

**Once Upon a Time There Was No Other Than
God**

Once Upon a Time There Was No Other Than God



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Throughout the world there are not many Islamic books written for children's benefit and education. Of those that exist, many deal with the concept of actions and do not emphasize the theological side of things. Here comes a book that through rational examples and simple language, tries to explain to children the existence of God. This is an extremely useful book for both teachers and parents to instill the belief in God and the wonder of his creation.

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Introduction by the Authors

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Religious books which have so far been compiled for teaching in school, have dealt mainly with various regulations of cleanliness, defilement, explanation of prayer and fasting etc. None of them have argued about theology in detail.

If one does not believe in God, religion will not make any sense to him, as the holy prophet of Islam was primarily calling people to God, saying. "Oh! Say 'there is no God except Allah' to be saved."

For this reason, the authors decided to compile an independent book about theology in order to make God familiar to children in a child friendly language and manner. Several stories have been collected in this book to make this point:

"In the creation of the universe, knowledge and prudence have been used."

For example, when we say, "Duck feathers do not wet", we mean ducks themselves not have the ability or intelligence to produce the fat to cover their feathers in. Therefore, an intelligent being has to provide them with this in order to enable them to survive on water and swim.

Additionally, breast feeding the offspring of animals, the transfer of insects from fathers to children, the bending of trees and all of these are beyond the intelligence and capability of creatures; consequently an intelligent thing must have contributed towards this – which is God.

Thus, we require all respected parents to read carefully all stories in advance, bearing in mind the rational points, which can be used as proof of the presence of knowledge in the creation of creatures, and to explain them to students.

A few stories about prayer and righteousness have been narrated here. Many people, through extraordinary powers, realize that there is a higher power and thereby believe in God. This realization comes about through their heart and inner condition – having suffered through many troubles and having done many good works. Therefore, teaching by example and through personal experience can help students to understand this in detail also.

Ducks (1)

Once, Mahdi and Ali went for a walk in a garden where some ducks were in a pond. Mahdi saw that the ducks did not get wet when they put their heads under the water. Instead, the water would slide down their backs, like pearl beads onto their colorful feathers.

Mahdi was really surprised, because he had already seen that whenever a pigeon or sparrow washed themselves in water, their feathers would always get wet.

He turned to Ali and said, “Why don’t the ducks get wet, no matter how many times they go under the water?”

Ali looked at the ducks and said, “You are right, their feathers are not wet – but I do not know why. Let us go and ask the farmer.

The farmer was a wise man; he thought for a moment about the boy’s question. Then, together with children, he went and stood beside the pond. The farmer said, “You are right, but I do not know the answer – and one who does not know a thing must not speculate. You had better ask your teacher.”

The children decided to ask their teacher the next day.

Questions

- 1) Where did Mahdi and Ali go?
- 2) What did they see in the garden?
- 3) Why didn’t the duck’s feathers get wet in the water?

Ducks (2)

The next day in class, Mahdi got up and described what he had seen. He asked, “Why don’t duck’s feathers get wet in water?”

The teacher liked Mahdi’s question and said, “Its feather are oily, that’s why they don’t become wet. Not only ducks, but all birds that swim in the water have oily feathers, otherwise their feathers would become wet and heavy, and as a result they would not easily swim or fly any longer.

I have personally seen this when it is raining heavily. Pigeons, sparrows and crows, whose feathers become wet, fly with great difficulty.

Ali got up and asked, “Who makes the duck’s feathers oily?”

The teacher turned toward the students and said, “Who can answer this question?”

One of them said, “Their owners.”

The teacher replied, “The ducks in the sea have no owner to make their feathers oily.”

All the students kept quiet and the teacher said, “God, who has created all creatures, has provided them with oily feathers to enable them to swim and fly readily.”

Questions

- 1) What did Mahdi ask and what did his teacher reply?
- 2) Who has made duck’s feathers oily?

Kids

One day while on holiday, Mahdi’s and Ali’s parents took them to a village nearby. Once they arrived, they started playing.

On one side of the village, there was a meadow in which some cattle and sheep were grazing. The children went to see them. They began to run after the kids and lambs and wanted to hug them, but they couldn’t catch them. The shepherd caught a few kids and gave one to each child.

