to go in the afterlife. But people should make preparations according to where they want to go in the afterlife and should only commit sins to the degree that they can stand the fire. Yes, the fire summons us. And the Devil does everything it can for us to respond to this summons.

In your worldly life you may draw great pleasure from doing something that is very appealing but that is forbidden by religion, but imagine that once you have done that, you will be thrown into the fire burning inside a huge cauldron. Although you may want to do something that you desire, you will not dare do it because you do not want to end up in the fire within the cauldron. In which case, how is it that you do not pay any regard to your life in this world and you run the risk of staying an indefinite period of time in the fire after death by committing sins? **Do you realize that it is your life that you are gambling away? What's more, you have no chance to take your revenge from death, which puts an end to your life.**

The famous Russian author Tolstoy presents a fable known by Eastern cultures to express people's indolence when they worry and waste time with worldly bounties in spite of the reality of death, which is so obvious.

A traveller is overtaken on a plain by an enraged beast. Escaping from the beast he gets into a dry well and clings to a twig, but sees at the bottom of the well a dragon that has opened its jaws to swallow him. Not daring to climb out lest he should be destroyed by the enraged beast, and not daring to leap to the bottom of the well lest he should be eaten by the dragon, he clings on to the twig. Then he sees that two mice, a black one and a white one, are gnawing at the stem of the twig to which he is clinging. The traveler knows that he will inevitably perish; but while still hanging he looks around, sees some drops of honey on the leaves of the twig, reaches them with his tongue and licks them, trying to ignore that terrible situation he finds himself in.

Even if we never stop prostrating ourselves and opening our hands in prayer before the blessings and opportunities that God has given us in advance, we must know that our gratitude, need of and debt to God can never end, that those who wish drops from the river of mercy will receive it hand-fuls and we must make up our minds right now, rather than later on. What kind of a life am I preparing for myself and how will my choices affect my afterlife? I know about the 101 places to visit and the 1001 films to see before I die, but what is it that I need to do for my afterlife? Let us ask ourselves this question.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Everything that is given to you is only the material of this life, and its vanity. What is with God is far better, and everlasting. Do you not understand?

28 History (Al-Qasas) 60

WE ARE CONSUMED BY THE CONSUMPTION MENTALITY

*People in the world fight
Over things that the dead regret.*

Ghazâlî

EXCESSIVE CONSUMPTION is among the most serious diseases that modern people are not aware of. It is always thought that further consumption and owning more things can make people happy. Although it is possible to see examples of excessive behavior throughout history, the industrial development, increase in production, and the capitalist minded race to market products, all of which have taken place in the modern era, have resulted in people catching the disease of consumption. **Increase in production has brought about an increase in needs. Or maybe we have been fooled into believing that we really need these products.** Everything that is introduced into our life suddenly becomes indispensable, as if it had always existed and we could not possibly live without it.

Many things that were considered a luxury until a short time ago have gradually been transformed into essential needs. Things we could do without were more numerous in the past, now they are fewer. The more we consumed, the more they produced. These material goods were practically forced onto to us by the ads and slogans drummed at us by the mass media. Research has shown that 500 billion dollars are set aside every year for advertising. We are fooled by ornate packaging. Sometimes we join long queues, either in front of a supermarket or an electronics shop, on its sales day. We

have joined queues before sunrise. We have pushed each other in order to be the first buyers. We have filled up our shopping carts with useless things, because it was an occasion not to be missed. **We filled up our worlds with material things. And we ignored the fact that a void was forming inside us.**

What matters in life is not to own many things but to need few.

Plato

We have become unable to use things for a long time. Once there used to be craftsmen and repairers, shoe repairers for example. We used to stop by whenever our feet got wet inside the shoes. Then there were the tailors who would mend our clothes or sew us a simple suit. Now everything has changed. The more they have produced the more they have smothered us with ads to make us change our shoes. Shoes have an obvious purpose of use. But they were not content with that. So we bought different shoes to wear with suits, different shoes for walking and for sports and different shoes for running, football, basketball and tennis. We bought so many that our shoes could no longer fit into our cupboards. The moment they were a little worn out we threw them away. Once, both shoes and clothes were worn for a long time. New shoes or clothes were only bought on holidays. Shoe repair shops have closed one by one. We have consumed and destroyed them just like we have consumed and destroyed ourselves.

People have become fashion addicts. Some people have established the trends for this year or this season and some have followed these trends. But the real purpose of clothes is to cover the body and to protect it from heat or from cold,

and maybe to look nice as well. But this year's fashion, that was proclaimed through fashion shows, television channels and magazines, soon falls from favor and becomes last year's fashion. People who would have died for it six months earlier did not deign last year's fashion another look. It was consumed, so it was finished and done with. It was last year's. It would not have been appropriate to be seen in it. **Some people now go on two-day trips with several suitcases full of clothes, even if that means a different outfit every half hour.**

People have become brand addicts. They pay tens of thousands of liras for a meter of fabric or a pair of shoes. Because these products have a reputation. Not everybody can wear them. Then critics emerged. They began to give marks to people's clothes, to exalt some and disparage others. People went crazy, simply in order to be appreciated. Then the most ill-dressed of the week were chosen as well as the best-dressed. People who accidentally wore the same clothes twice were disparaged. It was loudly announced that somebody had worn the same dress at an opening two years ago. They said "We never miss such things; that's just not done, it is so unbecoming." People were "caught" wearing the same dress. Others announced that they would never wear the same dress twice, that their body would not accept it. Clothes overflowed from cupboards. We chose to wear different clothes during the day, at work, at meetings and at receptions. **Some people practically became walking cash dispensers, with clothes, shoes, bags and accessories worth tens of thousands of liras.**

Some people showed up at auctions. Hands went up and down. Objects were paid millions because they were antiques, rare vases or paintings. Suddenly everybody became fascinated by the works of painters who during their

lifetime sold their pictures to earn a meager living. Millions were paid. In 2004 Osman Hamdi Bey's painting "The Tortoise Trainer" was sold at 5.5 million liras in Istanbul, and in 2010 Picasso's painting "Nude, Green Leaves and Bust" was sold at 106.4 million dollars in New York. Some people set the value and others paid it.

Some people organized sumptuous receptions, splendid openings, weddings or circumcision feasts. Huge establishments were hired and hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in one night. Money was thrown around. Tables were decked with all kinds of dishes. We suddenly spent as much as possible and had as much fun as possible. Parties were featured in the press for days and days. They became the object of reputation.

People have been transformed into monsters of consumption. We shopped like crazy, ravenously. Women angry at their lovers or husbands went shopping to relax. Husbands bought their wives expensive gifts to appease them. **A single rose was not enough anymore, unless there was a solitaire ring hanging on its thorn.** But in what way were these stones different from others? They were stones after all, were they not? In what way were they different from stones that we stepped on in the street or that we skimmed on the beach? Maybe they were a little more transparent and shiny. And they were more rare. But are we not the ones who set their value? Or is it not certain people that make us chose them and render them valuable? **We decided that solitaire rings are indispensable for weddings. First we put them on our fingers, then we exhibit them ostentatiously.**

With the excuse of personal care and a healthy lifestyle they covered us with loads of chemicals. Every day a new discovery was made in cosmetics. New formulas were developed

every day and poured into new boxes. Once we had moisturizer. Now we have dozens of moisturizers for hands, face, body, between the toes, heels, under the eyes, earlobes and so on. We bought them all and spread them all over our bodies. It became impossible for us to live without them or to get up in the mornings and not spread them on. First we painted our faces with loads of chemical colors, then they sold us other products to get rid of those colors. We bought them all. We never failed to buy the products they produced. Research has it that women throughout the world spend 18 billion dollars a year for makeup and 15 billion dollars for perfume.

We put some people at the top of Turkey's agenda within a couple of days. We praised them to the skies. Sometimes it was because they had a mournful voice, and sometimes because of their naked legs. We declared artists of the year people who could not say a single word about art. And then we consumed them quickly and pulled them down from the skies. We barged into people's private lives, into their homes and bedrooms. For gossip programs nothing is private. If people are popular, they cannot sit in a café and chat with friends, because flashes explode everywhere. We write about them, regardless of whether we know anything about them. We have disrupted marriages and broken homes. We have criticized them, but we have become addicted to such programs. We have eagerly followed them up in the media, to find out who caught whom where and when. And so we consumed privacy too.

Once houses were shared by several families who generally lived together comfortably and in peace and shared their food. Now we have separated people and put them into separate houses. We have made it impossible to live

together. We have divided up families. We have divided up neighborhoods, and erected huge buildings on them, where no one knows each other. We built modern houses where people avoid each other and begrudge a greeting. We have discovered new needs. We have consumed friendship and neighborly feelings. Children do not know anything about neighborhood friends anymore. Children who once played together in the street, fell and scraped their knees, do not exist anymore and we have done away with friendships where fights are followed by embraces. Now we look for friends for PlayStation. Now our friends are the protagonists of games. Either we attempt to defeat them or we cooperate and try to defeat the enemy who comes from other planets to take over our planet. We produced and we consumed what we produced.

We have smothered our children with toys. And cupboards and boxes have overflowed with them. The more we bought toys, the less our children played with them, after which they threw them aside. We made even toys lose their value in children's eyes. We could not give them the happiness that we give children who dragged clothes pegs behind them as if they were trains. We pushed children to continuous consumption and to wear out their things as soon as possible. We let them become addicted to cartoons for hours and hours so that they would sit still and not go berserk and smash the house.

We have decked our tables as if our stomachs could be filled over their capacity. We have bought everything just to taste a piece of each. Going to expensive restaurants and paying expensive bills has made us look privileged. Leaving some of the

food on the plate has made us look refined and privileged. Some people have become habitués of night clubs and of uncorking dozens of champagne bottles, of breaking plates in the name of a show, of scattering around dollars and roses. Uncorking the highest number of champagne bottles has made some people look privileged!

Owning a car was once practically a privilege. The same car was used for years and years. The purpose of a car was to provide transportation, securely and comfortably. There were no changes in models and brands for years. But now people have become consumption addicts and automotive companies compete with each other. Models are changed almost every year and with some alterations the new models make the previous models look old. Most people do not want to use the same car for more than two years. Hundreds of thousands of Euros are spent for stronger engines. Luxury cars have become a sign of exclusivity. People treat you differently, they respect you, they are more reverential.

While in some countries people considered most respectable within society generally occupy important positions and consist of academics, scientists, authors, thinkers, artists, doctors, prominent business people, judges and prosecutors, in some other countries pop singers, country singers, football players, socialites, models and stylists have become the most respectable people. Many professions have been adopted by society and have been attributed much more value than they deserve. Being featured in gossip magazines has become a sign of privilege for some. In these circumstances, children do not wish to become academics, doctors or artists of course. They want to be pop singers or country singers or act in television dramas.

WE HAVE FINALLY CONSUMED THIS HUGE WORLD

Not content with having consumed human values, we also insensitively consumed our natural resources. Research conducted by the World Wild Life Fund on natural resources tells us that the current consumption frenzy is bringing about the end of the world. Scientists who have carried out a research on the world's natural resources have warned the public and have called out for all countries, starting with the West, to put an end to this consumption frenzy.

According to research, an average American consumes 50 times more steel, 56 times more energy, 170 times more paper and 5 times more wheat than an average citizen in a developing country. We can see that there are differences also among consumers within the centers of capitalism. According to experts, high consumption rates in Western countries constitute the main reason for such a rapid consumption of natural resources. According to research, an average American citizen consumes twice as many natural resources as a British citizen and 24 times as many as an African. Moreover, a number of life-threatening illnesses that derive from obesity, in other words excessive adiposity and overweight, such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiac and cerebrovascular conditions and cancer are encountered frequently especially in developed countries. According to research, every year 2.5 million people lose their lives throughout the world as a result of obesity-related health problems.

We have also ruined the equilibrium of nature. The disruption of the ecological balance, soil erosion, forest fires, the conscious destruction of forests, the fall in biological diversity, the rapid pollution of clean water sources, air pollution, acid rain, global warming and climate change, radioactive

incidents and waste, major hurricanes, floods emerge as the consequences of the consumption frenzy.

WE HAVE CONSUMED OURSELVES TOO

We have consumed love and respect as well. It has become practically impossible to do favors without expecting anything in return. We covet what others have. Our feelings of sharing and helping each other have become atrophied. We have stopped sharing other people's problems, unless they become our problems. We burden others with our responsibilities and sensitivities. We expect understanding from others but deny it to others.

We ended up with nothing to consume, because we consumed and wasted our lives. What's more, we cannot recover it by putting it into the recycling box. We forgot that time is our most precious thing and we wasted our hours, days and nights before television, watching drama after drama, competition after competition, and surfing the internet. But none of these were indispensable for us.

While the extra points promised by banks in return for intense usage incite people to consume even more, the extra points arising from expenses made in the name of God and the duties performed as a servant of God do not incite people to do good deeds. **We consume everything, but we do not consume ourselves for the sake of good deeds. Whereas the points accumulating as a result of our good deeds will return to us in the form of eternal happiness.**

Greedy moneylender, sew yourself another pouch, and start saving the currency that is valid in the grave!

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

WHEREAS THERE IS A DIFFERENT WORLD ON THE OTHER SIDE

Research conducted on people's economic livelihood has shown that close to half of the world population is trying to live on 2 dollars or less a day. A statement by the International Labor Organization drew attention to the fact that 2 billion people earn their livelihood on 2 dollars a day and 1 billion people on close to 1 dollar a day. The organization's press release emphasized that the gap between the poorest 20 percent and the richest 20 percent of the world population has doubled over the last 40 years. The United Nations' data corroborates this fact. A total of 1.2 billion people in the world attempt to live on less than 1 dollar a day. In most places, people's major luxury may simply be access to water resources. On the other hand, it is obvious that the amount of water used to irrigate the golf courses in America could very well solve the water issue of African countries. Mind-boggling imbalances of this kind are an indication of how insensitive humanity has become.

Most people are not even aware of the existence of a country called Niger. Niger is situated in the northwest of Africa. According to reports issued by the United Nations it is the world's poorest country. It achieved independence from French colonialism in the 1960s and has a population of 13 million, of which 95% is Muslim and 2% Christian. It covers an area that is 1.5 times that of Turkey, but 88% of it is a desert. Seventy percent of its people are on the threshold of hunger. Most people in Niger cover an average of 20 km a day to get 10-15 liters of water. But as this water generally comes from polluted lakes or rain water pools that animals utilize as well, most people are sick. Although the country is self-sufficient in terms of underground water, its people experience severe water shortages because they are not able to access this water.

In a significant part of the world, people's major luxury is simply to find sufficient food and water to maintain their biological life. Countless news items corroborate this fact. For example, 500 people starved to death in Guatemala because of a recent famine. This situation, which could very well be defined as "mass death" is known to have arisen from droughts. It has also been stated that 54,000 families living in this area experience malnourishment. According to UNICEF's July 2009 dated report the "very poor population" in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka has exceeded 405 million. When it was decided in a millennium summit held in 2000 that the "very poor population" would be halved by 2015, this figure had not yet reached 300 million. According to other data we see that every six seconds a child starves to death somewhere in the world. In a global observation report issued by the United Nations in 2009, it was stated that because of the global recession 200,000 to 400,000 more children would die compared to the previous year. According to pre-recession data, 20,000 children starve to death every day.

Civilized (!) countries have left the countries they exploited down to the bone in a state of underdevelopment and poverty that they will not be able to recover from for centuries, even though the population of the colonized countries is entitled to part of the prosperity and wealth of the above countries. And then, the colonizing countries have tried to teach lessons in humanity by giving small amounts and sometimes only seem to be giving. **Unfortunately the end of this misery and the feeding of people who suffer starvation depends on the satisfaction of people and societies that lead a life of pleasure at the expense of other people. While it is easy to feed people, it is quite difficult to satisfy people who are addicted to material things.**

People who worship a material life resemble those who drink sea water. The more they drink, the more they are thirsty.

Muhiddin Ibn Arabi

When we look at nature, we can see that most animals do not consume more than they need. Even the fiercest of animals, such as lions or tigers, hunt other animals to meet their biological needs and then retreat to a corner and do not hunt or attack any other animal until they feel hungry again. But people want to own and to consume much more than they need. They will risk anything to achieve this. **But then we refer to animals as wild and to ourselves as civilised.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Do you think that most of them hear, or understand? They are just like animals; no, they are far worse.

