

# MY STORIES WITH ATHEISTS

THE DOUBTFUL & OVER-THINKERS

WITH APPROACHES TO CONVINCING & GUIDING THEM

Shaykh Ahmad Al-Tayyar

PUBLISHERS DETAILS

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## Introduction

Praise be to Allah, and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, and all those who follow his path. To proceed:

Discussions and debates have taken place between me and some skeptics in matters of faith, as well as with a number of former Muslims who have become atheists due to various reasons. I recorded these discussions at the time to draw lessons and reflections from their lives and stories, to highlight the shallowness of their doubts, and to demonstrate how easily those who are sincere among them can be convinced. They possess no sound argument, nor do they hold firm and unwavering convictions. Rather, they harbor doubts and unsettling questions that Satan casts into their hearts due to their distance from Allah.

**These stories serve as profound messages to the following audiences:**

1. **The confused, the skeptics, and the atheists:** Let them take lessons from those who preceded them and avoid becoming a cautionary tale for others. With Allah's permission, these stories are sufficient to remove their doubts and answer their questions, provided they are seeking the truth.
2. **Preachers and intellectuals:** These stories offer guidance on engaging with such individuals with kindness and gentleness, understanding their thought processes, and addressing their doubts effectively. Often, these discussions do not require much time. For instance, the second story revolves around a young woman who spent two years in doubt, atheism, suffering, and corruption. My conversation with her did not exceed an hour and a half, yet it was sufficient to guide her, bring her back to repentance, and firmly convince her of the truth of the religion.
3. **The general public:** These accounts aim to strengthen their conviction in their faith and creed, warn them against the causes of spiritual decline that affected these individuals, and encourage them to pray to Allah for steadfastness in religion and sound belief.

#### 4. **Those afflicted by all forms of obsessive thoughts:**

- OCD - Obsessive-compulsive disorder (Waswâs al-qahri)<sup>1</sup>
- Obsessive fears of being possessed by jinn.

Additionally, I have included discussions between myself and individuals suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorders, both psychological and religious, among others.

I ask Allah, the Exalted, to bless this humble effort and modest work, to make it beneficial, and to accept it sincerely for His sake. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, Ever-Near, and Responsive.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dar Al-Hijaz Publishing House. I have observed their excellent treatment, integrity, and professionalism in their efforts to disseminate what benefits Muslims in both their religious and worldly affairs. They give special care to books that adhere to the methodology of the righteous predecessors.

Finally, I express my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to reviewing this book and proofreading it for spelling and grammatical accuracy. May Allah reward them and bless them.

Ahmad Al-Tayyar  
Author info...

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<sup>1</sup> Waswâs al-qahri, meaning “overwhelming whisperings” in Arabic, refers to a religious manifestation of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) commonly found among Muslims. It involves irrational fears and compulsive behaviours related to acts of worship, such as excessive repetition of ablution or prayer, driven by the fear of inadequacy. Known in clinical literature as scrupulosity.

## Story 1: My Encounter with the Student Doubting Religion

I entered a high school classroom to deliver a beneficial talk and share a meaningful story. As I began speaking and delving into my words, a student interrupted me in a peculiar and striking manner, saying:

“Teacher, in your previous lecture, you mentioned that the West does not wish for our growth and prosperity. Yet here we see that they have helped the Syrians and stood by them. So, you’re mistaken.”

I asked, “Is this a question?”

He replied, “No, it’s a piece of information I wanted to correct for you!”

I said, “Thank you for your input. I’ve heard your point, will you allow me to share mine?”

He responded, “Of course.”

I then asked, “How long has it been since the Syrian people started seeking freedom and dignity?” The other students all replied loudly, “Two years.”

I continued, “What tangible assistance have they been given that we can see?”<sup>2</sup>

He remained silent.

I added, “Didn’t they intervene in Mali directly and kill people who sought to implement Sharia?”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The author references the Syrian people’s pursuit of freedom and dignity, which began with the peaceful protests of 2011 and escalated into a prolonged conflict due to violent crackdowns. This serves as an example of the inconsistency in international support for such struggles.

<sup>3</sup> The mention of Mali refers to the intervention by France and other Western nations under the pretext of combating terrorism. The author critiques these actions, arguing that they resulted in civilian casualties and the suppression of those advocating for Islamic governance, exposing contradictions in the proclaimed support for freedom.



He said, “Yes.”