The kids were very beautiful, yet cheeky. The children wanted to take them home, but the shepherd

said, “They are still babies and they need their mom to feed them. They are quite difficult to look after.”

Suddenly the shepherd ran off to the edge of the meadow. After a while, he called the children over. When they arrived, they saw that one of the goats had given birth and was licking its baby.

The kid could not easily stand on its feet, but after a few minutes, it went to its mother’s breast and started drinking the milk.

Mahdi turned towards Ali and said, “Ali! Look at this new born kid. How does it know that its mother’s breast is under its abdomen and has milk in it?”

Ali said, “Although we are humans and are educated, if we had not seen a cow or a sheep, we would not know where their breast is, whether it is under their abdomen or on their chest. But this new born knows where to find its mother’s breast. Where has it gained its knowledge and intelligence?”

The farmer, who was listening to their conversation, interrupted them and said, “This is God-given intelligence. If God had not given kids, lambs and other animals such an intelligence, they would have died from hunger.”

Chickens

Masoomah:

“How is it that baby chickens walk as soon as they come out of their eggs, whereas a crow’s and sparrow’s young do not do so until they grow their feathers?”

Sorayya:

“Because crows and sparrows make their nests in trees – if they walk and run as soon as they come out of their eggs, they will fall from the tree and die.”

Masoomah:

“Are you saying crows and sparrows understand that their chicks must not walk or move?”

Sorayya:

“No. They do not have such an intelligence or understanding.

Masoomah:

“So who has made things this way?”

Sorayya:

“God has given crows, sparrow and chickens everything they need from the beginning of their creation. He is aware of everything and knows that if birds and animals make their nests in trees, and if they walk too early, they are in danger of falling down. Therefore God has created their feet in a way that they cannot move at first. As baby chickens do not face such a danger, they can walk as soon as they comes out of their eggs.”

Questions

- 1) Do crow and sparrow chicks walk once they come out of their eggs?
- 2) What would happen if they could walk straight away?
- 3) Do baby chickens walk once they come out of their eggs?

Kittens

One Friday, Mahdi went to his classmate Mohammad’s home.

Mohammad told Mahdi, “Our cat has given birth to three beautiful kittens. Let us go and watch them.”

Mahdi agreed, and together they went to see them.

The cat was asleep and the kittens were feeding from their Mother’s breast. Mahdi and Mohammad watched them for a while.

Mahdi wanted to cuddle one of them.

Mohammad said, “Do not do that. Kittens do not like to be cuddled.”

Mahdi asked, “Why is its mother’s breast filled with milk once it gives birth to kittens?”

Mohammad said, “Because kitten have no teeth and cannot chew food; the best food is milk.”

Mahdi said, “But how does the cat know that its kittens cannot chew food? Or know how to produce milk for her kittens?”

Mohammad’s mother, who had been listening to the conversation, answered, “Yes, it is obvious that cats

do not possess such an understanding. And even if they did, they would not be able to produce milk in their breasts of their own will. These are the works of God. He knows new born kittens are unable to chew food, and so He has created breasts on the mother cat, which produce milk once her kitten is born.

Questions

- 1) Whose home did Mahdi go to and what did he see?
- 2) Why must a baby drink milk?
- 3) What happens if a baby eats solid food?
- 4) Who has put milk in the mothers' breast?

Electric Cables

Father said, "Mahdi, go and help this child to the other side of the road. God likes those who help and accompany others."

"Mother dear, yesterday when father and I were walking in an alley, father said that God likes those who help others. A few days ago, you too said that God likes us to be kind and good-natured. Mother, how do you know there is a God? If there is a God, why can't we see him?"

His mother laughed and said, "Look out of this window and tell me whether this cable has electricity flowing through it or not?"

Mahdi looked at the cables and left the room.

After a couple of minutes he returned and confirmed that the cables did indeed have electricity flowing through them.

Mother asked, "Where did you go?"

Mahdi said, "I went into the alley and found a bulb that was lit, so I knew the cable had electricity flowing through it."

Mother said, "But you could have seen it from this window. What was the need to see the bulb in the alley?"