25 The Statute Book (Al-Furqān) 44

All religions and especially Islam has always prescribed people to share what they have, to help others and to ensure that justice is achieved among people, and have emphasized that as much as possible, people should have equal social possibilities. When the Quran says **“And eat and drink moderately. Surely, He does not love the gluttons.” (7 The Purgatory (Al-A’arāf) 31)** it means that people should avoid waste and when it says **“God has provided for some of you more than others. Those who are given plenty would never give their properties to their subordinates to the extent of making them partners. Would they give up God’s blessings?” (16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 71)** it means that God tests the rich through their wealth and the poor through their poverty

and that He asks those who have the means to share their property with those in need. We have not come to own our possessions by ourselves and this is the same as well for our hands, feet, eyes and skin, which we believe we own. People in need are entitled to our possessions. If God had wished to make everybody rich or poor, He would have done so. But in order to test people, He has given them different bounties in material terms. Whether people who are wealthy in this world are fortunate and whether those who are poor and therefore considered unlucky are fortunate or not in God's presence will become clear according to whether they fulfill the requirements of the conditions that God has created for them.

People should be aware of their responsibilities and act as conscientious and exemplary servants of God. It will be difficult for people who are insensitive and do not care about the difficulties and lack of means of others to account for the blessings they possess in this world where they got carried away by its wind and were fooled by its sparkle. It is not right to say "What can I do on my own?" or "I cannot do anything on my own." It is individuals who change the world. Rather than get carried away by a worldly life and waste our life with futile things, we should endeavor to carry out good deeds that will be of benefit to humanity. **Humanity and spiritual conscientiousness are burning away. If you have even a single drop of water, do not begrudge it. At least you will have shown your allegiance.**

WHAT WE CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT AND THE TRUE VALUES IN OUR POSSESSION

We are in such a hurry to grow up and then we long for the lost childhood. We make ourselves ill earning money, and then spend all our money on getting well again. We think so much about the future that we neglect the present, and thus experience neither the present nor the future. We live as if we were never going to die and die as if we had never lived.

Plato

WHEN ASKED WHY HE NEVER FELT SORROW, the Greek philosopher Socrates answered: "I do not own anything that I would feel sorry to lose." The true values that humanity owns contain a degree of perfection that cannot be measured in material terms. What's more, all these values have been conferred on us by God, when we were born, although we have not done anything to deserve them.

Faith, ethics, health, serenity and happiness... Which of these concepts can possibly be obtained in return for material wealth? Or which material things are we really in possession of? To what degree and for how long can the transitory pleasure and happiness we derive from material things satisfy us? Are there any other feelings that can make people feel as good as believing, taking refuge and trusting in God does? Or as good as the serenity deriving from a heartfelt worship carried out to express the happiness of being a servant of God before the numerous blessings provided by Him?

Which other feeling can enable people to view all the beauty in the world as God's art, to derive spiritual pleasure and happiness from this beauty and to lead them to add meaning to life or to carry out good deeds and aim for peace, as required by the purpose of our existence. Which other feeling can enable people to help others and do good deeds in return for nothing and to behave with common sense even in the most difficult situations? Which other feeling can make people smile before death and welcome it, make them consider death as the moment of reunion, of betrothal with God?

We have attached such great value to material things that we waste our life to achieve them, and once we have achieved them, not to lose them. Many people develop worries simply out of fear of losing their possessions. They are seized with fear and worry when they think that they may be deprived of such things and may lose their ease and luxury. Whereas we are in possession of a great deal of beauty and of characteristics that we are not aware of and that cannot be compared with any material wealth.

According to the famous Islamic philosopher El-Kindi, sorrow is a psychological condition arising from the loss of a loved one or the failure to realize a wish. But according to our philosopher it is not possible for anyone to achieve all their wishes or to keep the things they love forever. The reason for this is that in the world of creation and decay in which we live, there is no place for immutability and continuity. Immutability and continuity can only be valid in terms of the world of the soul and of the heart.

If we wish not to lose our loved ones and to achieve our wishes, we should therefore pay attention to the world of the soul, for it is from there that we should expect what to

love, achieve and wish for. If we do so, no one can take away from us the values we achieve and it is impossible for us to lose our spiritual values.

We do this because such values cannot be subject to danger or die. The fact that somebody else desires them does not prevent us from owning them as well. Spiritual concepts never disappear, or rather they are continuously perceived, whereas pleasures and wishes achieved via the senses are transitory objects that can be obtained by everybody. That is why it is impossible to protect them and to prevent their change or destruction.

That is why people who desire transitory things and wish for the things they own and love to be of this kind are unhappy. How can anybody take away from us values such as faith, ethics, kindness and virtue, unless we let them? Or does the fact that other people possess these values as well result in our being deprived of them? Does true wealth not consist of the values that people possess in their inner world? Which other material thing can satisfy people in the real sense of the word and bring them serenity and happiness?

HOW AWARE ARE WE OF THE TRUE VALUES WE OWN?

There are so many things that we place in the center of our lives and believe to be indispensable for us. How is it that while small and trivial things become huge in our view while numerous extraordinary phenomena and examples of perfection become small and unimportant? For example, let us think of the action of writing on the computer. Our mind thinks, our eyes see, our hands touch the keyboard, there is a computer that we work at and numerous muscles that work simultaneously. As you can see, numerous interconnected examples of perfection come together even for a simple act

such as writing and they form a harmonious whole without us being aware of it.

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN WONDERS OF THE WORLD IN YOUR OPINION?

When we are asked what the seven wonders of the world are, most of us will immediately begin to list the wonders known by all. The pyramids in Egypt, the Wall of China, the Taj Mahal... We may never have seen any of these from close up, but this does not matter, as these are wonders that are recognized by everybody. If somebody said, "In my view the seven wonders of the world are: our **mind**, which is our body's center of control, our **eyes** that see, our **ears** that hear, our **hands** that touch, our **feet** that move, our **tongue** that talks and tastes and our **heart**, that pumps blood throughout our body" most people would be very surprised. But it is these examples of perfection in our bodies that we generally trivialize, that are the real wonders of the world.

Do you know that our eye muscles are the most active muscles in our body and that we move them an average of one hundred thousand times a day? Our face can take many different shapes that to a great degree express our state of mind. Have you ever thought of how many muscles move at the same time to obtain those expressions? Or how, in spite of consisting simply of eyes, eyebrows, a mouth, ears and a face, people resemble each other but no one is an exact replica of others? Among billions of people. What kind of an art is this? Just as all the snowflakes that fall on earth are different from each other and fascinate people with their shapes and designs, people too are different from each other. Have you ever thought, if many people were the exact copies of each other, how would we distinguish them?

We know that in our bodies there are approximately 206 bones and more than 70 mobile joints that consist of connections between these bones. The joint of the jaw is said to be the most complex and unique of these joints. Besides the perfection of its structure, it is like a mechanism that works almost 24 hours, as it continues to function even during our sleep. Is it very normal for our jaw to move forward, backward, right and left? Are we aware of how much it helps us to crush the things we eat? Or of its role in helping us spell words properly?

Do we not speak thanks to the functions of our tongue's muscles? Does our tongue not help us to chew and swallow food? Do we not taste things thanks to our tongue? Is it very normal that although it seems a simple piece of flesh, it has muscles and taste buds? Our hands too are pieces of flesh, but we cannot taste anything unless we use our hands to put a piece of food in our mouth. "Sweet" taste buds are on the tip of our tongue, "salty" taste buds are immediately behind, while the sides are "sour" and the back is "bitter." Is it very normal for a piece of flesh to be so sensitive? Can it have acquired all these features by itself? Have you ever thought what an unpleasant thing it would be to eat something without feeling its taste? Have you thought that if our nose could not feel any smells, so many things that we like would become meaningless for us?

Are you aware that within a few minutes, around forty thousand skin cells die and are replaced by new ones? Isn't our skin, which wraps our body, protects us from external factors, ensures our temperature balance and provides us with the feelings of touch, pain and pleasure, like a natural suit that fits us perfectly? Is there any doubt that we would look very ugly if our skin was completely or even partly stripped from our body? Does anybody object to the view that we

would look very ugly if our skin dangled from the soles of our feet or from our fingertips, like trousers or a shirt that is too long?

Is anybody aware that each one of our DNA molecules contains enough data to fill one million pages of an encyclopedia (an average of 1,000 books), in other words that information that is used to control our body's functions and that equals to one million pages of an encyclopedia has been coded into each cell nucleus? Are you aware that the total length of the DNA contained in the trillions of cells in our body is about 75 billion kilometers long and that this distance is equal to 1 billion 875 times the length of the Equator and to 250 times the distance between the Earth and the Sun?

Do you know that if we join end to end all the veins and arteries in our body we will reach a length of 160,000 km and that this is equal to four times the perimeter of the world? Are you aware that the human heart, which beats an average of 100,000 times a day, pumps into the veins enough blood to fill up a 10 ton tanker? This amount of blood comes and goes to the heart via the circulation system and up to ten tons of blood are pumped every day. Have you ever thought that in an average lifetime, from the moment we begin our existence in our mother's womb to the moment we die, our heart beats around 2.5 billion times? And do you know that the energy that our heart uses in 24 hours is equal to a force that could elevate a man to a height of 1,500 meters?

When we trim our fingernails, which seem unimportant to us, we generally do not think of how they grow once again. But let us imagine that we caught our hand in the door and that we have lost a fingernail, if not a finger. Even with the loss of one fingernail, our hand will look ugly enough. How aware are we of this and of many other such things? There

are so many things in our life that we cannot understand or even perceive.

Our health is possibly our greatest wealth in a worldly sense. But how many of us are aware of our health's value? We generally ruin our health when we worry about material things. And then we spend all the money we have pursued to gain our health back. Let us take into consideration our eyes. The human eye is a marvelous organ. Imagining its absence is scarier than the scariest of nightmares, is it not? Well, does looking around and saying so what, it is something that billions of people have, demeaning such a perfect thing and considering it natural destroy its perfection? Or is the fact that we do not appreciate enough many other of our characteristics a sign that these are unimportant?

People who are fascinated by the sharpness of the image or the ability to take pictures of the newest model of a mobile phone, who are astonished by the close to reality images of a TV series or film on a new generation television with high resolution or the ability of three dimensional viewing, never stop to think of their eyes' ability to see or to take dozens of pictures within a few seconds. People who adjust the focus before taking a picture with a new camera are not surprised that they never need to adjust the focus of their eyes. Is it so normal that there isn't a knob on the side of our head to enable us to see more sharply the objects we look at or focus on and that our eyes always automatically focus the images we look at? Is there any doubt that if we had needed to focus everything we looked at by turning left or right, up or down a knob on the side of our head, this would have taken us a great deal of time and would have slowed down our life? People are never surprised by such extraordinary things. Why is that? Because these characteristics are innate

to us and all people with healthy eyes are able to see without needing anything else.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He is the One who granted you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brains. Rarely are you appreciative.

23 The Believers (Al-Mu'minûn) 78

Have you ever thought that if we did not hear, we would encounter so many dangers throughout the day and not being able to hear, we would not be able to speak either? Still, while we are fascinated by the sound of a music system, we are not aware of the perfection and sensitivity of our own hearing system. Same as with our eyes, we never feel the need to make any adjustments to hear things. Just imagine if we had to turn our ears left and right, like a radio knob, to hear sounds better. Or let us imagine that one morning we wake up and we discover that we cannot hear or see. Would that not be terrible? Who, other than He who has given us these abilities, could make us hear and see once again?

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Say, "What if God took away your hearing and your eyesight, and sealed your minds; which god, other than God, can restore these for you?" Note how we explain the revelations, and note how they still deviate!

6 Livestock (Al-An'ãm) 46

Most people are fascinated when they see robots, products of the latest technology, that walk, bend, move their arms and even speak a few words. On the other hand, most people never stop to think of how many muscles they use when they walk, sit, speak, laugh or do even the slightest movement. Man, together with all his functions, from the

smallest to the greatest, should be an object of admiration. Is there anybody who would not be ready to donate all they had in return for not losing their eyes? Do we need to lose the organs we use every day for many things throughout the day, to understand how much they facilitate our lives? Aren't the various types of physical pain that we generally complain about, miraculous signs telling us that something is not right with our body? So that we take measures and not lose our health?

We are told that we have voluntary and involuntary organs. For example when we move our hand, this happens under our control. On the other hand, our internal organs function like factories, but without expecting to be turned on in the morning and off in the evening. There is probably no one who claims to increase their heart's rate by themselves or to operate their liver through their own mental force. When we talk about the hundreds of functions of the liver, is there any need to mention how essential this organ, like many other organs, is for us? Who among us has bought their liver, or their heart, in return for money?

Let us think of the air we breathe. Living beings cannot live without breathing. Have we enabled ourselves to breathe and to live on air? Have we made a payment to be able to breathe? Since it is impossible to live for more than one or two minutes without breathing, would people not be ready to sacrifice all their possessions, to obtain a single breath?

Let us think of the natural gas we use for heating and for other needs. What if the air we breathe was to be cut off from time to time, as it happens with natural gas, and all living beings died? Can anybody come up with a physical solution to this problem? Which is more vital, the possessions

that we have wasted our life to obtain, or the air that we possess without having paid anything?

Can people live without water? Is it not true that life is practically indexed to water? Don't all living organisms depend on water? Did we create water? Have we played any role in its existence? If all the water in the world was to disappear, is there any material wealth that would be able to bring it back or to recreate it out of nothing?

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Say, "What if your water sinks away,
who will provide you with pure water?"

67 Kingship (Al-Mulk) 30

But after all there is plenty of air and water in the world. That is why most people do not feel the need to question such things. On the other hand, millions of people either fall sick or lose their life because of the lack of sources of clean water. Up to a few decades ago, especially in rural areas, most houses did not have running water. People would procure water either from a well in their garden or would wait their turn at the village fountain. When people wanted to wash, fires were lit and water was heated in cauldrons and baths were taken under difficult conditions. Nowadays the majority of homes have running water. How many of us are grateful for running water when we get up in the morning and open the tap to wash our face or take a shower?

Whether we are aware of it or not, don't we all possess a natural identity? Although people may resemble each other, which of us have the same fingerprints or the same lines in our palms as others? When people have their fingerprints taken to establish their identity, don't they ever wonder how

it can be that everybody has different fingerprints? How can the natural identities on our fingertips distinguish us from others?

Everything we see around us has a different color. All living beings and objects form a feast of color. Have you ever thought how gloomy a colorless world would be? Imagine for a moment that everything is the same shade of black or gray. Viewing nature with its trees, flowers and all kinds of living beings fascinates us and beautiful scenery or the view of the sun setting gives us serenity.

We are able to distinguish many objects because of their colors. When we think that everything could have been colorless or maybe a single color, we realize that it would have been difficult for us to distinguish among them. Besides the existence of beautiful colors, the patterns on the skins of wild animals in particular are almost artistic. Think of the thousands of living beings that live on land and in the seas. All these living beings with different colors and patterns are saying out loud the same thing to us: "Look at us and see the magnificence of the art of God." Let us think of the living beings in the seas, for example of the fish which are of such different dimensions, colors and patterns. Their patterns and colors are so harmonious that the elegance and harmony they exhibit like models walking on a catwalk wearing elegant dresses could fascinate even the most famous stylists.

Animals living on land also display a special aesthetic. They too adorn nature with their physical shape, their colors and patterns. The positive effects that the pleasant smell, colors and patterns of flowers have on people constitute yet another type of beauty. When we think of all these things, we realize that the things around us did not have to be colored and that all their characteristics have a certain purpose. We

witness the fact that with the beauty that the Almighty God adds to everything he creates, taking care of the minutest detail, He displays the perfection of creation.

In fact, the number of things that are essential for people to maintain their biological existence is quite small. But when we look at nature, we see that God has been very generous in providing us with many more things that we could ever need. We eat many fruits and vegetables that grow from the earth. You would never want to eat even a handful of earth. But God enables a number of products to grow from the earth and He offers them to his servants. Have you ever thought why there are so many different types of fruits and vegetables and why each one provides different nutritional values, flavors and scents? For example, would the absence of cabbage or of broccoli affect our life? Or the absence of apples or pears? And have you ever thought why there are things such as flavors?

All these fruits and vegetables could have existed without any flavors. But that is not how it is. When we eat all these foods that present us with different benefits, we gain different flavors and pleasures from them. Then there are the spices, which provide us with yet more beauty. When we mix some vegetables with a few types of spices, we can obtain very tasty dishes.

Have you ever thought that the shells of some fruits and nuts are like a natural packaging that protects their freshness, as well as their flavors and vitamins? Could you create packaging that could be more natural or protective for the said foods than the packaging they come in?

Many people feel meaninglessly impervious to these miraculous things that they own and witness. Perceiving all these

examples of perfection, which could not possibly develop on their own and present a unique design, as things that would have existed anyway, and ignoring the Creator behind them, causes people to live without a purpose.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We have established you on earth, and we have provided for you the means of support therein. Rarely are you appreciative.

