

What Is a Test?

The Conditions and Areas Where We Are Tested

What Is a Test? What Are the Characteristics of Divine Tests?

As soon as we hear the question, “What is a test?” we all immediately think of school and university tests, admission tests, driving tests, and various other tests we have had throughout our lives. Here, we mean the most important and decisive type of test, namely divine tests. Each of us is constantly being tested in all areas of life. Divine tests are unalterable and inevitable laws (*Sunnah*) of God, and no one is exempt from taking them.

It may be interesting that the necessity of being tested during our school years becomes clear to when we grow older and we move beyond the emotional intensity of our school and teenage days. However, even in those conditions, if they ask us which subjects we are more proficient in, we name a subject that had a stricter teacher and gave us more tests during the year. So the necessity of and reason for taking tests are clear to all of us somehow, and to discover the nature of divine tests and their necessity, it is enough to find the areas in which God tests us.

In every test, our abilities and assets become clear, and as the saying goes, tests “prove our real mettle.” Each of us reacts differently to divine tests. Some of us do well in them, while others fail. The test result depends on our readiness and assets in that area. Just as if a student studies his lessons well and has enough practice, he will do well in his tests, and vice versa.

The tests that we face in the world are in fact the sonograms of the human dimension of our existence and determine the level of health of our inward state. This is because the truth of a person is revealed in conflicts and contradictions.

You might ask, "Aren't tests and trials aimed at knowing unknown and ambiguous things?" So what does God, who is the All-Knowing and aware of the outward and inward state of everything, mean by testing? In response to this question, it must be said that God's purpose in testing is very different from ours. Another question is, "In what situations and areas and how are we tested?" In this article, we will answer these questions.

Who Does God Test and How?

As we mentioned, tests are one of the fixed and unalterable divine laws and practices, and all humans, even prophets, face them in their lives.¹ The hardships, obstacles, and problems of life are necessary factors in our movement towards spiritual growth and development. Therefore, the higher the level of piety and spirituality, the more hardships we must endure and the more powerful enemies we must fight.

We are all constantly being tested, growing, and developing. In other words, we are tested in all our relationships, decisions, behaviors, and thoughts. Every interaction we have with others is a test from God. God's tests cover a wide range of situations, including fear, hunger, hardship, disease, loss of property and loved ones, the temptations of Satan, low desires, jealous people, infidels, and

¹. Quran, 2:124; 6:112

hypocrites. In addition to hardships, humans are tested with blessings such as wealth, beauty, children, health, and security. In general, there is no blessing or affliction, good or evil, except that it is one of the divine tests.³

A very important point is that we are all tested according to our life circumstances and our inherent qualities, and everyone's test is equal to their capacity.⁴ Therefore, the tests and hardships in our lives are not beyond our abilities, just as a primary school student is never given a chemistry or physics test. But we expect a high school student who is studying experimental sciences to do well in these tests.

Why Does God Test Us?

The main purpose of divine tests is to nurture and educate human beings so that they can grow and actualize their hidden talents. Each of us potentially have the names and attributes of God, and the tests provide the ground for us to actualize these names. Just as a seed in the heart of the earth grows by enduring hardships and going through hot and cold conditions of nature, we also grow and acquire human perfections in the world by passing divine tests and facing various hardships and events.

Diseases, sufferings, and hardships of the world affect our material and [animal dimension](#). But they activate, grow, and strengthen our [human dimension](#), like a

³. Quran, 21:35

⁴. Quran, 2:286

piece of coal that turns into a shining and valuable diamond through pressure and hardness. In fact, every trial or tribulation has a hidden blessing!

Another purpose of divine tests is to reveal our assets and inherent qualities in the trials and ups and downs of life. Some individuals possess extensive knowledge and expertise, yet their knowledge has not turned into assets (tools needed in the hereafter). Divine tests are essentially the pressures that are put on the lower and limited dimensions of our existence and make us realize the extent of our attachment to and preoccupation with non-human qualities. Thus, divine tests provide the ground for discovering the spiritual weaknesses and inefficiencies of our soul. Hence, with each test, we can take a step towards acquiring the tools we need for life in the living conditions of the hereafter.

In this lesson, we first addressed the question “What is a test?” and then we stated that divine tests are inevitable laws of God and include all individuals, even prophets. We are constantly being tested in every moment of our lives. Every hardship and affliction, such as fear, poverty, illness, loss of loved ones, or marital and parenting problems, and every blessing, such as wealth, health, knowledge, or beauty are all grounds for our testing. Everyone is tested according to his circumstances, and tests are not beyond our capacity. Divine tests lead to the growth and flourishing of our talents and reveal our inward state and assets.

Have you faced any challenges that you think might be divine tests? What do you think about this type of test? We are eager to hear your thoughts.