Mahdi said, "Since electricity is not visible in the cable, you have to look at the bulb."

Mother laughed and said, "You have understood well. There is electricity in the cable, but it is not visible; likewise there is a God but he is not visible."

Mahdi said, "I did not see electricity in the cable, but as the bulb was alight, I knew there was electricity. You have not seen God, so how do you know he is present?"

Mother said, "We too do not see God with our eyes, but we realize that there is a power in this universe which is God, due to the wisdom that is evident in the creation of the universe, and the orderly way in which the universe is managed."

Fatimah

Mahdi:

"Father, when my classmate Masoud came here this afternoon, he was angry. I asked why he was angry and he said that he wanted to go to the cinema this afternoon, but his father didn't let him. His father said that the film was not suitable for children and was harmful for them."

I told him that a father's and mother's wisdom are greater than one's own, and that he must respect and obey his parents.

Masoud replied, "Parents sometimes say things that kids don't like to listen to. I love the cinema and I really want to go."

Father:

"In your opinion, does your mother love your younger sister, Fatimah?"

Mahdi:

"Yes, she loves her very much."

Father:

"How do you know she loves her?"

Mahdi:

"Because I see that whenever Fatimah is ill, mother feels sad. A few days ago, when she was sick, my mother was crying for her."

Father:

“Have you seen you mother quarrel with her and prevent her from doing something?”

Mahdi:

“Yes, during Fatimah’s illness, the doctor advised mother not to give Fatimah a particular bread that she liked. Mother did not give her the bread, telling Fatimah that if she ate it, her illness would get worse. But Fatimah didn’t listen and she began to cry.”

Father:

“In your opinion, what does Fatimah think? Does she think mother is not good to her because she did not give her bread? Don’t you think she would say that that was nonsense?”

Mahdi:

“Yes, Fatimah might think mother was not good to her, but she would be wrong. It would in fact be the opposite. It is because mother loves her so much that she does not want her to eat the bread, as it will make her illness worse.”

Father:

“Parents’ actions towards their children are like the refusal to give bread to Fatimah in her illness. You understand that eating bread is harmful for Fatimah, but Masoud does not understand that films for adults are harmful for children.”

“Tomorrow in school, tell Masoud that parents stay awake at night to look after their children, and feel terrible sorrow at their uneasiness during illness. They try hard day and night to make them comfortable, so how could they say something to their children which is not based on benevolence or sympathy towards them?”

Truthfulness

Once, Mahdi and his father went for a walk. On their way they saw two kids playing. One of them said, “Do not lie, for if you do, God will send you to hell.”

Mahdi’s father stepped forward and said, “Do not say such a thing; God will not send anybody to hell. It is your actions that will do so.”

When they left, Mahdi asked his father, “I did not understand what you said. What do you mean by saying that lies will lead people into hell?”

His father said, “What would happen if somebody ate poisonous food or drugs?”

Mahdi said, “They would become poisoned and ill.”

His father said, “OK, what happens when one eats healthy and nutritious food?”

Mahdi replied, “Their condition will be healthy and strong.”

Mahdi’s father said, “Sins and good deeds are similar. If someone commits a sin, it is like taking poison. Of course, the poison will make him ill. If you act virtuously, it is like eating healthy, nutritious food – and so you will be in good health.”

“Therefore God does not take the liar to hell, but the lie itself does, because God is kinder to people than their parents. He never wishes harm for us, but He guides us like a doctor who gives advice on maintaining sound health. For example, he may advise one not to drink icy water after hot tea, or to brush one’s teeth every day. Therefore, God wishes us to perform certain duties in order to be comfortable in this world as well as the next.”

Cats and Chickens

One day Mahdi asked his father, “Dear father, our teacher was talking about obeying parents’ instructions today. He was saying that it is obligatory for children to listen to their parents’ instructions, and respect them. Anybody who does not behave so is sinful.”

His father replied, “Yes. That’s right.”

Mahdi asked, “Why must children obey their parents?”

Father said, “Have a look at this hen. When the cat approaches its chicks, she intervenes and distances the cat from her chicks. Do you know why?”

Mahdi replied, “Yes, because she loves her chicks and wants to protect them from being eaten by the cat.”