7 The Purgatory (Al-A'arāf) 10

THE MAGNIFICENT BALANCE IN THE UNIVERSE

We know and we are aware that we live on planet earth. We know that the earth is in space, that it is part of the solar system, that it is at a critical distance from the sun, the moon and the planets and that this distance enables the existence of life on the earth. We also know that the tilt of 23 degrees in the orbit results in the seasons and protects the world from excessive heat and cold.⁷ We are aware that the earth rotates around itself and around the sun and that the sun is in motion as well. What's more, this motion is such that the average speed of the earth's rotation around itself is 1,670 km per hour, while the speed of its rotation around the sun is 107,000 km per hour. This speed is approximately 60 times that of a bullet.

Have any of us felt the slightest tremor while all these tremendous phenomena happen in the sky? We sit with our friends and chat, we lie down to sleep and rest, we comfortably watch television, and we sip tea while reading a newspaper. Just think of how we shudder when we are driving a car at a speed of 60-70 km and we hit a small hole or bump.

7 Caner Taslaman, **Big Bang ve Tanrı**, İstanbul Yayınevi, İstanbul 2008, pp. 133-140.

Then compare this speed with the earth's speed and the result will be obvious.

Are we aware that lava boils under the ground where we stand and that the temperature there is an average of 4,000 °C? The liveliness that exists above the layer of earth, which is as thin as an apple peel, is not affected by this extraordinary heat and it continues to live. If a supreme and wise force had not ensured that these systems were favorable to our life, our fate would be no different from a leaf that is carried away in a stream.

We could present hundreds more of these examples.⁸ There are countless things that facilitate our life. But people need to be grateful and to be content with what they have and be aware of its value. Do people need to be deprived of what they possess in order not to want always more? How many people do you know who are virtuous enough to say what I have is enough, let others have these as well? God knows how few people are happy to witness the rise or setting of the sun or the blooming of a flower and who are content with what they have and are grateful for it. They must be very few because we have created ourselves artificial joys and artificial needs. We have no time to pay attention to the perfection around us and we do not appreciate it as we should.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He created seven universes in layers. You do not see any imperfection in the creation by the Most Gracious. Keep looking; do you see any flaw? Look again and again; your eyes will come back stumped and conquered.

67 Kingship (Al-Mulk) 3-4

8 See: Emre Dorman, **Modern Bilim: "Tanrı Var"**, İstanbul Yayınevi, İstanbul, 2011.

LIFE INSURANCE

You are younger; but what does that matter? There is no fixed count of our years. You do not know where death awaits you; so be ready for it everywhere.

Seneca

IT IS NATURAL THAT EVERYBODY SHOULD WISH TO LIVE A LONG LIFE. Indeed, whether we are aware of it or not, most of us spend the first forty years of our life for the sake of living a life of ease when we retire. We always worry about the future. We worry that we will end up badly, that we will become dependent on others. We take out private insurance policies. We make regular monthly payments. What for? For a serene future. We always invest in the future. We know that that future will arrive one day, but we forget that it will also end. People always wish to secure their future. Health insurances, a house with strong foundations, a bank account, profitable investments, a reliable car. The idea that the rates paid regularly every month will one day result in a cumulative pay off makes people feel secure because they will live at ease at least when they grow older. Feeling secure is generally what makes people feel most at ease.

On the other hand, although it is possible to obtain a return on money spent, there is no guarantee that people will live long enough to see this return. For example one may make payments throughout his life and die before retiring. Making such payments therefore constitutes a risk. When people die, leaving an inheritance to their relatives does not benefit them in a worldly sense. Everything is down to luck. There is no guarantee that we will live a life of ease in the end or

that we will not fall prey to a fatal illness towards the end of our life and suddenly have to spend everything that we have paid throughout our life.

When I die I hear the same harmony in the call to prayer as I did when I was born and a prayer was whispered in my ear

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

On the other hand, there is a separate life insurance that could rescue people from all their worldly worries and concerns. What's more, this is not a temporary insurance where one receives back what one pays. It is impossible for people who invest in the Hereafter Bank's policies to make a loss or not to benefit from the possibilities presented. It is such a profitable investment that you get 10 to 1 and not being limited to a few years, its offers last forever.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Whoever does a righteous work receives the reward for ten, and the one who commits a sin is requited for only one. No one suffers the slightest injustice.

6 Livestock (Al-An 'ām) 160

The situation is crystal clear. Although following God's commands and doing good deeds results in a number of benefits for people even in this world, what matters the most is the investment made towards eternal happiness in the hereafter. While in the first type of insurance people waste a whole life to live at ease for a few years, in the second case it is possible to live at ease eternally. It is that clear and simple to work out. The most profitable and trusted trade is the one conducted with God.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

O you who believe, let Me inform you of a trade that will save you from painful retribution. Believe in God and His messenger and strive in the cause of God with your money and your lives. This is the best deal for you, if you only knew.

61 The Column (Al-Suff) 10-11

Yes but, why is it that people cannot work out something that is so simple? There is no doubt that people's love for things obtained in advance, their failure to appreciate God who has created them and their uncertainty that He will recreate them in the hereafter play a role in this phenomenon. As was said before, people are given numerous blessings that they are not aware of. **They are given everything whether they deserve it or not, because they deserve eternal happiness and life.**

Imagine that you have just been hired and that your boss has paid you a few months' salary in advance, before you even started to work. You would probably be astonished and you would feel deep gratitude and fondness towards your boss. On the other hand, you would be unable to understand the meaning of this behavior and you would find it strange that your boss makes you a payment like that without knowing how you will work and how productive you will be. Since the Almighty God is also the creator of time and space, He is not dependent on time and space like us. That is why, through his knowledge that transcends time, He knows which servants obey his commands and which turn their back on Him. In spite of this, He gives people in advance an amount of blessings that could never be obtained in return for any material wealth, regardless of whether they perform good

deeds or not. But people who would be surprised if their boss paid them their salary in advance are not surprised by this situation and they do not stop to think what they have done to deserve the blessings that God has given them.

If God had wanted, he could have blinded people who do not believe in him and let believers see. Or everybody could have been born blind and only people who believe in God could have been allowed to see. Or people could have been made to see on some days and be blind on other days. Or they could have been able to walk on some days and crawl on their bellies even to go to the toilet on other days. Or our memory could have been erased completely when we woke up. Let alone remembering what we had done the day before, we could have been unable to recognize our family. Every morning when we woke up we could have looked around us in astonishment and tried to make sense of our surroundings. Imagine how difficult life would have been and how any plans or program we made would have been affected. Not knowing whether we would have been able to see or remember anything the next morning, there would have been no guarantee that we could carry out the plans we had made.

All this sounds difficult, does it not? Indeed, there is no need why we should be able to see like the day before, to walk or to remember anything, when we wake up in the morning. But that's not what God has done and although there are exceptions, because of the tests He subjects people to, He has created almost all people with the ability to see, walk and remember. He has thus provided all people with opportunities and possibilities so that they see the truth, that they are grateful for the blessings He has provided and that both believers and non-believers may chose to believe or

not believe of their own will, so that they may use the limbs He gave them in advance for good deeds.

But the majority of people are unable to comprehend that they hear and speak, see and move, think and understand, eat, drink and get rid of what they eat thanks to God's blessings and live their life in such a way that they do not deserve to take one more breath.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

And He gives you all kinds of things that you implore Him for. If you count God's blessings, you can never encompass them. Indeed, the human being is transgressing, unappreciative.

14 Abraham (Ibrahîm) 34

SOMEBODY IS WATCHING US

When the disciples trained by a master were about to complete their training, in the belief that he taught them all the religious and ethical knowledge there was, he decided to teach them one last lesson. He gave them a hen each and he told them to go and slaughter the hens where no one would see them. The disciples scattered around in the open terrain and some went into caverns, some into the hollows of trees, some into dark corners and after having checked their surroundings, they slaughtered the hens and ran back to their master. Only one of them did not return though it was already dark. When he finally came back, holding the hen that he had not been able to kill, the master and his friends asked him what had happened and he replied: "I could not find a place where no one would see me." While all his friends laughed and made fun of him, the master asked him to explain what happened and the disciple said: "Master, I have learned many a discipline from you. But there is one thing you said in particular that I have practically ingrained in my heart. You told us that though we cannot see Him, God always sees us and is always aware of what we do. You asked us to slaughter the hen where no one would see us, but I wasn't able to find a place where God would not see me." The master smiled because he saw that at least one of his disciples had understood the last lesson and that all his efforts had not been in vain.

ARE YOU AWARE THAT from the moment we are born till we die, we are always being observed and everything we do is

recorded? Every word we say, every good or bad deed we perform is recorded by God. A record is kept for each one of us. When we come face to face with our file in the hereafter, we will suddenly see that even the smallest thing we have done has not been omitted.

A non-believing teacher filled up his pockets with candies and then said to his little students: "If God exists, let us see if he can give you candy. On the other hand I exist, and I can give you candy if you want it, right now." One of the students realized his teacher's intention and said: "Sugar is bad for me, teacher. I would rather have an apple."

A few years ago there was a television program that left its mark on Turkey, that was watched by the wider masses and that people became addicts of. The main reason why so much interest was shown to the program, which was entitled "Somebody is Watching Us," was that thanks to cameras installed in the living rooms, bedrooms and even bathrooms of a house where people were gathered, everybody was able to watch what went on in that house. The program was followed by many other similar programs. What interests us here is the behavior of the people gathered in that house, rather than the content of the program. When the contest began, aware that they were being watched by many viewers and with the intention of appearing pleasant and benevolent to those who would vote for them and of winning the rewards promised to the winner of the program, these people began to compete ruthlessly and they endeavored to follow to the letter the rules set by the program producers. Why did they do so? Probably for the sake of fame and for

some money. But the fights and the quarrels among these people who lived in the same house and the way they slandered each other featured in the headline of newspapers and television programs. What is it that had changed? Why did these people, who initially had seemed mature and sensitive, suddenly change? What happened was that forgetting that there were cameras all over the house and that the public watched them live, they went back to the normal behavior they exhibited in the outside world. The masks fell off. That's the truth of human beings. They forgot that they were watched all the time and that they needed to follow the rules to complete the contest and a curtain of indolence fell before their eyes and minds. **Whether we are aware of it or not, somebody is always watching us and all our deeds are being recorded.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Two recording angels, at right and at left, are constantly recording. Not an utterance does he utter without an alert witness.

50 Q. (Qāf) 17-18

The rewards and the saving from suffering promised to people who will pass the test and contests of this world cannot be compared with any worldly wealth or fame. But people who endeavor to be liked by others and sometimes dare to risk their lives, are insensitive, unwilling and distant from God who has created them out of nothing and has given them numerous blessings and opportunities. Whereas God has given us much more than the rewards distributed in these competitions, in advance and before even testing us.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

If you count God's blessings, you cannot possibly encompass them. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 18

Let us think of the cameras installed on streets and offices. We know that there has been a considerable decrease in crime rates thanks to these cameras. People who are prone to commit crimes act more cautiously or simply do not dare to do anything because they are afraid of the cameras. A significant decrease has been observed also in the number of traffic offenses in places where traffic cameras have been installed. Indeed, before violating rules, many drivers first check to see whether there are cameras around and acts accordingly. We are not implying that complying with or violating a traffic rule has anything to do with religion. But we notice that when people are aware that they are being watched, they pay more attention to the way they act.

A few years ago, when a long term electricity cut took place in California, hundreds of people took advantage of the fact that alarm systems and security cameras were deactivated and looted shops, broke shop windows, stole clothes and furniture and caused major destruction and damage both from a social and an economic point of view. So why is it that people who generally display civilized behavior go berserk when they realize that they are not watched by cameras or that alarm systems are deactivated? **Is being under the observation of the authorities more of a deterrent and more effective than being watched by God?** Or can the fact that there is no worldly proof to the crimes you commit, save you in God's presence? How many of the people who are careful about not doing shameful things and being reproved by others, are careful about not being embarrassed before God?

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

To Him belongs everything in the heavens and the earth and therefore, the religion shall be devoted absolutely to Him alone. Would you worship other than God?

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 52

Imagine that you climb up a high hill in the city where you live and look both at your life and at other people's lives. Or reflect at the end of the day of all the useless things you have done and the needless things you have said. The picture that you will encounter at the end of this simple reflection will be pathetic. Whether you reflect on it or not, every moment of your life is watched, everything you do and word you say is recorded. Whether you are aware of it or not, somebody is aware of you.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He is the One who created you, then among you there is the disbeliever, and the believer. God is fully Seer of everything you do.

64 Mutual Blaming (Al-Taghaabun) 2

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

You do not get into any situation, nor do you recite any Quran, nor do you do anything, without us being witnesses thereof as you do it. Not even an atom's weight is out of your Lord's control, be it in the heavens or the earth. Nor is there anything smaller than an atom, or larger, that is not recorded in a profound record.

10 Jonah (Yunus) 61

OUR PRIORITIES

An elderly Native American was sitting in front of his hut with his grandchild, watching two dogs that were brawling a short distance away. One of the dogs was white, the other black and ever since the twelve year old child could remember, they had been brawling in front of his grandfather's hut. They were two big dogs that his grandfather always kept in view and by his side. The child wanted to know why there were two, since one would have been enough to protect the hut and why one was white and the other black. So he asked his grandfather. The old chief smiled wisely and patted his grandchild's back. "They are like two symbols to me," he said. "Symbols of what?" asked the child. "The symbols of good and evil. Good and evil continuously fight inside me, just like these two dogs. Whenever I watch them, I think of this. That is why I keep them by my side." At this point the child thought, if there is a fight, there should be also a winner and he added one more to the endless number of questions, so typical of children. "Well, who do you think will win this struggle?" The wise chief looked at this grandchild with a deep smile and said: "Which one? The one I feed best!"

JUST AS IT IS WITH THE GOOD AND EVIL INSIDE US, we are not able to enslave one of our aspects because over time we become enslaved to the one that we feed and reinforce the most. People who place God in the center of their lives and endeavor to follow most closely His commands and bans, reinforce that side of theirs and regardless of what may happen, they never make any concessions from their loyalty to

God and his commands. But the situation is different for those who are addicted to the world and who prefer transitory pleasures and joys. The priorities of such people are defined by their wishes and desires. The more they reinforce this side of theirs, the more they inadvertently weaken their spiritual sides. People's characteristics and behaviors are defined by their priorities. People have always pursued the things they value the most and they get carried away by the objectives they set for themselves. It is therefore understandable that the world should be considered so valuable and that so many lives should be wasted for its sake. People are slaves to their desires; they practically venerate their desires and they submit to their passions.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Have you seen the one whose god is his own ego?

Will you be his advocate?

25 The Statute Book (Al-Furqān) 43

Let us ask ourselves what our priorities are in life. They are our family, our possessions, our pleasure and entertainment, our honor, pride, reputation, fame and glory, our health, home and car, or maybe a very simple skill that we may have. We spend hours and days for things that we like, regardless of whether they are meaningful or not. This may be a TV drama. We may hope for the days to pass faster in order to see a new episode. We may focus completely on the episode and practically fall into the television screen. We may let the food on the stove burn, or be unable even to get up and go to the toilet, though we need to. We may spend the week reviewing it. We may attempt to foresee what will happen in the next episode. Our priority could also be the matches of the team we support. We may lose our temper when we watch these matches. We may even stop behaving

like normal people. Matches may even cause fights among close friends. For our team we may be ready to wait outside a stadium for hours, to give our support come rain or shine and even to be beaten up or be thrown bottles at. And we may follow for several hours, if not several days, the comments and rehashes of a 90 minute match.

Then there are the people we admire. For instance a pop singer, an athlete or a TV star. We may watch them or listen to them in a state of trance. We may have to squeeze into a concert hall or to be pushed and shoved. We may turn into a wild beast just to catch an accessory that they may throw from the stage. We may shed tears for their sake or engrave their name onto our hearts. We may adorn our room with their posters. We may follow any news regarding them. We may dream up imaginary love stories with them. We may think that seeing them from close up, holding their hand or kissing them on the cheek can never take the place of anything else.

Some of us want to be like certain people who generally pursue meaningless things and are generally not of much use to humanity. Let us stop and think about the people we admire. Other than practicing their own profession, in what way have they been of benefit to humanity? Of what use have their token or publicity-driven shows of responsibility been up to today? Outstanding people who carry out such activities with heartfelt sincerity are of course an exception, but it is generally difficult to identify them.

