

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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Our Amazing Spaceship Earth

GOD is the One who rendered the earth habitable for you, and the sky a formidable structure, and He designed you, and designed you well (40:64)

Scientists have spent multiple years and billions of dollars searching for life elsewhere in the universe, only to find that earth alone not only teems with life, but seems to be expressly designed for life. An amazing intelligence seems to be behind it all. What is that intelligence telling us?

Have you ever dreamed of traveling through space? The prospects sound exciting to most people.

Amazingly, we are already traveling through space—but without being aware of it! Planet earth can correctly be compared to a giant spacecraft carrying on board more than 6 billion people and billions more animals and plants.

American scientist Buckminster Fuller coined the fitting term “Spaceship Earth” to describe our planet.

We are truly hurtling through space on this giant spacecraft called earth—at the incredible speed of 65,000 miles per hour! This is far faster than man’s speediest aircraft. At the same time, this space vehicle is spinning at more than 1,000 miles per hour. Every year we complete an entire circuit around the sun—a journey of more than half a billion miles!

Yet perhaps the most amazing aspect of our voyage is we don’t feel the trip at all. Certainly as we travel in a car at 50 miles per hour, we can sense the velocity and see the scenery go by. But the paradox is, once we get out of the car and sit down, everything on the ground seems at rest—yet we are still traveling at an incredible speed through space.

[27:88] When you look at the mountains, you think that they are standing still. But they are moving, like the clouds. Such is the manufacture of GOD, who perfected everything. He is fully Cognizant of everything you do.

If we finish our life’s journey with an average life span, we will have traveled around the sun some 76 times, and completed a trip of more than 38 billion miles—the equivalent of traveling several times to the planet Pluto and back! All of this without ever feeling the velocity or being aware of the trip itself.

This is just one of the incredible and marvelous features of our remarkable spaceship.

[53:55] Which of your Lord’s marvels can you deny?

Our privileged planet

In the last 30 years scientific discoveries have undermined the idea, once popular among some scientists and scholars, that we live on an unexceptional planet. This idea was summarized in the view of the late astronomer Carl Sagan (of the famous TV series *Cosmos*), who spoke of “the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe”.

We have come quite far from the similar notion posed by philosopher Bertrand Russell that humanity is merely, as he put it, “a curious accident in a backwater” (*Religion and Science*, 1961, p. 222). As scientific discoveries have accumulated, planet earth has turned out to be not a backwater region, but instead a very privileged planet.

Astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez and philosopher Jay Richards recently wrote a book about the latest scientific findings that refute Sagan’s assertion that we live on an insignificant planet. They aptly titled the book *The Privileged Planet*.

Instead of a universe once thought to be possibly teeming with life, more and more scientists are now realizing the rare qualities of our terrestrial globe. Cosmologists

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Peter Ward and Donald Brownlee recently wrote the book Rare Earth: Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe to explain some of our planet's unique features and how difficult it would be to duplicate these conditions on some other planet.

Similarly, the influential science textbook Earth begins its introduction with a section titled "the uniqueness of the planet Earth" (1986, p. 3). So many factors have to be just right to duplicate the feats of our amazing Spaceship Earth that hope is slowly fading of ever finding intelligent life on other planets.

"From the seventeenth to the twentieth century," explain Drs. Gonzalez and Richards, "many expected to find intelligent, even superior life on the Moon, Mars, and other planets in the Solar System. . . Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, despite PR blitzes from Martian-life enthusiasts, the search has moved from the planets to a few obscure outlying moons. At the same time, the aspirations have been substantially downgraded" (The Privileged Planet, 2004, p. 253).

What are some of the remarkable features of our Spaceship Earth? Let's explore some of these characteristics so we can appreciate how carefully crafted it is. We can then ask, could all these precise conditions be only a lucky accident?

Portholes to see beyond Spaceship Earth

As every spaceship has a porthole to view the outside, so our atmosphere acts in the same way. In fact, we have a much better window than an ordinary spacecraft. Our "window" on this Spaceship Earth is not limited to a certain viewing area, but actually covers the entire planet. It is like having a porous crystal 430 miles thick that allows everyone aboard to have a full view of everything outside our planet and yet still blocks out the airless outer space.

[13:2] GOD is the One who raised the heavens WITHOUT PILLARS that you can see...

Some planets are covered in thick clouds that make it impossible to see out. But our atmosphere enables us to view and discover the universe around us. Our earth is thus an exploration vessel.

The transparent canopy covering the planet also houses a renewable supply of oxygen for human beings and animal life and carbon dioxide and nitrogen for plants. It also provides the proper air pressure for living things, and the outer edge of this translucent shell is composed of an ozone layer that protects life from harmful ultraviolet rays.

Strange as it may sound, this canopy even comes equipped with a protective force field! It sounds like something out of the TV series Star Trek, but it's true. We have a magnetic field generated by the spinning iron core at the center of our planet that deflects damaging cosmic rays and deadly solar winds. Without these features, life here would not be possible.