Father said, “All animals behave so towards their children; when they are in trouble whether big or small, they try to protect them from it. Humans are the same. When people realise their children are in danger, they will quickly put a stop to it. A parents’ wisdom is greater than a child’s; parents have a better

understanding of harm and benefit. Children must listen to their parent's advice in order to prevent themselves from getting into difficulty and danger.”

The Thirsty Dog

Mahdi told his father when he came home, “Dear father, while Soheila was washing her hands today, she suddenly slipped and fell in the pool. Her mother was not at home, but their neighbor, an old woman, jumped into the pool and brought her out.”

His father said, “Do you think their neighbour did a good thing?”

Mahdi replied, “Yes, she did. But the water was cold, and now she is ill.”

His father said, “My dear son, on such occasion's one must not worry about the inconvenience one may experience or what the outcome may be. In this case, it seems as though something was drawing the lady towards helping.

People do not always calculate and act according to that which benefits them only; they sometimes put their own life in danger. It often happens that someone going through hardship may have food and is hungry, but nevertheless they give it to a poor person or a hungry animal.

They does not immediately benefit from such an act, but their affinity to good works encourages them to act in this way.”

Mahdi's father said that once, his own father had listened to one of the great men that had travelled to Qom with some companions. The weather was hot, the time was about noon and they were a few miles from their destination. One of his servants, who was a butler, lagged behind the caravan. He noticed that a dog was following him, exhausted due to heat and thirst.

He thought he could quench the dog's thirst with his water.

He pitied the dog and decided to give it some water, but he noticed that he had nothing but his master's cup to feed it with. If he quenched the dog's thirst with this cup, he would be punished severely, and would be at risk of imprisonment or exile.

Nevertheless, he could not tolerate depriving it of water, so he fed the dog and hurried ahead to catch up with the caravan. This butler said that since then, his worldly condition had changed for the better, and all his difficulties have been resolved. Everything became easy for him, and it looked like something or someone was helping him. Of course, I had no doubt that it was God's reward for him treating that

animal with kindness. Since then, he has progressed from being a butler to attaining a high level in the ministry.

Mahdi's father continued, "If someone acts righteously, it may benefit them in this world too, but we must act righteously only for God's satisfaction and happiness, and must not expect a reward."

One day, a man came across a tired, thirsty dog. He wanted to help the dog, and so tied his turban like a rope to his hat, and lowered the hat into the well. He retrieved some water and fed it to the thirsty dog. The Prophet informed us that all of the man's sins were then forgiven.

A Flower

Once on holiday, Mahdi, his parents and his brother went to a garden for a walk. On their way back, Mahdi was keen to return home quickly, as he had not done his homework.

His father asked, "Why did you not bring along your school bag and do your work in while we were at the garden?"

Mahdi said, "I wanted to do it when we returned."

Father said, "It is important to do your work first before you play. Otherwise you will get too tired to do your homework. But if you do your homework first and then play, when you remember you have no further work to do, you will be able to enjoy yourself fully."

Mahdi and his family returned home quickly, and Mahdi began his work.

When he was looking for his pencil in his bag, he saw a piece of paper on which there was a painting of a very beautiful flower. He wondered where it had come from. He then took it to his brother Hasan, saying, "Look, I found this painting in my bag, but I do not know who has put it there."

Hassan said, "Maybe you painted it, but you have forgotten."

Mahdi said, "No, I have not."

Hassan said, "Where do you think it came from then?"

Mahdi said, "At first I thought perhaps Ali had painted it and put it there, as he was ill today and did not come with us to the garden. But he does not go to school or know how to paint. It must be an expert's work. Look how beautifully the branches, leaves and flowers have been painted. When you see it you think it is a real flower."

While they were talking, their mother came in and gave Mahdi a note.

When Mahdi read the note, he suddenly said, “Did I not say it was painted by an expert; look, Hassan my uncle came to visit Ali and he painted this for me and put it in my bag.”

Walking in the Garden

One Friday, Hassan, Mahdi, Ali and their parents visited the same garden they had gone the week before.

It was a beautiful and pleasant place. They spread a rug under a tree and sat down. This time the children brought their school bags as their parents advised.