What is more important for people who say “God exists” but live to the contrary, a simple worldly thing, or God? Is the number of people who care more about their thinning hair or a blemish than about fulfilling God’s commands so low that it does not matter? How can we expect such great things from people who worry about not finding pink boots in the right size, missing the beginning or the most exciting part

of an episode, not immediately receiving an answer from the lover one has sent a message to or having just missed an underground train, although the next will arrive in only five minutes? Is it silly to expect people who state that they are Muslim to behave accordingly? Is it this easy to abandon a religious command when it conflicts with the most trivial of worldly interests? Or with something that matters to us, such as our life. The following joke comes to mind:

A non-Muslim man runs into a mosque holding a big knife and asks: "Are there any Muslims here?" Everybody is so scared that no one replies. Then an old man gets up and says: "I'm Muslim." The man with the knife leaves the mosque with the old man. The man shows the old man some sheep and says: "I want to sacrifice these sheep and distribute them to the poor, but I cannot do it, can you help me?" The old man slaughters many sheep and then says: "I'm tired, go and find somebody else." The man takes the bloodied knife, enters the mosque and asks: "Are there any other Muslims here?" The congregation, thinking that the man with the knife has just killed the old man, is seized with fear and everybody turns and looks at the imam. The imam says: "Why are you looking at me. Just because I've led the prayers does not mean I've immediately become a Muslim!"

Even if one does become a Muslim by believing in God, one is not considered a worshiper without having fulfilled the requirements of the religion. People find the time to do all kinds of worldly things, but then leave this world without even realizing that they have disregarded their real world. Most people are able to ignore religious commands when they conflict with even the most trivial of worldly interests. People become slaves to their passions because of momentary pleasures and indolence. **Life in this world is like a tasty candy on**

the exterior. But in reality it contains a poisonous and deceitful stupor. Those who are fooled by its exterior believe that they are eating candy, but when they reach the interior, they are infected by the deadly poison and scum.

Imagine that you have applied for a job and that it is very important that you are accepted. But your boss comes up with a very strange request. Let us imagine that he wants you to go to the Çamlıca Hill every morning before you come to work and that you take a picture of the Bosphorus at 07.30, with a digital camera that he will give you and that you take these pictures to him regularly. He says that if you fulfill this request regularly, every morning, he will recruit you and pay you a satisfactory salary. In spite of this justifiably strange sounding request, most people will probably accept this proposal and will fulfill the boss' request, going up to the Çamlıca Hill every morning to take that picture at 07.30. But the same people question the reason for many things that God requests from them and do not feel the need to fulfill those requests on the basis that they do not sound very meaningful. **Because these people have other priorities, priorities for which they are able to ignore the rules of He who has given them this life.**

Although most people think that they are very intelligent, there is always someone that they believe to be more intelligent than they. This may be the boss at work, a teacher in the university or a friend. Or there may be people who are accepted by all to be very intelligent, such as Newton or Einstein. Most people know that these individuals are cleverer than they are and admire them. But people forget that there is an Almighty Being who has created their intelligence and the intelligence of beings more intelligent than them. They cannot understand that God is more intelligent than everybody and knows everything. They cannot sense that there is a reason to everything He does.

They cannot understand that if God requests something from His servants, they will benefit from it.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Fighting may be imposed on you, even though you dislike it. But you may dislike something which is good for you, and you may like something which is bad for you. God knows while you do not know.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 216

People who do not question why they exist, dare to question many of God's commands. They forget who they are dealing with. In spite of their limited intelligence, they dare to offer advice to the owner of infinite intelligence. As it says in the Quran, God can question them, but they cannot question God (21The Prophets 23).

People also forget who they are in need of. God certainly is not in need of anybody. But men are in need of God who has created them. They know that they are in need of Him, but instead of showing Him the loyalty, allegiance and devotion that a servant should show God, they ask Him for things that spoiled children ask their father for. They complain. They are displeased. They are ungrateful. They dare to offer advice to Him. But people who are sincere believers have no doubt at all that God knows everything best and does everything best. They trust in Him and submit to Him. They know that God knows better than they.

Let us see what God does, He turns evil into a blessing, don't think that he does anything else, wise men witness what happens, let us see what God does, whatever he does, he does well...

Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakki

EVERYTHING IN OUR LIFE IS DIVINE, JUST LIKE US

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The heavens and the earth are full of proofs for the believers. Also in your creation, and the creation of all the animals, there are proofs for people who are certain.

45 Kneeling (Al-Jātheyah) 3-4

IS THERE ANYBODY IN THIS LIFE WHO HAS LOOKED FOR GOD BUT NOT FOUND HIM? No doubt there are many who ignore him or in whose interest it is not to see or find him, who prefer his absence to his presence. Or who look for him in all the wrong places. Like the Russian astronaut who went into space and said he did not see God or the brain surgeon who said that although he had operated on hundreds of people's brains, he had not encountered God. But God cannot be seen by the naked eye. That is why there are many who accept His existence because it is difficult to reject, but who live – or who wish to live – as if He does not exist.

God's existence or absence may not mean much to the majority of people for, as we have previously said, some things are considered "more important," or a "major priority." That is why most people do not think, do not want to think, or cannot find the time to think of Him. What matters the most to such people is the presence of things that bring a material contribution to their lives. It is what they own, see, hear and touch. But possessing worldly things does not prevent us from being grateful to God and remembering Him who has conferred all these things on us. To anybody who wishes to recognize it, everything we possess is divine, just like we are.

Let us observe everything around us, alive or not. Let us think how the numerous tools that simplify our lives have come into being. It is inevitable that some of the answers will refer to the intelligence and skill of many people, to industrial developments or to scientific progress. In other words, although in the view of many people it is God who has created them and the universe, what we own has been created by man himself. But is this the truth? Of the things we own, is there anything that we truly can refer to as ours? Is there anything that we can claim to be made by humans? Can it be said that even things like the human mind or a person's skills develop on their own? Can an object that has emerged as a result of a number of stages be explained independently from God? Let us reflect on this. For example let us take a look at the simplest tools that we use in our daily lives; the televisions we watch, the radios we listen to, the computers we use, the internet, transportation vehicles, kitchen gadgets, stationary, mobile phones and cars... Are any of these or of numerous other tools any less divine than any living being?

Since even a leaf cannot fall from its branch without the knowledge of God (**6 Livestock (Al-An'ām) 59**), how can anything in the world lie outside God's knowledge or mercy? Everything in our lives is created by the Almighty God, who has enabled flies to flap their wings 400 times a second and move at a speed of 8 km per hour, bees to shape their hexagonal honeycomb with an angle of 120 degrees thanks to a unique knowledge of mathematics and to collect pollen from 2 million flowers to create half a kilo of honey, fleas to leap to a height that is one hundred times their own height, hawks to move at an average speed of 300 km per hour and to have the force to nosedive onto their prey, ants to lift weights that are five hundred times their own weight and

snails, which weigh 10 gr, to have the power to pull weight of 1 kilo. The work of a musician is as divine as a bird's song, a shoe as divine as a person's foot, the memory of a computer as divine as human memory, the camera of a mobile phone as divine as an antelope's eye, a tea glass as divine as the tea itself and the flight of a plane as divine as a falcon that glides.

Everything that we possess exists thanks to the knowledge that God has given us, the properties that He has added to substance and His universal rules. The fact that earth constitutes the raw material that tea glasses are made of, that fire is able to shape substance and that people are able to add their art to these properties and develop a variety of shapes, are all as divine as the fall of rain. We know very little regarding many objects within our lives. We only know how we can make them work or what they are for. We generally think that we know or understand them. In fact, unless we go in-depth, the knowledge we have is based on nothing more than simple observations. For example, when we watch television, or use a vacuum cleaner, we know very little about how images reach the television screen or how the vacuum cleaner works and we think we understand how they work. But we actually understand very little. We just plug them in and they work. The images reach the television's screen. If the broadcast is live, we may even be able to see somebody or something that is on the other side of the world simultaneously. Is it the box, the glass, the tube, the cables, the antenna or something else within the television that brings that image into our home? One may provide a technical explanation on this subject. One may also explain how a car works. One may say that when the key is turned the engine is ignited and the petrol enables the energy that will make the vehicle move to turn the wheels.

But it is not neither the key, or the engine, or the petrol that makes the car run. What makes all of these be in harmony down to their smallest detail is only divine power. Isn't the raw material of petrol black water that comes from underground? And is it very normal that the metals that form the body of a car can be shaped so that they can carry people? Indeed, there is no reason why all these elements should come together and form an image, or why a car can cover within a few minutes a distance that it would take us hours to cover. Other than God, who has created these objects so that they can fulfill these functions...

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

And they carry your loads to lands that you could not reach without a great hardship. Surely, your Lord is Compassionate, Most Merciful. And He created the horses, the mules, and the donkeys for you to ride, and for luxury. Additionally, He creates what you do not know.

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 7-8

Thanks to the potential existence of these objects in nature, we are able to benefit from numerous blessings and opportunities that are presented to us and that facilitate our lives. For people who are able to view life from this perspective, God is the almighty power that has created everything. There are numerous evidences and signs regarding God's existence for those who wish to see this truth and to be grateful.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He sends down from the sky water for your drink, and to grow trees for your benefit. With it, He grows for you crops, olives, date palms, grapes, and all kinds of fruits. This is sufficient proof for people who think. And He commits, in your service, the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon. Also, the stars are committed by His command. These are sufficient proofs for people who understand. And He created for you on earth things of various colors. This is a sufficient proof for people who take heed. And He committed the sea to serve you; you eat from it tender meat, and extract jewelry which you wear. And you see the ships roaming it for your commercial benefits, as you seek His bounties, that you may be appreciative. And He placed stabilizers (mountains) on earth, lest it tumbles with you, as well as rivers and roads, that you may be guided. And landmarks, as well as the stars; to be used for navigation. Is One who creates like one who does not create? Would you now take heed? If you count God's blessings, you cannot possibly encompass them. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful.

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 10-18

THE TRANSIENCE OF WORLDLY LIFE AND THE VALUE OF TIME

When life is so short, do not reduce your activities and increase your ambitions!

Zemahşerî

IS THERE ANYONE WHO IS AWARE OF TIME'S VALUE? We never care about time; we waste it lavishly although it is impossible to recover. Sometimes we stop and we regret the passage of time, but we never take any significant measure to prevent wasting it. Though generally of little value, minutes and hours sometimes acquire so much importance that we, perforce, understand their value. Below is a poetic approach that comes to mind on this subject:

*A year is valued by a student who fails his class.
A month by a woman who gives premature birth,
A week by an editor of a weekly magazine,
A day by a soldier waiting to be discharged,
An hour by anybody who is about
to see of a lover from a railway platform.
A minute is valued by anyone who misses a plane,
A second by anyone who is rescued from
death at the last moment,
A split second by anyone who wins a silver medal.*

Ali Tuncay

But what we do is to spend time like small change. On the one hand we want time to pass slowly, on the other we make plans for the day to pass quickly. Sometimes I think of

the old men who sit in the coffee houses of villages, resting their chin on the stick they hold firmly, watching what goes on outside. Although they don't want death to arrive, they despondently wait for it. This wait is no different from that of people who believe to be distant from death. **Because there is no guarantee that a newborn baby is going to live longer than an old man close to his nineties. On the other hand, if he has spent his life in vain, an old man close to his nineties is not luckier than a baby that dies at six months of age. Death is the twin of life. It is born when we are born.**

*What is life, what is it? Though I rack my brains,
I don't know which cypress shadow will be my grave.*

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

When we are young, we think that time does not pass quickly enough. We want to sever all our ties with school and with our family as soon as possible. We want to grow and be independent. We climb rapidly to the summit of the mountain of life. We fool ourselves into thinking that we will always stay on that summit. Then we realize that that is not how things are. The time comes to start the descent and, because we cannot hold on at that height, we begin to feel the cold, we lose strength, our mobility is constrained. That is when we realize the truth and wish to stop time. Every day, every moment becomes valuable. But the more we wish it to slow down, the more it goes by rapidly, as if to take its revenge from us. After all those years when we considered it of no value, time begins to see us as of no value.

*Youth cannot be grasped.
Do not waste it with futile desires.*

Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel

When we look in the mirror, we see an increase in the number of wrinkles on our face and of white hairs on our head. We can practically hear the ticking of the clock in our ears. Every tick is a minus for us. Then we realize that these thoughts make us unhappy. Since there is death at the end, we decide to have a wild time and hit the bottles. But the reality does not change. Time continues flowing, whether we are drunk or sober. In fact we know that that day will come all the same. But like most other people around us, we do not think of this reality and since we have only one life, we are enchanted by sayings like “enjoy yourself,” “live it up” or “live the moment” and we say “life is passing by, we must enjoy our life to the fullest.”

*Ordinary people merely think how they shall ‘spend’
their time; a man of talent tries to ‘use’ it.*

Arthur Schopenhauer

After some more time has passed by, we realize that it is all futile. We find ourselves surrounded by feelings that we have always felt to be missing. We know that we have made mistakes in our lives. And when push comes to shove, we begin to think of the afterlife. At that point there is so little time left that we cannot risk wasting it anymore. We seek a door that will open up to us, that will not fling into our face our past, that will accept us with our sins. Our ship is not able to survive high waves anymore. We seek a harbor in which we can take refuge. And if we are sincerely penitent, we are accepted. But whatever we do, the years that we have wasted and that have slipped through our hands cannot be brought back.

*If you spend your youth having fun,
you will spend your old age in tears.*

Ali Fuat Başgil

All that is left from the transitory and fleeting pleasures that we have pursued for all those years is simply to have “lived it all,” but we cannot feel it so anymore. Some people keep boasting about the pleasure and the fun they had in the past. Well, we may have done a lot of things, but all that is left are simple words. What we have done is of no use to us either in this world or in the afterlife.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Indeed, you are preoccupied with this first life. Even though the Hereafter is far better and everlasting.

87 The Most High (Al-A'ala) 16-17

IT IS NICE TO GROW OLD, IT REMINDS ONE OF DEATH

Have you ever thought that growing old is God's blessing? Practically no one wishes to grow old. Everybody wishes to stay young and strong and beautiful. Let us imagine a world where people never grow old and never lose their beauty and strength but where there still is the truth of death. Since there is no such thing as old age, we will know nothing about it. Let us imagine that we enjoy our youth throughout our life. It sounds nice, does it not? In such a situation it would be difficult for people to feel helpless and look for a place to take refuge in and since most people would be enjoying their worldly life thoroughly, the reality of death would never come to their minds. Whereas growing old reminds one of death, because people realize that they are getting closer to death. They are not as strong and as beautiful as

they used to be. They gradually stop enjoying life. They begin thinking that they have made mistakes. **Growing old is beautiful in fact. It makes people realize their error and it reminds them – those who have a life long enough to grow old – of death.**

*A child asked his grandfather, an old man with a snow white beard and a saintly face: "Grandpa, how long do people live?" The grandfather smiled sweetly and said: "The length of time between the call to prayer and the prayer itself, my dear." The child said: "How can it be, is it that short?" The grandfather replied: "Yes, my child. Life is as long as the time between a call to prayer without the prayer and a prayer without the call to prayer." This time the child said: "I don't understand what you mean by a call to prayer without the prayer and a prayer without the call to prayer, grandpa. Can you explain it to me?" The grandfather held the child's hands in affection and said: "Listen child, a few days ago a child was born into our neighbor's family. The call to prayer was whispered into his ear, wasn't it? Was it followed by prayers? It wasn't. That was the call to prayer without the prayer. And when one dies, there is no call for the prayers to be held. That is the prayer without the call to prayer. In fact, the call for that prayer is whispered in people's ear when they are born. That call to prayers admonishes people: "O mankind! You are born, but you will die, life is short, make good use of it." **"That's why, son, life is the length of time between the call to prayer and the prayer itself. So don't waste your life."***

WE MAY NOT BE AWARE OF IT, BUT EVERY NIGHT WE DIE IN OUR SLEEP

We know that people need sleep, that the movements and reflexes of people who miss even one night's sleep slow down and that if they miss more than one night's sleep they practically collapse physiologically. There is no doubt that for most people sleep means simply to rest, to recharge oneself at the end of an exhausting day. But if God had wished to do so, He would have ensured that people do not need sleep and that they live like ants. Besides providing physical and mental rest, sleep reminds also one of death, of that deep sleep that one will fall into at the end of life. People may not be aware of it, but every time they fall asleep they experience a state of death. That is why some philosophers consider sleep the twin brother of death.