I asked, “Then why didn’t they intervene in Syria if they were truly honest and supportive of the people’s desires?”

He could not respond.

After the class, I left feeling puzzled by his questioning style and approach. I inquired about him from his teachers, and they all described him as someone who often asks skeptical questions about religion and faith. Some labeled him as an atheist, while others resorted to insults and harsh judgments.

I asked, “Has anyone had a friendly discussion with him?” They replied, “No, except for the student counselor, who gave him general advice.”

One day, I sent a student to call him, but he refused, saying that he was busy with his classes. I waited an hour, then went to him personally and asked him to come. He was visibly nervous, so I started talking to him on the way to my office, joking and lightening the mood. His anxiety eased somewhat.

When we arrived at my office, I had prepared coffee and water for him. I welcomed him warmly and joked with him a little. Then, I began by praising what I knew of his good qualities, such as his cheerful demeanor at times and his courage to express his thoughts. I told him that this is a trait found only in the strong.

I then said, “Would you allow me to have a brotherly discussion with you, based on goodwill and mutual respect? I hold love and respect for you, and if you’re not comfortable with this, I won’t force you.”

He replied, “I am fully ready and open to it.”

I said, “Let’s base our discussion on fundamental principles, and we’ll set any resulting details for later. Let me explain how I’d like us to proceed: we’ll use reason and logic to guide us, and we’ll make a pact with ourselves to accept whatever we find convincing, and to reject whatever doesn’t

convince us. I'll be more delighted by your objections than by your agreements because I don't want flattery. If you try to deceive me or flatter me, you are only deceiving yourself". The door was shut, and phones off, it was about 10 a.m. when I began.

I asked, "Do you agree with me that anyone who reads a book must have a purpose for reading it?"

He replied, "Yes."

I continued, "So, what do you read, and why?"

He said: "I read works by Abdullah Al-Qasimi<sup>4</sup> - *and others who hold deviant ideas* - I read them to understand their views and perspectives.

I replied: "SubhanAllah! Your mind is precious, you filled it with things that lack quality and authenticity, placing in it what does not belong there? The mind, when filled with things incompatible with its nature, becomes corrupted and ruined, leading to psychological disorders and destructive problems. Look at your car: every compartment is designated for a specific purpose - one for oil, another for water, and another for fuel.

Allah created the mind and sent down to it what suits its nature - the Qur'an and the pure revelation. If you fill it with the garbage of misguided thoughts, the mind becomes disabled from performing its intended function. You'd be like someone who fills their car with water instead of gasoline."

I then asked him, "During your reading and exploration, what is the argument of those who claim that nature is the creator and originator?"

He hesitated in responding and eventually said, "They have no argument; it's nothing but misconceptions. The Creator is Allah."

I decided to start from the very basics with him, focusing on foundational principles. Once those were firmly established, we could move to secondary matters. This foundational understanding, recognizing Allah's existence

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<sup>4</sup> Abdullah al-Qasimi (1907-1996) was a Saudi writer who initially defended Islam but later deviated to Atheism & skepticism.

with absolute certainty as the Creator and the Provider, resolves most doubts and issues. While he outwardly acknowledged Allah's existence and His dominion, I was not convinced of his inner conviction. After all, can someone who doubts religion, the Prophethood, and the unseen truly believe in a Lord who commanded and called to these matters??.

I said to him: "But let's consider their perspective. Let's hear them out before judging them. They say they only believe in what they can see and perceive, and nature is what they can see and experience."

So, I said: "Let's ask them this: Is nature created or the creator?"

If they answer, "It is created," we ask: "Then who created it?"

If they claim, "It is the creator and originator," we follow up: "Is this nature tangible or intangible?"

If they say, "It is tangible," we reply:

"Where is it? Why can't you perceive or sense it? What is its location and its attributes?"

If they say, "It is intangible," we respond:

"Don't you claim to only believe in what is tangible and perceivable?"

And yet, we continue: "This nature that supposedly possesses the ability to create and bring things into existence, and has perfected its creation - does it have attributes we can recognize and define?"

If they say, "No," we reply:

"Then, this is nothingness, and such a thing does not exist in reality. You've contradicted yourselves."

If they say, "Yes, it has attributes," we reply:

"Then ultimately, we and you both acknowledge the existence of a great Originator who possesses the most perfect names and attributes. However, you choose to call it 'nature,' while this so-called nature has provided no proof of its existence. It has not sent messengers to explain its reality to people, nor has it revealed books to clarify its purpose and essence."