[57:25] ... And we sent down the iron, wherein there is strength, and many benefits for the people...

Last but not least, this marvelous canopy contains an automatically adjusting "curtain" to shade the terrestrial orb from too much light hitting its surface. This delicate shroud is formed by clouds, which act as moving shades that cover some 60 percent of the earth's surface at any given time.

[2:164] ... and the clouds that are placed between the sky and the earth, there are sufficient proofs for people who understand.

What's in the cockpit?

What if we enter the cockpit of Spaceship Earth? What do we find?

Incredibly, no pilot is aboard, but instead we find an "autopilot" system governed by carefully adjusted physical laws. Although no one is seen physically aboard our spaceship who manages the system, our planet faithfully obeys the programmed, finely tuned commands of the myriad of physical laws and completes its year—long journey around the sun, dutifully returning to its starting point only to begin yet another circuit.

[55:7] He constructed the sky and ESTABLISHED THE LAW.

What keeps the earth in its orbit? It is mainly the gravitational force of the sun that keeps the planet on its circular path.

In this cockpit, although not seen, are the equivalents of hundreds of elaborate dials, each regulating an aspect of our planet's features. Each dial has been carefully calibrated to permit life to flourish on the planet. You can't see the great Engineer, who set up the system, but you can measure the precision of every setting—and each one is just right!

[40:64] GOD is the One who rendered the earth habitable for you, and the sky a formidable structure, and He designed you, and designed you well. He is the One who provides you with good provisions. Such is GOD your Lord; Most Exalted is GOD, Lord of the universe.

Everything—everything down to the tiniest details—is "adjusted" just right for us to live comfortably on this planet. We get a glimpse of the marvelous Designer who set up the whole system...

[14:32] GOD is the One who created the heavens and the earth, and He sends down from the sky water to produce all kinds of fruit for your sustenance. He has committed the ships to serve you on the sea in accordance with His command. He has committed the rivers as well to serve you.

Truly, our planet is not some lucky accident since the evidence shows it was carefully designed to be inhabited by mankind and all other forms of life.

The spaceship's engines

What drives this craft and propels it through space? There are "twin engines" aboard, one pushing the planet forward and the other keeping it spinning and fueling its interior heat.

The centripetal force caused by gravity keeps the globe in its orbit.

When an object reaches a certain speed and is spun by centripetal forces, it stays in a stable circuit around the center. This is what the earth does when orbiting around the sun. And our planet's distance from the sun, though varying slightly, is perfect for life—not so close to the sun that we would all burn up, nor so far that we would freeze.

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[14:33] *He has committed the sun and the moon in your service, continuously. He has committed the night and the day to serve you.*

The second engine is deep inside the earth itself. There, the fuel is decaying radioactive elements that heat the planet and drive plate tectonics. Geologists Frank Press and Raymond Siever call this “a gigantic but delicately balanced heat engine fueled by radioactivity.” (Earth, p. 4).

“Not only does plate tectonics help with the development of continents and mountains, which prevent a water world,” adds astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez, “but it also drives the Earth’s carbon dioxide—rock cycle. This is critical in regulating the environment through the balancing of greenhouse gases and keeping the temperature of the planet at a livable level . . .

“This radioactive decay also helps drive the convection of the liquid iron surrounding the Earth’s core, which results in an amazing phenomenon: the creation of a dynamo that actually generates the planet’s magnetic field.” (quoted by Strobel, pp. 182-183).

The passenger cabin

What about the passenger cabin? How well designed is it?

We find the earth provides all the comforts a space traveler could desire—abundant and delicious food, plenty of water, gorgeous and entertaining scenery, a comfortable climate, challenging work and plenty of room to have a family.

[6:99] *He is the One who sends down from the sky water, whereby we produce all kinds of plants. We produce from the green material multitudes of complex grains, palm trees with hanging clusters, and gardens of grapes, olives and pomegranate; fruits that are similar, yet dissimilar. Note their fruits as they grow and ripen. These are signs for people who believe.*

It is a self-contained unit with renewable resources that can last, if properly taken care of, for potentially thousands of years into the future.

To keep the temperature comfortable for the passengers, the planet remains in orbit at just the right distance from the sun and is designed with an optimum tilt of 23.5 degrees.

“If the earth had been tilted as much as 45 degrees instead of what it is,” notes Fred Meldau, “temperate zones would have torrid zone heat in the summer and frigid zone cold in the winter. On the other hand, if the axis of the earth were vertical to the plane of its orbit, January and July would have the same climate and ice would accumulate until much of the continents would be ice-covered six months and flooded the other six months” (Why We Believe in Creation Not in Evolution, 1972, pp. 27-28).

[Psalm 104:24] *“O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all. The earth is full of your possessions.”*

[15:19] *As for the earth, we constructed it, and placed on it stabilizers (mountains) and we grew on it a PERFECT BALANCE of everything.*

A protector fleet of spaceships

Not only does our terrestrial vessel have a magnetic force field and renewable resources, but it also has a number of accompanying spacecraft to stabilize and protect it.