*You have in sleep the image of death;
you daily clothe yourself with it.*

Cicero

When people are asleep, they believe in the existence of things they see in their dreams. When they wake up, they realize that what they saw was not real. In respect to the afterlife, life in this world could be considered a kind of sleep. This life is therefore nothing but a dream. It is probable that we will wake up when we die.⁹

Ghazâlî

*Think of sleep as a light form of death
and death as a deep sleep.*

Muhammad Iqbal

9 Cited by Faruk Karaca, *Ölüm Psikolojisi*, p 64.

Although people continue to be biologically alive while asleep, they leave behind their possessions, their loved ones, their passions, ambitions, suffering and happiness. They lose consciousness, as well as all contact with the world. They are not aware of anything until they wake up again. They never think that every time they lie down, this may be their last sleep. Or at least, when they wake up eight hours later, they are not aware of what they do, of how much time has passed. If somebody told them that they had woken up from the sleep of death, it would seem strange to them. But what God does is to kill us every night. Then, those who are adjudged to live continue to live. **People who live without thinking of death or fearing death in fact experience death every day, without being aware of it. One dies as if falling asleep at night and rises from the dead on judgment day, as if waking up in the morning.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He is the One who puts you to death during the night, and knows even the smallest of your actions during the day. He resurrects you every morning, until your life span is fulfilled, then to Him is your ultimate return. He will then inform you of everything you had done.

6 Livestock (Al-An 'ām) 60

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

God puts the souls to death when the end of their life comes, and also at the time of sleep. Thus, He takes some back during their sleep, while others are allowed to continue living until the end of their predetermined interim. This should provide lessons for people who reflect.

39 The Throngs (Al-Zumer) 42

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN ENOUGH TIME TO REFLECT

Although the inevitable reality of death is right by our side, we lead an indifferent life, without thinking of it. We always think of the best places on earth where to live, or the places that receive the most immigrants, but we never think that the place that receives the most immigrants is not one earth. We are aware that nowhere else receives as many immigrants as the afterlife. But for some reason we ignore this and we forget that we too will one day migrate.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

As for those who disbelieve, they have incurred the fire of Hell, where they are never finished by death, nor is the retribution ever commuted for them. We thus requite the unappreciative. They will scream therein, "Our Lord, if you get us out of here, we will work righteousness, instead of the works we used to do." Did we not give you a life-long chance, with continuous reminders for those who would take heed? Did you not receive the warner? Therefore, taste the consequences. The transgressors will have no one to help them.

35 Initiator (Fāter) 36-37

Yes, we have been given enough time to reflect. Or at least we are expected to reflect during that time. For those who wish to see them, God's manifestations are everywhere. The verses of the Quran make a pledge to time:

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

By the afternoon. The human being is utterly lost. Except those who believe and lead a righteous life, and

exhort one another to uphold the truth, and exhort one another to be steadfast.

103 The Afternoon (Al-'Asr)

*What if I were to return to life again?
How I would count up every minute of it.*

Dostoyevski

Imagine that you have a company. The report on your periodic and annual operations contains a detailed breakdown on the work you carry out during the year. That is how you see what your income and expenses are and you can calculate your profit and loss both periodically and annually and prepare your end-of-year accounts. Death too, like the balance of your company's operations, represents the closing of your life account. How would you like to close your life account?

Every day, the Almighty Lord deposits one more day into our account in the bank of life. He deposits and we spend those days thoughtlessly. He continues to deposit new days and we continue to spend them thoughtlessly. **But when our life comes to an end and we are handed our bank account, we are going to be asked to account how we spent the life that we have been given.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Fast approaching is the reckoning for the people, but they are oblivious, averse.

21 The Prophets (Al-Anbyā') 1

LIFE IS ONLY AS LONG AS A DREAM, IT PASSES BY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

*My life has passed by like a breeze
To me it seems like the blink of an eye*

Yunus Emre

Time will pass by so fast that it will seem as if we have just woken up from a dream. Just like those dreams that seem to last hours but that according to the experts happen only within a few seconds. When you wake up you think that you have seen so many things in your dream. The length of life on this world is no different from the length of that dream. It will seem like a few seconds to us, like the blinking of an eye. We will not be able to understand how years could pass that quickly.

*Every day leads to death.
The last day is the one that arrives there.*

Montaigne

Anybody who is curious of this proof may ask those who have experienced it. The things that most people close to their 90s can tell about their past years will be limited to a few hours, or at the most to one day. You may be surprised that such a long life should be limited to only a few hours. That is exactly how it is. If we were to draw a parallel between our lives and a hourglass, just like the particles of sand that fall away, the earth too is dropping away under our feet. When our time is up, we will notice that just like the particles of sand that slide away in the hourglass, the earth under our feet has dropped away and we are buried two meters underground.

*Life is like a play: it's not the length,
but the excellence of the acting that matters.*

Seneca

Even a long life passes by in the blink of an eye, without your noticing it. **Life is like a match that you are given the moment you open your eyes in this world. It will only take a few moments to extinguish. And if you did not know how to hold it, it will burn you.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Finally, the inevitable coma of death comes; this is what you tried to evade.

50 Q. (Qāf) 19

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

To God belongs the future of the heavens and the earth. As far as He is concerned, the end of the world (*the Hour*) is a blink of an eye away, or even closer. God is Omnipotent.

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 77

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He said, "How long have you lasted on earth? How many years?" They said, "We lasted a day or part of a day. Ask those who counted." He said, "In fact, you stayed but a brief interim, if you only knew. "Did you think that we created you in vain; that you were not to be returned to us?"

23 The Believers (Al-Mu'minûn) 112-115

No one is treated unfairly in the afterlife. No one is asked for more than one is given. The scales of justice are brought out and every good or bad deed, even if as light as a mustard seed, is included in the score. People are confronted with everything that they might have forgotten about.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We will establish the scales of justice on the Day of Resurrection. No soul will suffer the least injustice. Even the equivalent of a mustard seed will be accounted for.

We are the most efficient reckoners.

21 The Prophets (Al-Anbyā') 47

THIS WORLD IS IN A CONTINUOUS STATE OF CREATION AND DECAY

Everything in the world we live is subject to creation and decay. We witness the changing of the seasons. The flowers that bloom and the tree branches that are covered with leaves in the spring let themselves go in the autumn. That array of bright colors pale away. What's more, there is no need to wait for the change in seasons to understand that decay is taking place. When we pick a flower or a fruit from a branch, a short while later we can witness that it loses that magnificent aspect, color and scent. A flower that can live on a tree branch for months dries up in a few days if put into a vase.

We can also see that the living beings around us continuously die away. Millions of insects have been created, some of which live only a few days, or a few weeks. We can see that they too die away over time and that they are replaced by the creation of others. There is therefore no need for a loved one to die to understand the reality of death and the

helplessness of humans before death. And there is no need for the person himself to die, to understand his helplessness before death. Imagine how weak and indisposed one feels even when sick with a cold or the flu. In cases like that people do not even like their favorite food, they do not feel like watching their favorite TV series and they feel moody and bad-tempered. The creation and decay in nature aside, humans themselves continuously wear away under the abrasive and destructive influence of time. Their cells die, their skin crease, their hair goes white and falls out, just like things we use grow old. Life in this world ends up as waste material, like any ordinary plant.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Know that this worldly life is no more than play and games, and boasting among you, and hoarding of money and children. It is like abundant rain that produces plants and pleases the disbelievers. But then the plants turn into useless hay, and are blown away by the wind. In the Hereafter there is either severe retribution, or forgiveness from God and approval. This worldly life is no more than a temporary illusion.

57 Iron (Al-Hadeed) 20

LIFE IN THIS WORLD IS LIKE A TEMPORARY STOPOVER

People who idle themselves with the transitory bounties of this world do not realize that they turn their backs onto eternal peace and serenity. Whereas life in this world is like a short stopover on a long journey. The famous philosopher Al-Kindi exemplifies the passage from this transient world of people who are undecided, who waste themselves and let down others, whose ending belies their beginning, who

delude those who trust in them and cause those who believe in them to fall into a pitiable state, with the behavior of people on a stopover during a boat journey.¹⁰

People resemble a group traveling by boat to a destination they intend to be their homeland. As they were setting out, the captain docked at a harbor to get some provisions. The boat anchored and anyone in the boat needing provisions disembarked. Some, having purchased what they needed, returned to the boat without dallying. By doing so they got the roomiest berths and the most comfortable seats without any competitors or rivals preventing that.

Some, however, stopped to see the meadows blooming with all kinds of flowers, to smell all the different kinds of scents of those flowering meadows and the stands of trim trees bearing wondrous kinds of fruit, to hear the pleasant songs of the hidden birds, to pick up, on the ground of that land, different colored stones and pretty shells with strange shapes and wondrous markings. [They did all of this] without leaving their landing site in which their needs were met. They then returned to their places on the boat, the best, most spacious places with the softest seats having already been taken before [them].

Others eagerly devoted themselves to gathering up those shells and stones and nearby fruits and flowers, without leaving the place where they had met their needs. So they returned, burdened by their loads, servants of the stones of the earth, and its shells and flowers that were perishing, changing from what shortly

10 Kindî, *Üzüntüyü Yenmenin Çareleri*, transl: Mahmut Kaya, *İslâm Filozoflarından Felsefe Metinleri*, Klasik, İstanbul 2003, pp. 61-64.

before had deceived them, and the fruits that would soon become spoiled and disgusting to those nearby. They then discovered that others had already taken the roomiest spaces on the boat and they had to sit in the cramped, rough, and uneven spaces. The stones, shells, flowers, and fruit that they had valued earlier became a burden in those cramped, rough, and uneven places, preventing them from the rest that came to the others who had preceded them to the roomiest places and who did not have stones nearby that further cramped their spaces and required them to guard and protect them and ward off damages to them. Most of their relaxation time was broken up into [fretting over] the stones not being there, and worries about it, many fears about it, and the intense devotion of [their] souls to their being nearby. The legacy of the stones bequeathed regret, sorrow, and worries every time they or even one of them was missing.

Some [of the passengers] wandered far into those fields and stands of trees, forgetting about the boat and the place that they had intended to be their homeland, being preoccupied with collecting those stones, shells, and flowers, distracted by eating that fruit from recollecting their homeland and the grief to which they would come at the boat. In that [foray], they were not free of successive fears, continuous calamities, and the anxiety of harm from a fleeing wild beast, a poisonous snake, a frightening noise, and a hanging branch that would scratch and wound their faces and the rest of their bodies, or a thorn sticking to a foot requiring a long time to heal, or mud holding them back, soiling and destroying their clothes that covered their private

parts, or a piercing branch tearing their cloaks, or a hanging vine preventing their progress.

When the captain of the boat called to them that he was weighing anchor, some of them returned, burdened with what they had collected, and so suffered the harms we have described. No sooner had they arrived at the boat than they found no place except for cramped, uncomfortable ones that allowed for no rest and led them to contract fatal diseases. For some, the captain's call did not reach them, because they had gone so far into the stands of trees and tramping through the muddy fields.

So the boat left, and they were in the place, cut off from their homelands, exposed to its deadly, vicious dangers and horrific injuries. Some became the prey of savage beasts; some became caught up in diversions and distractions. Some became soiled in the muddy places; still others were bitten by the poisonous snakes. They became deserted, disgusting, and putrid [corpses] with their limbs torn away, and their conditions horrific, as [objects of] pity for whomever did not know them and a lesson to whomever knew them as cut off from their homelands to which they had intended to go.

As for those who reached the boat burdened with what they considered valuable of what they had gathered (and which deceived their minds, shackled their freedom, did away with their rest, cramped their berths, and caused them anxiety), [they found that] it did not take long before those flowers wilted and the colors on those stones faded (since the freshening moisture they and their color had was gone). The shells, in their brackish [water] and with their horrible stink, [also]

changed and became a burden and a harmful companion for them. There was nothing to do with them besides throw them into the sea. Whatever prevented their hastening [back to the boat], spoiled their lives, made them sad at their places, and robbed their freedom, became a burden and left them empty-handed. No sooner had they reached the place [on board the boat] than their illnesses multiplied because of [the effects] of the putrid smells on them and the exhaustion of strength through the hardship affecting them from the cramped quarters and the serious attention to [their illnesses and exhaustion], which brought them ruin and harm.

Some perished before reaching their berths. Some arrived at theirs weak and ill. As for those who stayed behind and whose preoccupation was to the extent of sightseeing and breathing in the fresh air, they missed only the spacious and comfortable berths. As for those who returned to the boat without being preoccupied by any of what their senses took in except for whatever their eyes saw while they were going to meet their needs, then they got back early to the most spacious and comfortable berths, and would reach their homeland relaxed.

This parable is like our passage through this world to the true world and the simile of the conditions of the travelers in this world. How wretched it is for us to be deceived by the pebbles of the earth, the shells of the sea, the flowers of trees, and the chaff of plants, [all] of which is paltry [and yet] a burden to us!

These are the causes of our sorrow that occupy this place for us. If we are sad, we should rightly be sad

at being cut off from our true place and coming to a wide expanse of sea [from which] the boat cannot deliver us to our true homelands, in which there are no misfortunes because there is no lack nor anxieties in it, because there are no things that pass us by, because there is nothing that is not rightful [for us] in that place. There, one does not want anything that he should not want. As for what should be wanted, there is with the one who wants neither anything that is kept separate nor anything that produces harm.

HUMANS ARE NOT AWARE THAT THEY ARE HELPLESS BY BIRTH

Although mentally able to do many things, humans are physically weak. All they consist of is a few bones and a little flesh. Their huge body is covered with a skin as thin as apple peel. This skin comes to harm at the slightest impact. A cut can lead one to bleed to death. When they are strong and healthy, people consider themselves as powerful as rocks, they stand before a mirror, flexing their muscles and boast of how strong they are. But they cannot catch bullets with their teeth or arrows with their hands, as they do in films. A bullet or a thin piece of iron is sufficient to deflate them. Even a splinter in a finger can make them groan for many days.

People cannot endure either excessive cold or excessive heat. The body temperature should be around 37 degrees, neither a few degrees above, nor below. Even the slightest change in the body temperature can make them poorly. It could mean the end of their lives.

People need to continuously wash and clean. If they do not wash, they stink like rotten meat and they keep scratching, like monkeys. All of these are in fact God's blessings. They show people how helpless they are. If people were made of

steel or of iron, if wild animals, let alone a small mound of germs, were not able to withstand them, if they weren't affected by the slightest impact or cut, in other words, if they were like the heroes of fables, if their dead bodies did not decay for years and years, if even flowers didn't grow on them, it would be so difficult for them to realize how helpless they are.

When a teacher of philosophy said that humans are in control of the universe, a student replied: "How can humans, who are not in control of their blood pressure, be in control of the universe?"

A LIFE SUMMARIZED IN A FEW SNAPSHOTS

I have always wondered about photographic cameras and video cameras. Shots made from one's infancy on provide people with memories from many years back. In fact, these and other gadgets are a great blessing for people, but very few are able to perceive this. Those thousands of shots and the recordings of all those moments remind me that people's lives are recorded just as with a camera and that when the time comes they will be brought up from the archives and shown to people. Isn't that great?

On the other hand, these shots and frames are beautiful from another point of view too. When the years flow by rapidly, we feel sad and we wish to look at our old photographs. We look at our pictures in an album and we cannot understand how the years could pass this quickly. All that is left of the beauty and elegance of a woman who looks at a picture of when she was young is a stooped old woman, a wrinkled face and snow-white hair. Neither her eyes can see as they used to in her youth, nor her ears can hear.

Youth's a stuff will not endure.

William Shakespeare

The situation is even worse for a beautiful and attractive woman. Think of those who have pursued her in her youth, of those she has hurt. Sighing deeply, she mumbles to herself: "Good old days! How beautiful I once was." In the words of a philosopher:

*Which beautiful face
Has not turned into earth!
Which beautiful eyes
Have not filled with earth?*

When people leave behind a long life, the years that have passed by fit into photographs.

A young man walking by sees an old man who sits by a river and stares at it and asks him what he is looking at with such concentration. The old man replies without looking away from the river: "I'm looking at my life son, at my life that flows past..."

People live for years without thinking of the reality. They do or try to do everything possible related to this world, but they postpone what needs to be done for the afterlife. They thoughtlessly get stuck in crime like mud, in spite of being aware that it is a sin. They fall into the devil's trap. They think that they can do things in the future, as if it was guaranteed that there will be a future. They are not aware of the value of the years that are lost, although they would not be able to bring back even the recent past, let alone the years that have been lost, in return for their whole wealth and possessions.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Indeed, you love this fleeting life. While disregarding the Hereafter.

75 Resurrection (Al-Qeyaamah) 20-21

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

This worldly life is no more than vanity and play, while the abode of the Hereafter is the real life, if they only knew.

29 The Spider (Al-'Ankaboot) 64

DEATH COMPLETES THE INCOMPLETE PICTURE

While people think that they are enjoying their present, they continue to live their lives looking at the future, hoping to achieve something or other. When their lives end, they are still full of hundreds of plans, programs and objectives to be fulfilled. For example they may not have visited an island they wanted to see. Or they may not have been able to see the first steps of a grandchild. They may not have been able to live in a house in the woods, or by the lake, like they always dreamed. Their hopes regarding their lives may have been interrupted. They may have thought that life was only fun and entertainment.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We did not create the heavens and the earth, and everything between them, just to play.