“As for us, we believe in a Lord who sent messengers to guide us, revealed books to enlighten us, and established clear evidence for His existence and truth. So, between us and you, who is more deserving of salvation and hope?”

After this detailed explanation, which he completely agreed with, I asked him: “This great Lord who created us and created the entire universe, can it be possible that He would leave us without clarifying what He wants from us and what is required of us?”

He replied, “No, but this contradicts logic. Isn’t He the one who created us? Why would He need to send us messengers?”

I said to him, “Consider the airplanes manufactured by America. If they were sent to us, and America said, ‘That’s sufficient; we won’t send experts or technicians to explain how to operate them,’ would that make sense?”

He replied, “No.”

I continued, “Similarly, Allah the Exalted created us, brought us into existence, and sent us ‘experts,’ who are the messengers, to explain how to deal with ourselves, the vast universe, and with each other. Isn’t this the logic you believe in and the principle we agreed to return to?”

He said, “Yes, and I am entirely convinced by what you’ve said. However, you claim that whenever Allah sends a messenger, He brings a new law and abrogates the previous one. This either implies that the earlier laws were flawed, or why wouldn’t God suffice with just one messenger? I also believe, along with all nations, that we should live in friendship and brotherhood. What you are suggesting is the cause of conflict and hatred.”

I said to him, “You have accustomed me to your kindness, humility, and fairness, such that if something doesn’t convince you, you tell me openly, and if something does, you agree without hesitation or evasion. I admire this beautiful quality, which is rare among many people.”

He smiled at my words and said, “And I remain committed to that.”

I said to him, “Do you remember the first mobile phone that came out?”

He replied, “Yes.”

I said, “Imagine that the manufacturer of that phone said to us: ‘I will suffice with the experts and technicians I sent to you and the manual that explains how to use it. For any future phones I create, I will refer you back to the previous experts and the first manual.’ Does that make sense?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “You’re right. If they did that, it would be selfishness and a lack of wisdom.”

“Likewise,” I continued, “Allah the Exalted sent the first messenger who was appropriate for the people he was sent to. As the years passed, times and people changed, so it was fitting that Allah would send messengers suited to the needs of each era.”

“What do you think about a brother marrying his sister?” I asked.

He said, “That’s impossible.”

I said, “Do you know that the children of Adam married their sisters? This was out of necessity because there was no other way for humanity to multiply. Would it make sense for this arrangement to continue indefinitely?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “For this reason, Allah sent messengers who changed matters that were no longer suitable for the times while preserving universal principles, such as belief in Allah and the foundations of faith, which remain consistent across all eras and prophets.”

The prophet ﷺ said, “*The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one.*” (Agreed upon)

I added, "The term 'paternal brothers' to siblings who share the same father but have different mothers. Similarly, the essence of their religion is one, which is Tawheed (monotheism) even if the branches of their laws differ."

Then I asked, "Do you agree with me?"

He replied, "Yes."

I said, "Look at the far side of the wall." He looked over, and I continued, "Do you see the distance between its two ends?"

He replied, "Yes."

I said, "Do you realize that we've already covered two-thirds of the distance in our discussion? Look how far this respectful and beautiful dialogue has brought us, which is something we all agree upon. How then could it be said that you oppose, doubt, and object when, in reality, you agree with most of what I'm saying?"

He laughed, the laugh of someone who is both impressed and delighted.

Then I asked, "Shall I step out for a short while and give you some time to rest?"

He said, "Yes."

I stepped out, noticing the sweat pouring from him. I could sense his anxiety and tension, and I firmly believe it stemmed from the inner struggle within him. He was holding on to certain ideas he considered self-evident, now being unraveled, one by one.

When I returned, I saw on his face signs of calm and relief.

I welcomed him warmly and praised his patience, intellect, mentality, and sincere search for the truth.

I said, "Now we've covered two-thirds of the journey. Only a small portion remains. Haven't we already agreed on the existence of Allah, His sending

of messengers, the diversity of their missions, and their coming for our benefit?”

He replied, “Yes.”

I said, “Then the final step is the last messenger and prophet, Muhammad ﷺ”.

At that point, the difficult and intense discussion began. He was the one who asked me about it first, the origin of his doubts, and the source of the challenges he posed to his teachers and classmates. These questions, in his view, revealed contradictions that he demanded answers to. However, the sequence of our dialogue had paved the way to convince him and diminish his doubts and misconceptions.