The first of these is our moon. It is a veritable workhorse. Not only does it shield our planet from taking some meteorite hits, but it stabilizes earth’s vital tilt. Just as a clock has counterbalancing weights, so the moon acts as a counterbalance to the earth, keeping the planet’s tilt carefully adjusted to allow the four seasons of the year. This tilt permits the sun’s rays to uniformly heat the globe, much like a rotisserie slowly roasts a chicken.

The moon, along with the sun, also regulates our tides. The earth’s tides help circulate the water in the oceans and sweep away waste products from the coasts.

“If the moon were half as far away, or twice its present diameter,” adds Fred Meldau, “great tides would wreck most of our harbors . . . If the moon were smaller and farther away, it would not have suffi-

cient pull on our tides to cleanse our harbors or adequately rejuvenate (with oxygen) the waters of our oceans” (p. 31).

Also remarkable is the relative size and placement of the moon with respect to the sun. The sun is 400 times larger than the moon but also 400 times farther away—an arrangement that produces perfect solar eclipses when viewed from earth.

This extraordinary phenomenon has revealed crucial scientific facts about the composition of the sun and other stars, as well as providing concrete evidence of Einstein’s theory of relativity (again illustrating how our earth is set up to allow us to make scientific discoveries about the universe).

Yet the moon is only the first of Spaceship Earth’s protector fleet.

The two gas giants, Jupiter and Saturn with their strong gravitational pulls, also help shield the planet by functioning as giant vacuum cleaners, sweeping the solar system of dangerous comets and asteroids.

[22:65] *...He prevents the heavenly bodies from crashing onto the earth, except in accordance with His command...*

Astronomers witnessed a stark example of such protection in 1994 when Jupiter took a hit as the Shoemaker-Levy 9 comet broke apart due to Jupiter’s gravitational pull and smashed into its atmosphere.

As the book *The Privileged Planet* notes: “The existence of a well-placed moon, of circular planetary orbits . . . of the outlying gas giants to sweep the Solar System of sterilizing comets . . . all these and more are profoundly important for the existence of complex life on our planet” (p. 256).

The neighborhood

Not only is Spaceship Earth just the right distance from the sun to have a temperate climate, but its solar system is in an excellent neighborhood of stars. It lies between two spiral arms of the Milky Way galaxy, far away from the dangerous galactic core or the spiral arms, and is in what astronomers call a “safe zone.”

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“Certainly, our type of galaxy optimizes habitability,” explains Guillermo Gonzalez, “because it provides safe zones. And Earth happens to be located in a safe zone, which is why life has been able to flourish here . . .

“Places with active star formation are very dangerous, because that’s where you have supernovae exploding at a fairly high rate. In our galaxy, those dangerous places are primarily in the spiral arms, where there are also hazardous giant molecular clouds. Fortunately, though, we happen to be situated safely between the [Milky Way’s] Sagittarius and Perseus spiral arms” (quote by Strobel, p. 169).

This clear zone is a good vantage point for viewing our own galaxy and the rest of the universe—once again demonstrating the way our exploratory spaceship is set up for cosmic discovery.

Conclusion

All we can infer from the precise natural laws and the fine-tuned features of our planet is that the earth was optimally designed for life and for scientific understanding. Even a skeptical astrophysicist such as Stephen Hawking admits as much on the matter of life. “Wheeler agrees with Hawking and Carter,” writes John Boslough, “that our own universe is uniquely fine-tuned to produce life, even if in just one small, lost corner” (Stephen Hawking’s Universe, 1985, p. 125).

After surveying the astronomical and biological evidence, biochemist Michael Denton comes to this conclusion: “Four centuries after the scientific revolution science has provided no significant evidence that any alternative life is possible... Scientific exploration has found no token of another life, no shred of evidence for something other than ourselves or of our type of life as it exists on earth.

“On the contrary, science has revealed a universe stamped in every corner, riven in every tiny detail, with an overwhelmingly and all-pervasive biocentric [life-centered] and anthropocentric [human-centered] design.”

So here we are, traveling on this spaceship called earth, and everything we see around us is carefully designed and calibrated to sustain our existence.

[41:53] We will show them our PROOFS IN THE HORIZONS, and within themselves, until they realize that this is the truth. Is your Lord not sufficient as a witness of all things?

[39:67] They can never fathom the greatness of GOD. The whole earth is within His fist on the Day of Resurrection. In fact, the universes are folded within His right hand. Be He glorified; He is much too high above needing any partners.

[Ed.’s note: This article was authored by Mario Seiglie and published in Good News Magazine. The link to the original article is <http://www.gnmagazine.org/issues/gn65/earth.htm>. Most of the article is reproduced here with the Quranic verses adopted by brother N.Q./Toronto]

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