44 Smoke (Al-Dukhān) 38

In the words of the poet, "Do not call me so ardently. One night I may suddenly come to you." Death may suddenly knock on our door like an unexpected guest. It may come in

before you even have the chance to be surprised. And you will not even have the possibility to say that you are not at home or that this is the wrong address or not to accept the invitation.

*When death knocks at your door,
you cannot avoid opening it.*

Jean de La Fontaine

The day and moment when death arrives is not announced in advance by mail. Death is included in our destiny together with life. There are no snooze buttons for the alarm which goes off loudly. **In order to wake up we needed first to fall asleep. To live in order to die. And we lived. And we slept while we lived. We thought we were alive, when we were actually deep asleep.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

You shall respond to your Lord before a day comes which is decreed inevitable by God. There will be no refuge for you on that day, nor an advocate.

42 Consultation (Al-Shoorã) 47

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The day He summons you, you will respond by praising Him, and you will then realize that you had lasted in this life but a short while.

17 The Children of Israel (Banî Israel) 52

YOU COME TO THE END OF THE PERIOD YOU ARE ALLOTTED

When people become aware of the reality they ask their Lord for some more time. But at that point it is too late. Their time

is up, as it is with contestants who have reached the end of their allotted time. That's when they realize that the time they were given was to prove themselves as servants of God and carry out good deeds and aim for peace. But God informs people of their inevitable end a long time in advance. He informs them of death and of the consequences for unbelievers in the hereafter. People are given time and opportunities to think, understand and not get trapped in denial. When they perceive the truth, they wish to live in this world as sincere believers. They plead for one more chance. But at that point it is too late. Because people are informed of this end a long time in advance. They are told to prepare. But people continue to pursue hollow dreams without paying any attention to this reality.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

“If only we could get another chance, we would then believe.”

26 The Poets (Al-Shu'arā') 102

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

When death comes to one of them, he says, “My Lord, send me back. “I will then work righteousness in everything I left.” Not true. This is a false claim that he makes. A barrier will separate his soul from this world until resurrection.

23 The Believers (Al-Mu'minûn) 99-100

People do not realize that He who has given them in advance this life that they are passionately attached to, may very well reward them with eternal life. Eternal life is within the power of He who first created life. People live this life without ever wanting it to end and never stop to think why

they have this feeling and why they want to continue to live. Life is beautiful and **God wants to confer humans with eternal life. That is why he has given them the wish to live. But people look for life in the wrong places. And they want to live their lives in the wrong places. They look for God in the wrong places, almost hoping that He will respond and render account when they dial a number on their mobile phone.**

A materialist teacher said to his student: "Tell me where God is. If you know the answer, I will give you an orange." The student replied as follows: "Tell me of a place where he isn't and I'll give you a whole orchard."

But it is God who has created your eyes that see and your fingers that dial a number, as well as the dials and the mobile phone itself. Some people expect to receive a phone message saying "You will die in a little while!" or "Refrain from sinning and cease disappointing me!" Or maybe they expect God himself to talk to them and to convince them to believe in Him. But God is not a party leader. His power does not depend on the number of people who believe in Him. He does not need that, if he did, He would not be God. He hopes for the good of his servants, He wishes that they should be able to see the truth of their own volition. In fact if he had not wished to inform people of His presence, He would not have done so. After having created them, he could have abandoned them to their own means and then He could have tormented or rewarded people as he wished, for He has absolute power and sovereignty.

People are helpless before His greatness. They need to know that they should fear His punishment more than a common tough guy. But also that He is more benevolent than

everyone else, that He wishes to forgive people and to lead them to what is true and beautiful. After all, all but one (9 Ultimatum) of the *surahs* in the book that He sent down to people, to guide them in the true path, begin with the words “In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.” And in that single *surah* He threatens the unbelievers, stating that this is an open warning to them. In another place He tells his messenger to speak mildly to the pharaoh, the most cruel of all, so that he may take warning (20 Taha Suresi Ayet 43-44).

It is possible for us to draw lessons from everything, positive and negative, that happens to us during our lives, or from the death of other people. But when death happens to us, it is not possible for us to draw a lesson for ourselves or to acquire experience. **When you reach the end of the period allotted to you, there is no compensation for death and death happens only once for each of us.**

LIFE IS SPENT IN VAIN, LIKE THE ARROWS THAT A HUNTER SHOOT AT SHADOWS

Some say that the bounties of this world are so attractive it is impossible not to fall prey to them. But they do not realize that that attraction is part of the test. The world is adorned all over with all kinds of blessings and opportunities. Their sparkle dazzles people, practically blinds them.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Adorned for the people are the worldly pleasures, such as the women, having children, piles upon piles of gold and silver, trained horses, livestock, and crops. These are the materials of this world. A far better abode is reserved at God.

3 The Amramites (Āli-‘Imrān) 14

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

No prophet shall acquire captives, unless he participates in the fighting. You people are seeking the materials of this world, while God advocates the Hereafter. God is Almighty, Most Wise.

8 The Spoils of War (Al-Anfāl) 67

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

It is they who bought this lowly life at the expense of the Hereafter. Consequently, the retribution is never commuted for them, nor can they be helped.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 86

But when they are confronted with reality, they are ready to give everything they own, even if they owned everything in the world, to save themselves. They live remembering their good deeds but forgetting the bad ones. But they forget that there is somebody who does not forget what they forget. And when they are confronted with bad deeds they have not taken into consideration, they look for ways out.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

If those who transgressed owned everything on earth, even twice as much, they would readily give it up to avoid the terrible retribution on the Day of Resurrection. They will be shown by God what they never expected.

39 The Throngs (Al-Zumer) 47

But the truth is clear for those who wish to see it. The inevitability of death is certain. People knowingly throw themselves into fire, like people who see a banana peel and foresee that

they are going to slip and fall. People fall prey to the transitory ornaments of life in this world. They do not understand that the bounties of this world are like a shadow play. Just as they think that everything is real and that they have got a hold of it, it slips through their fingers. They spend their whole life pursuing those shadows, in the hope of catching them, like hunters who shoot arrows at shadows.

When birds fly, their shadow on earth seems to fly too. A fool decided to hunt a shadow and ran until he was exhausted. He was not aware that that shadow belonged to a bird in the sky; he was not aware whom that shadow belonged to or where it was. He kept shooting arrows at the shadow and ran out of arrows. The arrows represented his life, so he spent his life shooting arrows in vain, pursuing a shadow. That is how he wasted his whole life.¹¹

Mevlânâ

11 Mevlânâ, **En Korkunç Düşman**, transl. Ömer Rıza Doğrul, Kaknüs Yayınları, (Herodot-Beydebâ-Mevlânâ, Dost Görünen Düşman içinde) İstanbul 2005, p. 70.

WHY ME?

*Whatever comes from you is pleasing to me
Whether you make me cry or laugh,
Whether you make me live or die,
The bard Yunus is your servant,
Both your sorrow and your blessings are
pleasing to me...*

Yunus Emre

WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE OR SADDENING HAPPENS, the majority of people immediately ask God “Why me?” or “What have I done to deserve this?” **Don’t ask yourself “Why me?” You are the reason why!** There is no doubt that whatever happens to people is a consequence of what they themselves have done.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Anything bad that happens to you is a consequence of your own deeds, and He overlooks many of your sins.

42 Consultation (Al-Shoorā) 30

But people do not always need to have deserved something. Because there is also the reality of being tested. God has announced that he tests his servants in a number of ways and that those who are patient will receive good news.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

The One who created death and life for the purpose of distinguishing those among you who would do better. He is the Almighty, the Forgiving.

67 Kingship (Al-Mulk) 2

But when people think of the numerous blessings and opportunities before them, they never say “Dear God, why me? Why have you given me all these blessings when I have not done anything?” Most are not even aware that it is God who gives them benevolence and blessings, because they think that they achieve these thanks to their own skills, and that only terrible things derive from God. When people are comfortable, and their worldly affairs are in order, they do not feel the need to remember God and to be grateful to him. But the moment they run into trouble, it is obvious who should be blamed and people, with their usual arrogance, believe that they have not done anything to deserve this.

The legendary tennis player and Wimbledon winner Arthur Ashe was about to die of AIDS. He was receiving thousands of letters from his fans all over the world. In one, a fan said: “Why has God chosen you for such a terrible illness?” Arthur Ashe replied as following: “All over the world, 50 million children begin to play tennis, 5 million learn to play tennis, 500,000 learn professional tennis, 50,000 participate in competitions, 5,000 reach the major tournaments, 50 get to play at Wimbledon, 4 reach the semi finals, 2 reach the finals. When I was holding the trophy, I did not ask God “Why me?” So today that I’m in pain why should I say “Why me?”? Happiness makes one soft. Hardship gives one strength. Sorrow makes one insane. Defeat makes

one humble. Success makes one sparkle, but only God enables us to pursue our path. Never ask God "Why me?"... Whatever will happen will happen... He has his own ways and reasons... Just keep your faith.

We must remember that people do not need to ask "Why me?" only regarding good or bad things that happen to them. For example, they could also ask "Why do I have these?" about their eyes, hands, feet or ears. But this question does not come to mind in such cases, because the majority of people have all this and much more. Hence they were not important enough to deserve such a question. What's more, once prayers offered during moments of difficulty produce a response, people forget about God and plunge into a state of indolence. On the other hand, people whose wishes are not fulfilled remember this and blame God. Most people are not sincere. They do not think that there may be an auspicious reason for the fact that their wishes are not fulfilled. They rush to a mosque to pray and make offerings just before an exam they want to pass or for a relative with a fatal illness to get better. The moment they pass the exam or their relative gets better, they forget about their prayers and pleadings. And when they fail an exam or lose a relative they think that their prayers were in vain and they blame God. But God is not the wish tree that we encounter in fables, a spirit that comes out from the lamp or Father Christmas who wanders in the sky on his sleigh. People forget that they need God in every moment of their lives. They do not carry out their duties as God's servants, yet they need and expect God's help in matters over which they have no control.

The moment students begin school, they begin to be tested on the information that they are taught. They are tested throughout their lives, practically since the moment they

are aware of themselves. They know that they need to work hard to be successful. And that if they fail at exams they will encounter many problems. Getting prepared for university entrance exams is a nightmare for many people. Years are spent solving thousands of questions. And then, within three hours, the destiny of many people is established. University ends but exams do not end. There are interviews for job applications, exams for civil servants, reports and researches to get promoted. Exams never end. And people wish to succeed in all and to get where they want to. And within the commotion and the worry of exams, people do not even remember that they are also being tested by the creator. They get prepared for all kind of exams in this world, but they do not understand that God tests them. For most people God's test is not something to take or to be prepared for. For example they are of no use when one wants to enter a university or become a civil servant. **Most people who wish to reach the summit in their careers, do not aim to rise to a high position or to reach the summit of faith and devotion. And they do not understand people who have such an aim.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Every soul will taste death, after we put you to the test through adversity and prosperity, then to us you ultimately return.

21 The Prophets (Al-Anbyā') 35

GOD IS ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WHO SEEK HIM WITH SINCERITY

*If you find God, what do you lose?
And if you lose God, what do you win?*

Hikem-i Atâiye

*If you find him, you find everything.
If you do not find him, you find nothing,
Apart from trouble.*

Said-i Nursî

SOME PEOPLE MAY SEEM INACCESSIBLE, for instance the boss of a major corporate or a prime minister. One cannot convey any and every wish to them, or consult them whenever it is needed. Even if you have the power to see them, you may have to wait several days, if not weeks, to see them. They may not give you anything, but you would still cringe and fawn before them. Can anybody remember a time when they wished to pray to God and ask for something but they had to wait, or they were not taken into consideration? Or that were told to go away and come back the next day? Or that God was very busy or on holiday? Is it not possible for everyone to access God whenever they want to? If a servant of God has pleaded with all sincerity, do they not receive a reply? Do they not know that God always hears them? That He knows in what state they are? That He tests them? That if He has granted something, even if all the people in the world were to get together, they would not be able to prevent Him? And if He does not grant something, that no one else can obtain that thing? **That is why never ask “Why**

me?” when something evil happens to you. And do not consider as evil everything that seems evil to you. Because you yourself are the reason.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

This is the consequence of your own works. God is never unjust towards the people.

3 The Amramites (Āli-‘Imrān) 182

At times God tests his servants through a variety of hardships and troubles. And at times people pay for the mistakes that they have made in their worldly life. Whatever situation one may be in, one should adopt the principle of turning to God and asking God for help. If a servant of God trusts in Him and relies on Him, if he sees God as the only true friend, there is no doubt he will receive God’s help. But remembering God only when facing a difficult situation and praying to God only when helpless – like so many people do – is insincerity. We encounter many people who beg God when they face a difficult situation and they are helpless, but who once their problems are over return to their old life style and forget about God. People like that do not think about God or refrain from making mistakes until they feel helpless once again. **Although servants of God only turn to God when they need to do so, in fact there is not a single moment when they do not need him.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

We created the human, and we know what he whispers to himself. We are closer to him than his jugular vein.

50 Q. (Qāf) 16

Praying is very important for a believer. People should always pray to God, and not only when they need Him. As long as prayers are heartfelt and sincere, God will respond in the most positive and beautiful way. In their prayers, people should ask to become faithful and devoted servants both in the worldly life and in the afterlife, rather than request for material wishes, and they should be always grateful to God for the numerous blessings and opportunities that He has provided them with. If one requests for possessions, these may make the person go astray and act in a depraved manner. That is why we should always ask for what is propitious both in our worldly life and in the hereafter. It is a servant's duty to feel heartfelt attachment to God and to pray to Him. Only God knows what is propitious or what he should grant.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

When My servants ask you about Me, I am always near. I answer their prayers when they pray to Me. The people shall respond to Me and believe in Me, in order to be guided.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 186

IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, THERE IS A REASON WHY

*Everyone thinks of changing the world,
but no one thinks of changing himself.*

Tolstoy

UNLIKE MOST OTHER PEOPLE, I LIKE CEMETERIES. The dead are better than most people alive. Not only they do not harm anyone, they also offer advice. They do not talk nonsense, like living people. They do not speak, but they remind me of my last stop. They seem to shout at visitors: "Travelers, look at us and draw your lessons, be aware that your end will be no different."

IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, THERE IS A REASON WHY

Don't think that you are luckier than us. Only God knows that. **Don't pity us, don't cry for us. If, in spite of seeing us, you are still wasting your days, you are in as pitiable a state as us.** When you were born you got on to the bus of life, like us. And, though you are not aware of it, the "stop" button has already been pressed for you to get off. Your light is flashing. Your bus is about to stop. It will be the final stop; the doors will open and you will have to get off. That is when you will ask yourself where you are.

*Life is like a tram, when you get to
sit down it's the end of the line...*

Camillo Sbarbaro

IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, THERE IS A REASON WHY

In spite of all your ingratitude and your denial of Him, God still gives you new opportunities; you are still alive. Shake yourself and come back to your senses. The fact that we are lying here and not you means that your time is not up yet. Don't think that the world rotates thanks to you. When you die some tears will be shed at your funeral and then people will go back to whatever they were doing before. After you, life will continue until Judgment Day.

If you are still alive, there is a reason why. Why don't you go and lie down on that coffin bier. While your body feels its chill; reflect on it. What if this was that inevitable moment.

Imagine your dead and naked body wrapped up in a white shroud, inside a coffin. People have gathered around. Prayers are held. Try to hear the voices. Just ask yourself, if I were dead and had left everything behind, what would I have wanted to have done in my life?

Ask yourself, when people make preparations and take some stuff along even when they go on holiday for two days, what do I have that is worthwhile as I go on this eternal journey? It is not easy to account for a life that has been wasted.

Put your life on the scales of conscience. Measure yourself, weigh yourself, check what state you are in. After all those years that you have spent without a proper purpose, if you still have some years, try to do some good deeds. Bring meaning to your life. Let there be some difference between you and other living beings that are devoid of intelligence. Enhancing your life with kindness and good deeds is up to you.