I grabbed some paper and a pen to facilitate the discussion, as writing often aids in understanding and absorption.

I asked him, “**Do you know what some of the most important missions of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were?** His mission included many vital tasks, among the greatest of which are:

1. **Teaching us about ourselves** - how to understand and deal with ourselves and with others.
2. **Teaching us about the universe** - how it was created, which is a matter more complex than the first. Allah says:

*‘The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind.’ (Ghafir: 57)*

3. **Teaching us about what happens after death** - the unseen matters of the afterlife, which is even more complex than the first two.”

I continued, “**Let’s begin with the first point.** Would you agree that one of the most challenging things in life is dealing with yourself?”

He replied, “Yes.”

I said, “You’re right, and that’s why universities and fields of study have been established to examine this very subject, understanding ourselves and how to navigate our inner world.

Our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent by Allah to teach us how to deal with ourselves and others. That’s why Allah prescribed prayer for us and revealed the Qur’an. These are the nourishment of the soul and spirit. The Prophet taught us morals and values. He taught us how to pardon and have mercy.

Look at the elderly, you’ll find that many of them have amazing peace of mind and inner tranquility.

Have you ever come across an elderly person who feels anxiety and unhappiness in their heart?”

He said, “No.”

I replied, “That’s because our Prophet ﷺ taught them what brings peace to their hearts - faith in the divine decree (qadaa and qadar), contentment with Allah’s will, and turning to Him in both ease and hardship.

**As for the universe**, Allah mentions in His Book about the universe, its vastness and magnificence:

*‘And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander.’ (Adh-Dhariyat: 47)*

Astronomers have proven that the universe continues to expand at every moment.

Allah informed us about the sun and the moon and their precise orbits. He also told us about the mountains and how they were firmly established. Allah says:

*‘Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and then We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe? And We placed within the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with them, and We made therein [mountain] passes [as] roads that they might be guided. And We made the sky a protected ceiling, but they, from its signs, are turning away. And it is*



*He who created the night and the day and the sun and the moon; all [heavenly bodies] in an orbit are swimming.’ (Al-Anbiya: 30–33).*

I asked, “Do you agree with this?”

He said, “No!”

I replied, “I appreciate your honesty, but tell me why not?”

He said, “Astronomers have proven that the universe came from nothing, in what is called in physical cosmology the ‘Big Bang Theory.’”

I thought to myself, If only you and others like you, blessed with intellect, used it wisely. How can someone raised among Muslims consider this a problem?

So I answered him and said, “This theory you mention the ‘Big Bang Theory’ I watched a documentary about it eight years ago, back when you were still in elementary school. I summarized it in a notebook I have, and you’ll find that our pure and noble religion already affirmed its principles.”

Allah said:

*“Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and then We separated them...” (Al-Anbiya: 30).*

The scholars explained that this refers to the heavens and the earth being one solid mass, and then Allah split them apart, creating the planets, the sun, and the earth.

So, I asked him, “Do you agree with me now?”

He said, “Yes, but I still have two issues. **One of them** is the narration about the sun not setting until it prostrates, which seems to conflict with what modern science and our own eyes observe.”

I replied, “What you mentioned refers to the hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ said to Abu Dharr when the sun set: ‘Do you know where the sun sets?’ Abu

Dharr replied, "Allah and His Apostle know best." The Prophet ﷺ said, "It goes and prostrates underneath (Allah's) Throne." (Bukhari)

It is important to clarify the meaning of 'prostration' here. Scholars explain that the prostration of each creation is in accordance with its nature. This does not mean that the sun prostrates in the human sense, with limbs or physical gestures. The linguistic meaning of 'sujud' (prostration) includes submission and humility, as Ibn Manzur and others have mentioned. This interpretation aligns with Allah's statement in Surah Al-Hajj:

*"Do you not see [i.e., know] that to Allāh prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified. And he whom Allāh humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor. Indeed, Allāh does what He wills."* (Al-Hajj: 18).

Ibn Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) said: "Allah informs us that He alone deserves to be worshiped with no partner, for everything prostrates to His greatness, willingly or unwillingly. *The prostration of every creation is specific to its nature.*"

Thus, the prostration of the sun, birds, and animals is their submission to Allah's power, control, and decree.