They started doing their homework.

Whenever they tired from reading or writing, they would play for a while and again return to their work. When they had finished their work, they went for a walk with their father.

On the far side of the garden, Mahdi saw a small pine tree next to a big one. The trunk of the small pine was slightly bent to the right.

Mahdi turned to his father and said, “Why is this tree bent to the right, whereas this pine tree is straight? It looks like someone has bent it to one side.”

His father replied, “No, nobody has bent it, but it has bent itself. Like us, plants need water and sunshine to survive and flourish. This small tree has bent to the right in order for its leaves to be able to reach the sunlight. Otherwise the small tree would have stayed straight underneath the big tree.”

Mahdi said, “Do trees have the intelligence to realize sunshine is necessary for their survival? Or do they have eyes in order to see which side the sun is?”

His father replied, “Trees do not have wisdom and intelligence like human beings, but God has created them in a way that allows them to bend themselves towards the sun where little sunlight is available.”

Mahdi pondered, and after a little thinking said to Hassan, “Trees and plants actually have no wisdom and intelligence. This must be God’s work.”

Hassan said, “Yes, it is so. These things help us understand that the world has a God. Likewise, when you found that painting in your bag, you said that an intelligent one must have painted it, as it was not feasible for it to be made by one who did not have the wisdom to do so.

When one see this, one realizes that a wise and intelligent thing has created this tree to be able to bend towards the sunlight. That thing is God.”

Photographic Camera

One day, Mahdi, Hassan and Ali went to Masoud’s house. While they were playing, Masoud’s elder brother came in and took some photographs. When the children returned to home, Mahdi wanted their father to buy them a camera.

His father agreed, but as he was very busy, he did not have time to buy it. Every night, when their father came home, they would ask him whether he had bought the camera or not.

As their father saw how badly they wanted a camera and that he did not have time to buy them one, he quickly went to their uncle and asked him to buy them one.

Their uncle accepted and the children were very pleased. Day and night they would go to him, asking whether he had bought it or not.

Many days passed, and their uncle too did not have time to buy the camera.

The children became angry and disappointed, and did not ask him any longer.

One day, their uncle visited their home and called them to give them the camera he had bought.

They were overjoyed and were asking themselves what had happened. Their uncle had bought them the camera, even though they had not reminded him for so long.

Mahdi said, “After today’s morning prayer, I prayed to God for our uncle to buy us the camera.”

Their mother heard their conversation, and was so pleased with Mahdi that she said, “God is kinder to us than our parents; if we obey him and sincerely ask for something, he will give it to us.”

Ahmad said, “Mother, once I asked God to give me a knife. Why did he not give it to me?”

Mother replied, “If you asked me to give you a knife, I would not, as it could cut your hand and would be harmful for you. God is kinder and more concerned about your welfare than your mother. If you pray for something bad from God, he will not give it you.”

A few days earlier, Mahdi’s brother, Ali, got ill, and the doctor was called. They received a prescription and bought some medication. They gave the medicine to Ali gradually as the doctor had instructed. At

night his fever increased. He was groaning, and Mahdi, who was staying in the same room, pitied him and became very upset.

Eventually Mahdi fell asleep. Early in the morning, when he woke up, he saw his mother supplicating after her prayer.

Mahdi then made his ablutions and prayed also. He then asked his mother, “Dear mother, how is Ali?”

She said, “He is fine, God willing.”

Mahdi said. “Mother, what does supplication mean?”

His mother replied, “My dear son, since childhood I would always observe my mother and father supplicating to God when they had trouble with work, and they would ask God to remove their difficulty. Since then, whenever my work gets too difficult or I have a problem, I pray to God.”

Mother continued, “I and all who know God, see that whenever we have troubles in this world, or whenever we become completely disappointed in life, there is only one who can help us remove our troubles, and that is God.

When I am alone with nothing except nature around me, I feel He is with me.”

Mahdi said, “Maybe it is just a feeling.”

His mother replied, “I have asked Him several times and He has always given to me – that cannot simply be a figment of the imagination. One must ask Him not just once, but consistently, in order for us to reach certainty about who God is and experience the effect that prayer has on us.”

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