*You say you're going to be a better person tomorrow,
why not start today?*

Epiktetos

Don't try to run away from reality, for there is no other reality. Don't rebel against your Creator. Don't violate His rules. Even if you have never turned your arrogant head towards the *kiblah* while you were alive, don't worry, your grave will face the *kiblah*. Even if your nose was up in the air all the time, not a single piece will remain of you. You thought that you would split the earth and reach to the sky, but when you die they will put you underground. You thought that money solved everything and you slaved for money, but where you will be, money will be worth nothing. When you come here, at the end of your life, there are two sentences that you will hear: either **"Welcome to the real world"** or **"You have come empty handed to the real world!"**

*So many have wanted it all
But then they passed away
You think that you will never leave
But they all were like you...
This world does not belong to anybody
Sooner or later it is a grave for everybody
Let us say you manage to live as long as Noah
Will you not cease to exist all the same?*

Omar Khayyam

Do we really own the material things that we believe we own? Are things that we refer to as mine or ours really ours? It may probably be said that some things are at our disposal because we acquire them, but up to what point do we have ownership of them? We all come empty handed into this world; is there anybody who leaves with full hands? Does

anybody manage to take any of the stuff they refer to as “mine”? Is there a price one can pay to avoid death? Most people are fully aware of the obvious reality of this situation. But still, people shut their eyes, cover their ears and bury their heads in the sand, like ostriches. They do not wish to confront this reality. Their nature is in part contrary to worldly ambitions, but they suppress that part. They suppress it because it clashes with their ambitions. They attempt to escape reality, to forget, not to be reminded of it. But even if they forget or they are not reminded of it, the truth does not change. When the time is up, the moment comes to depart. You hold your breath, and then you say goodbye to the worldly life, for which so much has been sacrificed, and shut your eyes in the real sense of the word.

*If the dead could speak they would tell you
They missed their chance, but you should repent...*

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek

IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, THERE IS A REASON WHY

Imagine that you are sitting in your office or at home and that suddenly your loved ones come up to you and with expressions of sorrow they lift you up by your hands and feet and begin to carry you. Although you shout “Stop, what are you doing?” they don’t hear you and they don’t react to your shouts. They take you to the mortuary, where they undress you and wash you. While you look around without comprehending, you realize that your funeral prayers are being held. Then you are removed from your coffin, put into your grave and soil starts to be thrown on you. You suddenly wake up and, realizing that it was all a terrible dream, you sigh with relief. But for how long? You may still be alive and what you saw was a dream. But sooner or later, this is what is going

to happen to you. If not now, one day your loved ones will come and take you and carry you on their shoulders. They will put you underground and throw soil over you. If you are still alive, there is a reason why.

In spite of all your ingratitude and your denial of Him, God is still merciful. He still presents you with new opportunities, open your eyes and see them! There is no proper time for death, and it is not anyone's turn. It may begin from the oldest of all, or it may not wait for the young to grow old. Death is not like the younger sisters that wait for their turn, until their eldest get married. Death comes suddenly. As the Roman thinker Seneca pointed out, whether people are aware of it or not, time is in favor of death.

If you pay close heed to the problem, you will find that the largest portion of our life passes while we are doing ill, a good share while we are doing nothing, and the whole while we are doing that which is not to the purpose. What man can you show me who places any value on his time, who reckons the worth of each day, who understands that he is dying daily? For we are mistaken when we look forward to death; the major portion of death has already passed. Whatever years be behind us are in death's hands.¹²

Seneca

The fact that no one knows when, where or how they are going to die is actually a great blessing. This is not like knowing when one's membership at the gym ends or when school will end, if everything goes according to plan. When we are born into this life, we are not given a document stating how many years, days and hours we will live or where and how we are going to die. Because one cannot live like that. On the

¹² Cited by Kaan H. Ökten, Ölüm Kitabı, p. 119.

other hand, since life ends with death, there is no difference between knowing and not knowing when or where one will die. Those who think there is a difference are wrong.

In some movies there is a mix-up between the medical reports of two patients. You may go to a hospital because you are coughing and they may tell you that you have developed a deadly disease and that you only have a few weeks to live. That's when your whole world falls apart. You don't know what to do. You feel completely helpless. As if you didn't know that one day you are going to die anyway, knowing the exact date has appalled you. After a few days spent in a state of hopelessness, regretting all the mistakes you made throughout your life and begging God for your forgiveness, there is a phone call from your doctor. "I really do not know how to explain this situation but there was a mix-up between some medical reports; there is nothing wrong with you, you are as fit as a fiddle." At first you cannot believe it. Then you suddenly start jumping up and down, shouting I'm not going to die, I'm not going to die. You embrace life and you throw yourself into a life of fun as if to take your revenge of those few days of suffering.

The state of indolence that most people plunge into is no different. When you are told that you have only a few weeks to live, you cannot lead a normal life. You cannot conduct your usual business and aim to fulfill your plans. You fall into a state of consternation, of panic. But why is it that you are not in a state of panic right now? Because, although you know that you will die, you don't know when it will be? But there is no change in your proximity to death. There are many cases where people who think they have another forty years die within a couple of days, sooner than those who realize that they have only another two weeks to live. But people delude themselves. They don't see the reality of

things. **Because they think that they are too young to die, as if death becomes a certain age only. They think of death like a suit, which doesn't become them.**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He is the One who granted you life, then He puts you to death, then He brings you back to life. Surely, the human being is unappreciative.

22 Pilgrimage (Al-Hajj) 66

IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, THERE IS A REASON WHY

How much can people put up with each other? If friendship is not based on shared faith, don't even the closest of friends clash at the slightest conflict and become harsh enemies? Don't people who profit from each other one way or another lose value when that profit ends? However good an employee you are, how many of your mistakes can your boss overlook? And if you are an ordinary employee, at your slightest mistake you may find yourself fired. How many times has it happened that when you expected loyalty you encountered disloyalty? Have you never been treated unfairly, over and over again? Even the world's kindest person, if he had the power of God – God forbid – would he not have destroyed all of humanity after all the ingratitude he witnessed? Would he not be spoiled by his power and play with the world as if it was a toy? If he knew what God knows, would he not have hidden the truth from people? Would he not have paid attention only to what is in his interest? Would he not do something and undo it the next day? Would he not renege on his promises? Would he not distribute justice at will? But God does not do so because he is merciful. He shows the way to those He creates and then, in spite of their

ingratitude and their denial of Him, He presents them with new opportunities. Do you know anybody who is more merciful than God?

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

If God punished the people for their transgressions, He would have annihilated every creature on earth. But He respites them for a specific, predetermined time. Once their interim ends, they cannot delay it by one hour, nor advance it.

16 The Bee (Al-Nahl) 61

SHOW YOUR ALLEGIANCE

*There are only three types of people;
those who have found God and serve him;
those who have not found God and seek him,
and those who live not seeking, or finding him.*

*The first are rational and happy;
the second unhappy and rational,
and the third foolish and unhappy.*

Blaise Pascal

MANY PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES TORN between different things during their life and when making choices. Most people are undecided in what they do. But whether right or wrong, the choices people make and the decisions they take regarding their future generally do not result in too much benefit or harm. Even if the consequences of a mistake are felt throughout one's life, this is only valid for one's lifetime. Whether a person lives in a state of poverty or leads a life of wealth, this condition lasts only as long as their lifetime. In other words, it's a transitory condition related to life in this world, whereas choices and decisions that one should make concerning one's lifetime, rather than one's worldly life, determine whether one will be made to suffer or will be rewarded in eternity, and therefore are of crucial importance.

When people are born into this world, they are asked a clear and simple question. You have not been created simply to exist in this world. This is where you are supposed to prove yourself. Are you ready or not to prove yourself? People have to choose between the two. However, the majority of people do a little of both, in other words, they are undecided on

this most important subject, regarding their eternal future. It is more understandable that people who decide that the Creator does not exist live their lives accordingly. But people who believe in the Creator's existence and whose decisions are no different from those of one who does not believe in Him, present a great contradiction. God either exists or doesn't. It is not possible for God to exist only at certain times or conditions and not at others. If God exists, nothing else matters.

People should show their allegiance clearly. If people say that they are God's servants, that they and their loved ones and all their possessions have been created by God, their lives should be led by God's commands and not by their own wishes and ambitions. Their choices should be determined by whether they comply with God's wishes and not by worldly interests.

If people are aware of the mistakes they make, they should haste to correct them and to tidy up their lives. Because delaying this decision is not like missing an exam or a flight. In other words this delay cannot be redressed. Worldly plans and programs can be delayed. A job can be delayed for one can come up with a number of excuses. But one's fate cannot be delayed and it happens suddenly.

That is why people should show their allegiance during their lifetime. If people do not submit to He who has created them and recreates them after their death to call them into account for their lives, then it means that they have submitted to their own wishes and ambitions, and therefore to evil.

People should do things and create value simply for God's approval and not in return for anything else. They should place emphasis on what God's opinion of them is, and not on what other people will say. They should dedicate themselves

to good deeds. They should be able to refuse worldly things and values that clash with things that are compatible with God's wishes. Rather than ask "what can I do on my own?" they should aim to carry out good deeds making use of all possible opportunities. In short, they should show their allegiance clearly.

Nimrod lit a great fire in which to throw the Prophet Abraham. While a crow was carrying brushwood to throw into the fire, an ant was carrying some water. When the crow saw that the ant was carrying water, he asked the ant mockingly: "What are you going to do with that water?" When the ant said, "I'm carrying water to put out the fire into which they will throw Abraham," the crow laughed and said: "The water you carry cannot possibly put out that huge fire." The ant said, "That's all right; I know it will not be sufficient, But I will have demonstrated my allegiance."

THE FEAR OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Most people are afraid to love because they are afraid of losing. They are afraid to think because it brings about responsibility. They are afraid to speak because they are afraid of being criticised. They are afraid to grow old because they do not appreciate youth. They are afraid of being forgotten, because they have not created anything permanent. And they are afraid to die because they are not ready to die.

Shakespeare

IF WE WERE AWARE OF WHAT GOES ON while in our mother's womb, we would probably think that we were in the place where we were born, we would grow up and we would die. We would think that our life in our mother's womb was both the beginning and the end for us. But our hands were not created simply so that we could suck our thumb. The purpose of our feet was not simply to kick within our mother's womb. The purpose of our ears was not simply to listen to our mother's heartbeat. And the purpose of our eyes was not simply to see her internal organs. In other words, our days in our mother's womb were the beginning of our life, but not its end. Just like our arrival and our departure from this life. Neither our mother's womb nor this world is our true home.

This adventure is common to everybody who was born into this world. We have come into this world, we have come into existence. But we were dead before; we did not exist. We came into existence when we acquired a life. And then we forgot about our past, when we were vitamins inside

oranges, when we were small drops of liquid in our mother's womb. Then we came into existence. We were brought into existence by He who alone is able to create. What's more, He who created us did not set us aside after having created us. He gave us food and drink; he raised us; he watched over us. He gave us a lot and asked for very little. But we are ungrateful. We forget our creation and our past and we become arrogant. Some of us said **"Who can resurrect the bones after they had rotted?" (36 Ya-Sin 78)** because they did not know that He who created them first would recreate them. Some others said **"We only live this life—we live and die—and we will never be resurrected."** (23 The Believers (Al-Mu'minûn) 37) or **"We only live this life; we live and die and only time causes our death!" (45 Kneeling (Al-Jâtheyah) 24)**

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

He raises a question to us -while forgetting his initial creation- "Who can resurrect the bones after they had rotted?" Say, "The One who initiated them in the first place will resurrect them. He is fully aware of every creation."

36 Ya-Sin 78-79

We have not come into existence either to live in our mother's womb, or to complete our 60-70 years of life and then cease to exist. The real purpose of our existence is that this world is a test to be passed on the path that leads to eternal life. Just as there are those who pass and those who fail exams, in this exam too, there are those who will pass because they deserve it and those who fail because of their laziness. What's more, there will not be a bell-shaped curve for people's success average and everybody will be evaluated on

the basis of their own grades. **Our only true life is neither in our mother's womb, nor in this world, it is our eternal life after death.**

If God and eternal life did not exist, people would be forced to curse the universe and the day when they were born. But when the existence of God and of eternal life are recognized, life is where kindness, benevolence and well-being reign and the world is where morality reaches perfection and happiness and grace lead to infinite holiness. The worldly life of a person whose disposition includes the wish for eternal life resembles the length of a day from the moment he wakes up in the morning till he falls asleep in the evening. If a person believes that life depends only on the corpse (in the body), then his life ends when his body ceases to exist. If a person believes that life depends on the spirit, then the end is of no matter.

Tolstoy

We doubt the state of mind of anybody who claims to have come into existence on his own, because we know that in the case of each and every person, fathers are always intermediaries and mothers are the bearers. No one has emerged from a pumpkin, or been brought by storks, as in fables. But people have forgotten how and why they have been created and instead of feeling gratitude to their Creator, have developed enmity to Him.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

O people, if you have any doubt about resurrection, *(remember that)* we created you from dust, and subsequently from a tiny drop, which turns into a hanging

(embryo), then it becomes a fetus that is given life or deemed lifeless. We thus clarify things for you. We settle in the wombs whatever we will for a predetermined period. We then bring you out as infants, then you reach maturity. While some of you die young, others live to the worst age, only to find out that no more knowledge can be attained beyond a certain limit. Also, you look at a land that is dead, then as soon as we shower it with water, it vibrates with life and grows all kinds of beautiful plants.

22 Pilgrimage (Al-Hajj) 5

Although some people have doubts about the afterlife, the existence of our present life is clear proof of the existence of the afterlife, for what matters is the first creation. Once we have witnessed such a power, we cannot doubt that we will be recreated by the owner of this power. Death is non-existence for those who believe that life in this world and people's existence happens by coincidence. This is an impossible situation: to think that all people and everything around them one day will cease to exist, not to know where everything has come from and where it will go. Life is senseless for people who believe in this. Life has no meaning for people who think that they will cease to exist when they die and that they will never be recreated.

Men who fear death, fear it because they picture it as nothingness and darkness, but they see the nothingness and darkness because they do not see the life.

Tolstoy

If after our death we are not going to be resurrected in the afterlife, it will not be possible for us to exist once again or to see our loved ones. We will not be able to witness the

blooming of flowers or the singing of birds, and we will not be able to do things that we enjoyed. It will not be possible to attain a form of this world that is purged of all kinds of evil, oppression, injustice, misery and infamy, although these do not prevent us from still wanting to live here. While we ask ourselves why is there so much evil in this world, we must remember:

It is not death or pain that is to be dreaded, but the fear of pain or death. For this reason we commend the poet who said not death is evil, but a shameful death.

Epiktetos

Death is not non-existence; on the contrary, it is the passage into reality, where God's servant is reunited with God. It is the passage into a life where all the beauty of life in this world will be multiplied. It is the passage into the end of that which is temporary and the beginning of that which is lasting. For believers, it is a source of happiness. For those who live with the reality and die with the belief, it is the day of happiness. It is the day when those who deserve it will receive justice, the ones before and the ones after will gather together, the tyrants and the oppressed will come face to face, the books of deeds will be opened. It is the day when the real owner of all possessions will reign. The day when no one will say a word unless permitted. The day when some faces will brighten and some will darken and become abominable. The day when those who are true worshipers carry out good deeds and aim for peace will enter paradise, as they deserve. The day when they are reunited with the real life and the real homeland where they will be offered all the blessings they may wish.

The lion of this world seeks prey and provision. The lion of the Lord seeks freedom and death. A hundred lives he sees in death – his aim becomes to burn moth-like within death's flame!

Mevlânâ

The most famous of the ancient philosophers offered a number of different views on death, one of the most fundamental subjects of philosophy, and on the whole they said that death was not to be feared, that on the contrary it was a new beginning that liberated the soul. For example, according to Socrates, death is a great blessing for man in that it separates the soul from the body. That is why the fear of death is an error that like all errors needs to be overcome through reasoning. Socrates' disciple Plato shares his teacher's views on this subject and sees life as a period of apprenticeship for death. He believes that to discover the purpose of life it is necessary to reflect on death. Plato likens life to a sentence within our bodies and death to escaping from this prison.