"As for the sun's prostration beneath the Throne, we must understand that the sun has two types of prostration:

1. General and constant prostration: This is its submission along with all other creations, as mentioned in the verses in Surah An-Nahl and Surah Al-Hajj.
2. Specific prostration: This occurs when it aligns beneath the Throne and prostrates specifically under it, as mentioned in the hadith.

In both cases, the sun's prostration does not resemble that of humans, nor does it require the sun to stop moving when it aligns beneath the Throne.

He said to me, ‘With this explanation, my mind does not find any contradiction or reason to reject it. But why weren we not taught this by our teachers when we asked them about it?’

I asked, ‘Did your teachers claim that the sun prostrates as humans do?’

He replied, ‘No, but they would say, “We believe in it and leave its exact nature to Allah.”’

I said, ‘The important thing is that I have clarified the correct explanation for you. And above every person of knowledge is the All-Knowing (Allah).’

He then said, ‘**The second issue** is that it was mentioned there are seven heavens, yet we can only see one sky.’

I replied, ‘It is well-known that astronomers unanimously agree that they have not fully comprehended the vastness of the universe, not even a fraction of it. What you know of the immense galaxies and their abundance all lie within the realm of the first heaven. So how can you assert there are no heavens above ours?’

If we have agreed that Allah is the Truth, then what He tells us is also true. He has informed us that there are seven heavens, as He said:

*“It is Allāh who has created seven heavens and of the earth, the like of them. [His] command descends among them so you may know that Allāh is over all things competent and that Allāh has encompassed all things in knowledge.”* (At-Talaq: 12)

Reflect also on the wisdom Allah mentioned in creating them with such vastness and number: *‘...so you may know that Allah is over all things competent and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge.’*”

“I said, ‘So, have we agreed now?’

He replied, ‘Yes.’

I said, **‘The last issue remains, which is about the unseen matters after death.’**

He said, ‘Yes, and this is the most complex matter for me. I find it extremely difficult to believe much of it.’

I said, ‘The matter is very simple. But what do you think if we establish a rule we both agree upon, and then dive into this point afterward?’

He said, ‘Go ahead.’

I took out my phone, removed the battery, and said, ‘What do you think if you walked in on your classmates who were arguing passionately about why the device only has four wires and not five? Would you consider their question valid?’

He said, ‘Of course not. That’s a silly question.’

I asked, ‘Why?’

He said, ‘Because their question wouldn’t provide any meaningful benefit.’

I said, ‘So we agree that any question for which the answer holds no benefit is an invalid question?’

He said, ‘Yes.’

I added, ‘Let’s clarify further: If they directed their question to someone who is not specialized in the matter, the question would be even less valid. However, if they directed the question to the manufacturer, it might hold some merit. Do you agree?’

He replied, ‘Yes.’

I said, ‘Now that we have agreed on this principle, share your concerns with me.’

He said to me, “I find it hard to believe in some of the unseen matters, like the punishment of the grave, its constriction and expansion, because when we dig a grave, we see nothing of this!”

I replied, “Have you ever thought of dismantling your phone and investigating every single part of it?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “Similarly, the unseen matters are not for you to dissect and analyze in their fine details when they haven’t yet occurred.

And don’t forget that you yourself established the principle that any question with no practical benefit is an invalid question. So, what do you gain by occupying your mind and thoughts with things that yield no benefit and have no impact on your daily life? Instead, focus your intellect and energy on what will benefit you.”

Then I added, “There’s an important point here: Didn’t you agree with me earlier that you believe in Allah and His Messenger?”

He said, “Yes.”

I said, “Then it is necessary for you to believe in everything Allah and His Messenger have informed us about.

The capacity of the human intellect is limited. It is incapable of grasping the unseen in its entirety, its secrets and details. On the Day of Judgment, Allah will grant believers an enhanced intellectual and physical capacity through which they will understand these matters.

Moreover, Allah must distinguish between His true servants who love their Lord and the corrupt disbelievers. That is why He commanded us to have faith in the unseen, to differentiate between the believer who trusts and affirms the unseen and the disbeliever who denies it. Otherwise, if the unseen were made visible, faith would lose its virtue and significance, as it would merely be based on what is seen and evident.”

And finally, hasn't Allah provided us with clear evidence, signs, and visible proofs within ourselves and in the universe around us?

Reflect on His saying:

*"And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]. And in yourselves. Then will you not see?"* [Adh-Dhariyat: 20-21]

And ponder His statement:

*"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allāh has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and earth are signs for a people who use reason."* [Al-Baqarah: 164]

Aren't these clear signs sufficient to affirm the Oneness of Allah and to believe in what He has revealed?

Isn't it Allah's right to conceal some matters from us and make them part of the unseen in order to test and examine who is sincere?

Imagine a teacher giving you a test and including a particularly challenging question at the end to distinguish the exceptional student from the average one, would you blame the teacher for this?

He replied, "No."

I said, "Allah, to whom belongs the highest example, has made the path of belief in Him easy for us. He sent down an eloquent and miraculous Book and sent us a trustworthy and sincere Messenger. Is it then your right to object when He keeps certain matters hidden from you to test and try you?"

Then I said, "Let me establish five principles for you:

**The first principle:** Allah, who created us and knows us best, has the right to conceal certain matters from us for our benefit and has promised us knowledge of them after death, such as the constriction and expansion of the

grave, and the punishment or bliss therein. Would you not agree that this is His right?"

He said, "Yes."

**Second Principle:** Allah has obligated us to believe in the unseen, but He has not obligated us to question its details. If an elderly person died without knowing the specifics of what happens after death, would Allah punish him?

He replied, "No."

I said, "Then do you agree with me on that?"

He replied, "Yes."

**Third Principle:** If you come across something from religion or the unseen that you find strange or difficult to understand, approach it step by step with logical reasoning, and it will become easier for you to comprehend.

I will give you an example: Imagine that you and I traveled back in time two hundred years. Then I said to you, "I will show you something in my hand that displays what is happening on the other side of the world, and I will talk to people there. Would you believe me?"

He said, "No."

I said, "But what if I started explaining to you logically step by step? I could say, for example, that in twenty years, people will discover a substance that produces energy, generating electricity. Then, they will invent a device called a telephone, which you can hold to your ear and use to speak to others through wires stretched over long distances. After that, they will invent a device that captures natural images and transmits them live. Finally, inventions will advance further, leading to a device with a built-in camera, enabling you to talk to people and see them no matter where they are in the world.

Would you, after hearing this explanation step by step, be more inclined to believe the original claim?"

He replied, “Yes.”

I said, “Similarly, if you approach matters of religion and the unseen with this logical progression, they will become easier to understand and accept.”

“For instance, when people question matters like predestination, saying, ‘If Allah has written everything about me, then this means I am compelled to commit sins, and I have no choice. So how can He punish me for something He already decreed?’ This confusion often arises because people fail to analyze it logically step by step.

So, here’s a simple and clear progression: Isn’t Allah the one who created us and knows everything, including what is hidden? Doesn’t He know what we will do in terms of good and bad deeds? Of course, He does. And if He knows this, isn’t the One who knows the future capable of recording His knowledge? Absolutely.

That is why Muhammad ibn Sirin (may Allah have mercy on him) said, *‘What do people deny about Allah knowing something and then writing it down?’*

Yes, Allah knew what would happen and wrote it down in the Preserved Tablet. The meaning of “*writing*” here is not imposing or forcing, but rather recording His knowledge.

If Allah is capable of knowing what will happen, is He not also capable of writing his knowledge? So, how does this imply compulsion on your part to sin or to act in a certain way?

For example, if Allah knew you would go to Riyadh, buy alcohol, enter a store, and steal, and He wrote this knowledge down in the Preserved Tablet, does this contradict logic in any way?

Now, let’s take an example of what you found difficult to grasp about the **punishment or blessing of the grave**, and how it happens even though we see no visible traces on the body. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “When a person sleeps, they experience



pleasure or pain in their dreams, and this happens to both the soul and the body. Sometimes, the effects are even visible on the body of the sleeper in the form of sweating or other reactions, even though they are lying in one place he dreams that someone strikes him, and he wakes up feeling the pain in his body. Or he dreams that he eats something delicious, and he wakes up with its taste in his mouth - this is something that occurs

If a sleeping person experiences pleasure or torment in their soul and body in such a way that they can feel it, while someone next to them does not perceive it, then why would it be denied for the deceased? For instance, a sleeping person might scream from intense pain or fear while asleep, and a person awake beside them may hear the screams. Similarly, a sleeper might recite Quran, engage in remembrance (dhikr), or respond to a question while asleep, and the awake person can hear these words, even though the sleeper's eyes are closed and they are unaware of their surroundings.

The same principle applies to the state of the deceased, about whom the Prophet ﷺ said that they hear the footsteps of those walking away after burial. He said, "You are no more capable of hearing what I say than they are."