According to some philosophers, people experience death every day, although they may not realize it. In Seneca's words:

I remember one day you were saying that we do not suddenly fall on death, but advance towards it slowly; we die every day. For ever day a little of our life is taken from us; even when we are growing; our life is on the wane. We lose our childhood, then our boyhood and then our youth. Counting even yesterday, all past time is lost time; the very day which we are now spending is shared between ourselves and death. It is not the last drop that empties the water-clock, but all

that which previously has flowed out; similarly, the final hour when we cease to exist does not of itself bring death; it merely of itself completes the death-process. We reach death at that moment, but we have been a long time on the way.¹³

The famous Islamic philosopher Al-Kindi saw death as a natural process that completes mankind's nature and said the following:

We ought to keep in mind that we should not hate what is not evil. It is precisely what is evil that we should hate. If that is firmly fixed in our memory, its attention to dispelling sensory causes of sorrow is thereby strengthened. We do not suppose that anything is more evil than death, but death is not evil; the fear of death is precisely what is evil. Death is no more than the perfection of our nature. If there were no death, there would certainly be no man, because the definition of man is is a living, rational, mortal being. The definition is thus based on the nature, I mean the nature of man is that he is a living, rational, mortal being. So, if there is no death, there is no man, because if someone did not die, he would not be a man. Therefore, it is not evil to be what we are; what is evil is precisely to be what we are not. Thus, the evil thing would be that there would be no death, because if there were no [death], there would be no man. Therefore, death is not evil.¹⁴

13 Cited by Kaan H. Ökten, *Ölüm Kitabı*, p. 120.

14 Kindî, *Üzüntüyü Yenmenin Çareleri*, p. 64.

Death is therefore not evil. It is evil not to be ready for death or to become attached to this world as if death will never happen. If you offer people, who spend their lives preparing for the afterlife and benefit from the blessings of paradise, all the money in the world in return for going back to their life in the world, they would not want to go back, just as babies born from their mother's wombs do not wish to return there once they have grown. Kindi provides the following example on this subject:

For instance, I might say that if food were possessed of an intellect and it was in the liver, and yet it had not experienced anything else, and then it is broken down in order to be transported from the liver, that would sadden it, even though it is being transported from the liver to a physical constitution of a form and reaching something closer to being perfect. So if it goes into the testicles and changes into sperm, where it is again broken down in order to be transported to the womb, which is more spacious than the testicles, that would cause it great sorrow. If it were said to it after it had come to the womb that it would be returned to the testicles, that would cause it to be even sadder than it was originally, because of its recollection of the cramped space of the testicles and its distance from the perfection of the human form when its condition in them is compared to its condition in the womb. Also, if it were going to be roused from the womb into the spaciousness and wideness of this world, that would make it very sad. Then, when it had come out to this spaciousness and perfection, and next it was said to it that it would be returned to the womb, when it possessed all the earth and everything in it, it would relinquish it [all] not to return to the womb. Similarly, while it is

*in this place that is the world, it is very apprehensive about departing from it. So, when it comes to the place of the intellect – a place that lacks sensory pains and the sensory possessions that are the sources of all sensory and psychological pains, of which neither hands nor harm can take hold, and so its possessor is never separated from his possession – if at that time it were told “you will be returned to this earthly world that you were in,” then its anxiety would be many times greater than the anxiety [it felt when] it was said to it, “you will be returned from this worldly expanse to within the womb.”*¹⁵

According to the famous Islamic philosopher Farabi, people who can maintain their wisdom before death are virtuous people. They not only know that death will not harm them, but they also know that they will not lose any of the kindness that they acquired while they lived. That is why such virtuous people love life and they endeavor to increase any good behavior that will increase their happiness in both worlds. Those who are afraid of death are ignorant people, who are afraid of being deprived of the pleasures of a worldly life. Such people think that happiness will cease to exist together with death and they know nothing about the real happiness that comes after death.

When life is on the right path, there is no need to fear death. The only thing to deter us from death is that life should be full of evil.

Omar Khayyam

15 Kindī, *ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

But why are people afraid of death? Although there are many reasons for this, it would be correct to list the reasons for being afraid of death on the basis of a classification made by Avicenna, another famous Islamic philosopher. Avicenna expresses as follows the seven groups of men who fear death:

1. Those who do not know what death is.
2. Those who are not sure where the soul will go.
3. Those who think that they will die and cease to exist and the world will continue to exist after them.
4. Those who believe that just as fatal illnesses are a source of suffering, death is also a source of suffering.
5. Those who believe that after death they will be punished and tortured.
6. Those who do not know where they will go after death.
7. Those who are sorry to leave behind their possessions when they die.¹⁶

All of this arises from the ignorance of people who become wrapped up with the said fears and wish simply to live in line with their desires. Not only does the fear of death not bring about a change in the reality of death, not preparing for it out of fear also does not change one's fate. That is why instead of fearing death, one should desire the eternity of the afterlife.

16 İbn Sînâ, **Ölüm Korkusundan Kurtuluş Risalesi**, transl. M. Hazmi Tura, Orhan Mete Matbaası, İstanbul 1959, pp. 12-13.

The day I've died, my pall is moving on - But do not think my heart is still on earth! Don't weep and pity me: "Oh woe, how awful!" You fall in devil's snare - woe, that is awful! Don't cry "Woe, parted!" at my burial - For me this is the time of joyful meeting! Don't say "Farewell!" when I'm put in the grave - A curtain is it for eternal bliss. You saw "descending" - now look at the rising! Is setting dangerous for sun and moon? To you it looks like setting, but it's rising; The coffin seems a jail, yet it means freedom. Which seed fell in the earth that did not grow there? Why do you doubt the fate of human seed?¹⁷

Mevlânâ

Tolstoy too states that death should not be feared, that on the contrary it is a beginning for people and that people return to their real homeland only when they die.

Even the most shriveled walnut needs to be broken. Mature fruits cannot hold on to trees. People should therefore not lament that their shell will be broken. Fruits should not struggle to avoid falling on the ground. Just think! What can be better than for something to return where it comes from. Life is nothing but the transformation of a seed into a tree and of a tree into a seed. In other words, it's death... But just as people shroud the dead, they shroud also death itself. And everything that is shrouded is fatal. What people need to do is to divest death of its garments and simply watch it. Watch life that is... There is a saying that people keep referring to: "either die or exist." But no one is aware that to exist and to die are the same thing.

17 Mevlânâ, **Divanı Kebir**, transl. Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul 1959, p. 169.

Fighting death kills life, because it means fighting life itself. That is what real death is. Those who do not understand this reality sully life with death and death with life. They muddy up the water, which becomes undrinkable.¹⁸

Tolstoy

Let alone living an eternal and happy life, if your time is up, do you know anybody who would enable you to live even one more minute? When you are in the world you can make use of material and spiritual means to avoid being blamed for a crime and even to get rid of evidence. And you can also intimidate people who could testify against you either through financial promises or by frightening them. But when it's the day of reckoning in the afterlife, none of the material things you own in this life will be of any benefit to you. You will be handed your book of records, and those who receive it in their left hand will feel deep regret.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

As for him who is given his record in his left hand, he will say, "Oh, I wish I never received my record. "I wish I never knew my account. "I wish my death was eternal. "My money cannot help me. "All my power is gone."

69 Incontestable (Al-Haaqqah) 25-29

Your mouth will be seared. It will not be you or anybody else who speaks, but your own organs, who will testify against you. You will be given what you deserve, in full.

18 Tolstoy, **Ölüm Manifestosu**, transl. S. Neval Şimşek-Serkan Özburun, Kaknüs Yayınları, İstanbul 2007, Back cover.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

On that day we will seal their mouths; their hands and feet will bear witness to everything they had done.

36 Ya-Sin 65

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Once they get there, their own hearing, eyes, and skins will bear witness to everything they had done.

41 Detailed (Fussilat) 20

Who, other than God, could create man? Who else could ever resuscitate rotten bones? Who else could take man out of a grave? Who else could create eternal happiness and life? Who? No doubt no one but God.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

If only you could see the guilty when they bow down their heads before their Lord: "Our Lord, now we have seen and we have heard. Send us back and we will be righteous. Now we have attained certainty."

32 Prostration (Al-Sajdah) 12

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

They will say, "Woe to us. Who resurrected us from our death? This is what the Most Gracious has promised. The messengers were right."

36 Ya-Sin 52

DEATH IS IN FACT BEAUTIFUL, LIKE LIFE

*When you are with God both life and
death are pleasant...*

Mevlânâ

LIFE IS AS BEAUTIFUL DEATH could be another way to state this. It is in our power to improve the temporary worldly life that we are offered with faith, good deeds and beneficence. And in this worldly sense death is our major supporter and ally. Yes, death is indeed a true ally. It never deceives us. It always tells us the truth. When we are carried away by the transitory spell of this worldly life, it gives us an affectionate slap. It reminds us of the reality. And it is always by our side, it never leaves us alone. It is much like a true ally. It shows us the meaninglessness of this transitory life because it wants us to achieve eternal happiness.

Life is a relationship with the world. All change and transformations in life are nothing but establishment of a higher relationship with life. Hence death is the introduction to a new relationship.

Tolstoy

For just as we are young and grow old, and flourish and reach maturity, have teeth and a beard and gray hairs, conceive, become pregnant and bring forth new life and all the other natural processes that follow the seasons of our existence, so also do we have death. A thoughtful person will never take death lightly, impatiently, or scornfully, but will wait for it as one of life's natural processes.

Marcus Aurelius

While the great majority of people continue to idle themselves with the transitory pleasures of life in this world, some people devote themselves to God and endeavor to carry out deeds of beneficence and aim for peace. They set the priorities of their lives in accordance with God's commands. They do good deeds with heartfelt submission, without expecting a return in this world. They devote themselves to this life. They compete for God's approval. They know that faith is the greatest wealth of all and they summon other people to God and to religion with beautiful words and advice.

They are careful concerning human and ethical values, rights, law and justice. Whatever benevolence they wish for themselves, they wish for others too and they consider it part of worship to summon others to be good and true. **It is not difficult to be a servant befitting God's glory. In fact, God does not expect too much from his servants. And God has asked that these things be done because they can be done.**

People who sincerely believe in God know that everything they own is a blessing of God. They do not turn their back on the world. They lead a good life within the circle of permissibility and they benefit from the blessings and opportunities that God provides them with. They see God's art in all the beauty of the world. When they see the flight of a bird in the sky, the color, pattern and scent of a flower, the way a butterfly flaps its wings or a ship floating in the sea, they appreciate and revere God. They want what God who creates such beauty in this world may create in the hereafter and they therefore want the permanent hereafter and endeavor to achieve it.

People for whom God is an ally keep their distance from the devil and do not fall in his traps. They are not fooled by the ornaments and the colors of worldly life. They know that

their lives are temporary. They submit readily to their Creator and they question the reason for their existence. They know that God is the almighty entity that they need to be approved by. They endeavor to earn His approval and to look good for Him. When they love or vilify something, they do so for Him. They carry out good deeds without expecting anything in return and without reproaching people. They know that the best trade is that conducted with God and by selling the temporary worldly life, they buy the eternal afterlife. They see all beauty in the world as God's creation and take real pleasure from life. They are content with what they have. They are fully satisfied and happy.

They are patient: they are not easily overcome by anger. They are intelligent: they do not act without thinking. They are generous: they share what they have with everybody. They know that God is the only true owner of all possessions who has dominion of all. They are loyal to God's commands and bans. They are as strong as rocks before things that are forbidden. They know that being God's loyal servants is one of the most honorable things in the world. They are sure of themselves. They do not shun being criticized by others. They keep on the true path and never bow before anybody but God.

They frequently mention God and revere Him. They are sincere and particular in their worship. When they pray, they ask for benevolence both in this world and in the afterlife. They pray not only for themselves but for all other believers too. They wish for unbelievers to find the true path. They are not insistent in their errors and sins; they immediately repent and beg for forgiveness. They are moral and virtuous people. They turn their back on atrociousness. They are devoted to their pride and honor. They have a sense of modesty. They keep their desires under control.

They are reliable. They can be entrusted anything. They are self-confident. Unless huge fortunes belong to them, they are of no value to them. They do not set their eyes on the possessions of others. They are self-sacrificing. They endeavor to carry out useful deeds. They look for opportunities. They give priority to good deeds over worldly deeds. They are as hardworking as ants. They emphasize their ease in the afterlife over their ease in this world. They are tireless. They always aim to do better. They compete with each other to carry out good deeds and they endeavor to befit God. They set an example for others around them. They do not pretend, lie or act hypocritically. They know that as God's servants they represent God. They do not deceive people.

They do not act with calumny. They do not backbite people. They do not reach a judgment without being sure. They do not try to pick out other people's faults. They do not defame others. They do not demean others. They are humble. They do not become haughty and act arrogantly. They do not make assumptions, and if they do, they are positive assumptions. Rather than pick out other people's errors, they conceal them. They keep away from inane and trivial talk. They speak as much as required. They do not exaggerate. They are measured. They do not waste anything. They are frugal. They are refined. They are particular about their cleanliness. They dress smart and clean. They avoid unnecessary luxury. They endeavor to choose what is correct, even if it is not in their interest. They pay regard to rights and to justice. They do not avoid acting as witnesses. They do not offer false testimony. They are conscientious and equitable. They speak wisely. They recommend what is beneficent, good and beautiful. They love not only humans but all living beings. They are loved and respected by others. They do not bear a grudge. They do not bear enmity. They are forgiving.

They believe foremost in peace. They respond to kindness with kindness and to iniquity in kind, when necessary. They do not plan any malignity. They oppose it to the degree that God permits them. When necessary they are courageous. They do not fear anything. They do not oppress people. They do not act excessively.

They are forbearing and empathetic. They accept apologies. They apologize when necessary. They are cheerful. They do not treat people sullenly or say unkind things. They are grateful. They do not expect gratitude. They wish for others the good things they wish for themselves. They are loyal. They are friendly. They are reliable. They are loyal. They appreciate others. They value people in line with their submission to God and their human beauty, rather than their bank accounts. They love their families and relatives. They establish friendly relations with their neighbors. They know that in order to be brothers, people do not need to have the same parents. They consider as brothers people who are sincere believers. They protect them, look out for them and have their best interest at heart.

They develop and cultivate themselves. They are sensitive to issues regarding humanity. They see their Muslim brothers' sorrows as their own sorrows. They endeavor to do good things not only for themselves but for all of humanity. They summon others to do good deeds. They announce the truth to them. The only return they expect is from God.

The time has come to make up our minds! While there is time, though there is no guarantee that we will be able to take even one more breath... Let us be aware of the value of our faith, our health and our life – that we are given in custody – before we lose them. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can do these things in future, let us

endeavor to straighten out ourselves and our life, to be aware of the unavoidable reality. If we have enough time that is...

It is not difficult to do these things or at least to endeavor to do them, to appreciate their importance and value, to behave in this way and leave a sweet smile on people's faces when we die, to be remembered with gratitude, to be bidden farewell with prayers, to welcome death with affection, to see it as a reunion with God, to attain the life that is real and not transitory, to feel eternal peace and happiness.

Death means to part with our loved ones for a short while. It is a temporary separation after which people who believe in God and do good deeds will be reunited in Paradise never to part again and will lead a life of eternal peace and happiness. Just imagine, what if death meant ceasing to exist? Who would ever have been able to see their loved ones? When a loved one dies, we feel that something is missing inside us. Our happiness can only be bittersweet. Sometimes we say if only, if only they were here, with us. If only they were here with us forever.

Is there anybody other than God to bring us together with our loved ones? Can all the money in the world, which is no remedy to death, brings back a loved one? Can it bring us together with our family, our children and our friends? Does anyone know of another place where we can get be reunited with our loved ones? Does anyone know of a greater blessing than this? Or of a suffering greater than the eternal suffering one will experience because one does not deserve to enter Paradise, or being forever apart from one's loved ones who do enter Paradise?

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

For those who believed, and their children also followed them in belief, we will have their children join them. We never fail to reward them for any work. Every person is paid for what he did.

52 Mount Sinai (Al-Toor) 21

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

They enter the gardens of Eden, together with the righteous among their parents, their spouses, and their children. The angels will enter to them from every door.

13 Thunder (Al-Ra'ad) 23

The vast majority of people do not want to die but want to exist forever. For example, if there was an elixir of eternal life, like that of the fables, they would do whatever possible to obtain it and they would take all kinds of risks. They would even risk their lives to obtain the elixir of eternal life, even if there was no guarantee that they would actually obtain it or that that elixir does really give eternal life. But they do not know that God has already promised eternity to all those who comply with His commands. An eternal and happy life for all. And you do not need to seek it on the other side of the world. **Death is not non-existence, on the contrary it is as beautiful as life, for those who carry out good deeds both for this world and for the afterlife, for those who are ready for it, for those who have lived with this reality and have prepared for it.** Let us end this book with a saying attributed to Rumi:

*Life is sleep, people wake up when dead.
Act promptly and wake up before you die.*

Mevlânâ

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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

When an affliction befalls them, they say, "We belong to God, and to Him we are returning."

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 156

Whatever good you do, God is fully aware thereof. As you prepare your provisions for the journey, the best provision is righteousness. You shall observe Me, O you who possess intelligence.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 197

Indeed, those who submit themselves absolutely to God alone, while leading a righteous life, will receive their recompense from their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve.

2 The Heifer (Al-Baqarah) 112

You should eagerly race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a Paradise whose width encompasses the heavens and the earth; it awaits the righteous.

3 The Amramites (Āli-'Imrān) 133

Wherever you are, death will catch up with you, even if you live in formidable castles.

4 Women (Al-Nesā') 78

As for those who believe and lead a righteous life, and devote themselves to their Lord, they are the dwellers of Paradise; they abide therein forever.

11 Hūd (Hūd) 23

The One who created death and life for the purpose of distinguishing those among you who would do better. He is the Almighty, the Forgiving.

67 Kingship (Al-Mulk) 2