However, one must not claim that the pleasure or torment experienced by the deceased is akin to the pleasure or torment experienced by a sleeper in a dream. Rather, the pleasure and torment of the deceased are more complete, profound, and real. This comparison is only given to demonstrate the possibility of such experiences." (End of Ibn Taymiyyah's words.)

This logical progression and analogy are extremely helpful.

**Fourth Principle:** Understand that the intellect is limited and cannot comprehend matters beyond its capacity. Returning to the previous example, if a man living two hundred years ago was told, "We will show you something that we hold in our hands that displays events happening on the other side of the Earth, and we will talk to people there," would he believe it? Of course not, he would consider it impossible.

Yet, today we regard this as one of the simplest realities. Therefore, do not allow your intellect to attempt to grasp everything beyond its reach. Those who try to do so often fall into mental illnesses and overwhelming doubts,

leading many to despair or even commit suicide. This is the natural consequence of turning away from the guidance of Allah and His laws, which are perfectly suited to human nature.

**And here are examples of famous intellectuals who ended their lives through suicide:**

1. Isma'il Adham: An Egyptian writer who earned a doctorate in mathematics from Russia and authored the book "Why I Am an Atheist." He committed suicide in 1940.
2. Tayseer Al-Sbool: A Jordanian novelist, known for his novel "You, As of Today." He took his own life before reaching the age of 40.
3. Arwa Saleh: An Egyptian writer and political activist.
4. Inayat Al-Zayyat: An Egyptian writer and activist.
5. Ernest Hemingway: The famous American novelist and Nobel Prize winner who ended his life by shooting himself with his own rifle.
6. Dale Carnegie: One of the most renowned American authors, famous for his best-selling books on interpersonal skills and self-improvement, such as "How to Win Friends and influence People" and "Stop Worrying and Start Living." His books have been translated into many languages, yet he too ended his life tragically.<sup>5</sup>

And the list goes on. You are neither more intelligent nor more educated than these individuals.

Allah the Almighty has spoken the truth: "*And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life.*" [Surah Taha: 124]

**Fifth Principle:** Allah has not prohibited us from asking about many matters of the unseen. Rather, He has clarified and explained much of it to us. If you fail to understand, blame your intellect but do not blame your Lord,

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<sup>5</sup> It has been reported that the cause of his death was Hodgkin's disease (a type of lymphoma) due to natural causes.

Now, bring forth any remaining doubts you have, and I am fully prepared, after this long discussion, to answer them.

So he said: “I no longer have any questions. You’ve answered everything that was on my mind.”

I then looked at the clock and noticed it was already past 12 noon. I was surprised at how quickly time had flown.

I said to him at the end: “Don’t we agree on almost everything now?”

He replied: “Yes, we do.”

I said: “I did not spread rumors about you being someone who causes doubts and controversies. I see you just like anyone else and I truly thank you for your morals, values, and fairness.”

And I gave him one final piece of advice: “Perform regular maintenance for your mind and thoughts. Take a moment to sit down honestly with yourself, reflect on where you’ve reached, contemplate your thoughts and knowledge, and assess your mental stability. Just as you check your body, eyes, stomach, and every machine - whether it’s your phone, car, or computer - you should give your mind and thoughts even greater attention. Are they truly something that you can afford to disregard and neglect to such an extent ?”

“One of the best ways to do this is to consult a trustworthy, honest friend, or an aware and knowledgeable scholar or teacher. Don’t judge yourself in isolation; rather, seek advice and guidance from someone more experienced and knowledgeable than you.”

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**At the end of this long conversation, I reached some important conclusions:**

1- Scholars and students of knowledge should take the initiative to approach individuals who have doubts or misunderstandings, instead of waiting for

them to come forward. When they proactively reach out and engage in calm, respectful dialogue, it will have a much greater impact. The impact of this approach is significant, as those who may harbor resentment or criticisms toward scholars will feel their kindness, compassion, and closeness. This, in turn, can dispel many of the doubts and misconceptions they carry.

**Let us consider two examples from the life of our leader and role model, the Prophet ﷺ:**

**The First Example:** Three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ to ask about his acts of worship. When they were informed, they perceived them as minimal. They said, “Where are we in comparison to the Prophet ﷺ whose past and future sins have been forgiven?” One of them said, “As for me, I will pray all night without resting.” Another said, “I will fast continuously without breaking my fast.” And the third said, “I will abstain from women and never marry.”

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ heard about this, he went to them and said: *“Are you the ones who said such and such? By Allah, I am the most God-fearing among you and the most conscious of Him, yet I fast and break my fast, I pray and rest, and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.”* (Agreed upon).

Reflect on this statement: “The Messenger of Allah ﷺ went to them and said, ‘Are you the ones who said such and such?’” This is clear evidence of the Prophet’s ﷺ proactive approach in personally addressing and guiding people. He did not wait for them to come to him. Instead, he took the initiative to go to them, clarify their mistakes, and provide them with proper guidance.

Additionally, the Prophet ﷺ did not suffice with merely condemning the error publicly. Rather, he would contact the individual directly or go to them in person to discuss and address the issue.

**The Second Example:** Abdullah ibn Amr narrated: “My fasting was mentioned to the Prophet ﷺ, so he came to me. I placed a cushion filled with palm fibers for him, but he sat on the ground, leaving the cushion between us.”

The Prophet ﷺ then began to discuss and persuade Abdullah, convincing him to change his practice - *fasting everyday & praying all night*. (Agreed upon)

When the Prophet ﷺ heard about Abdullah's actions, he immediately took the initiative to visit him, even though it required personal effort. He did not merely instruct Abdullah's father to bring him over, even though Abdullah lived under his father's care.

Despite the need for him and his son being evident, as it was reported that his father was the one who complained about his son due to his neglect of his wife's rights because of his preoccupation with worship.

2- Many of those who have doubts or are labeled as secularists or atheists - *though they are rare in our society, praise be to Allah* - do not have complex or difficult doubts. Their doubts are often simple and easy to resolve, but they haven't found someone close to them who can address their issues one by one with wisdom and patience.

3. Some of those who disagree with us may not differ from us fundamentally or in principles. It is only due to our lack of sitting together, listening to their arguments, and hearing their doubts that we think they fundamentally disagree with us. For example, the person I spoke to - I told him at the end, "I do not see you differing from me on a single matter." This was after I listened to him and explained the correct understanding of what he found problematic.

I remember years ago that during a weekly family gathering, one of my relatives - or perhaps someone else - would often bring up contentious issues. Topics such as satellite dishes, claiming they were not prohibited, or the errors of the religious police, or the takfir (declaring disbelief) of Al-Qaeda members. These discussions would become heated, voices would rise, and we would leave the gathering with resentment in our hearts.

One day I told them, "Until when will we remain like this? These are boring arguments that cause animosity and division. Let us have a dialogue, and I will organize it. I will ask questions about the issues previously discussed."

So, I started by saying, “Does anyone disagree that satellite dishes broadcasting indecent series and obscene movies are prohibited?”

They said, “No.”

I said, “Does anyone disagree that if these dishes are free of such content, they are permissible?”

They said, “No.”

I said, “This point was never a subject of disagreement between us, yet we always argued over it due to misunderstanding each other’s intentions.”

And so, I addressed each of the points we used to disagree on, one by one, calmly and systematically. In the end, we reached agreement and never debated those issues again.

This was completed on the afternoon of Monday, 3/7/1434 AH. I documented the discussion on the same day to ensure I wouldn’t forget any part of it or add anything that wasn’t said - except for a few minor references. I even provided my companion with a copy the next day, saying to him, “Reflect on it, as I wrote it specifically for you.”

## **Story 2: My Story with an Atheist - A Dialogue That Led a Young Woman from Atheism to Faith, and a Recounting of her Life Before and After Atheism**

On the evening of Monday, the 12th of Ramadan, in the year 1436 AH, I received the following message:

“Peace be upon you, Sheikh. Do you engage in discussions about skeptical thoughts?”

I replied:

“Peace be upon you. I am not specialized in that field. However, if the need arises, I do discuss such matters. May Allah protect us and you from doubt and uncertainty and grant us certainty, for in it lies true peace and happiness.”

She responded:

“I read your story about a student titled ‘My Encounter with the Student Doubting Religion’. Is it true?”

I said:

“Yes, it is.”

She then sent me a verse from the Qur’an:

*“And Allāh would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid.”* (At-Tawbah: 115)

She followed with a question:

“Allah guided me to Islam, so why did He lead me astray and take away the blessing of faith from me, even though I love this blessing and am not arrogant? Does this mean that Allah abandoned me? Why?”\*