

## Lesson 7: The Justice Of God

### 1. God's Justice

From previous lessons we have read and learned that:

1. The order, design and harmony in the universe in general and in the human body in particular are veritable witness to the existence of a Creator whom we call God.
2. The same order, design and harmony also shows the Omniscience and Omnipotence of the Creator; but at the same time, due to our limitation, we cannot fully encompass the extent of His wisdom, knowledge and power.
3. Unlike the perpetual need of all creation, God is the Absolutely Needless and He stands in need of nothing. We also came to know that He does not occupy any space or center, nor is He visible.

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Now we may ask if it is possible for God to be unjust? We know that injustice stems from ignorance, need, weakness or similar causes, none of which can exist in God. If we seek to find the cause of injustice, we may find the following reasons:

#### 1. *Ignorance:*

People sometimes commit injustice out of ignorance. At times, injustices stem out of man's limited and finite knowledge. For example, a judge can unjustly pass a sentence against an innocent person because he does not know the truth or because the truth was hidden from him.

#### 2. *Need:*

Injustice sometimes takes place when a person cannot get what he needs by proper means.

#### 3. *Weakness or Compulsion:*

Sometimes, people commit injustice because of weakness and compulsion. For example, after much struggling, when a person cannot get his rights from an unjust person, he is, sometimes, led to extremes

and does anything he can to bring that person down. The deprivation of that person becomes a pretext for violence and crime.

These and similar causes of injustice are impossible for God, because He is Omniscient, Free from need, and Omnipotent. So He is incapable of any injustice. This is a very clear and obvious matter. Those who doubt the justice of God have not considered what we have explained, or else they do not understand what justice is.

## **2. What is Justice?**

Justice is that every person's rights should be respected, that no distinction should be made between people for no reason. For example, in a school examination, all those who have a certain mark can move up to next grade. Thus, the principal cannot make any distinction among the students and allow some of them to proceed to the next class while depriving others of this right while their marks are the same—because creating such a distinction among students who have the same right of entry into the higher class constitutes an act of injustice.

But in a situation where the question of rights does not arise, discrimination between individuals cannot be counted as injustice. For example, if someone wishes to invite some deprived persons to a meal, and chooses only some of these unfortunates, his act does not constitute injustice—because here there are no rights which are being violated. What is given to them is only given in order to help them and purely out of a sense of doing good.

The observance of equality and justice is necessary when all have the same right; but when no rights exist, there can be no discussion of equality and justice, and discrimination between two individuals in such cases cannot be called injustice.

Thus, those who find difficulty in understanding the creation of things, and ask why God has not created all people equal and without distinction, and why He does not behave towards everyone with equal measure, have actually not understood the real meaning of justice. If God does not create anyone at all or if He distinguishes between beings, nobody's rights have been violated, and therefore we can say that there is no injustice in spite of the differences and variations we find among human beings.

However, since God is Omniscient and Wise, and does nothing without a good purpose, we can ask: What is the reason for the distinctions among human beings? Are the differences necessary in the order of things?

## **3. The Vicissitudes in the Life of Man**

Certainly you have heard of the spacecraft “Apollo”, a perfect example of the marvelous progress man has made in science and technology. It took man above the clouds, beyond the atmosphere, and

allowed him to set his feet on the surface of the moon, thus opening the door to a world hitherto unknown to him.

Looking at the design of this spacecraft, we see a huge mass of nuts and bolts, large and small, and various delicate and complex instruments; the command module, the main craft, the lunar landing module, landing and take-off equipment, fuel tanks, telecommunication and navigational apparatus, power sources, safety devices and sufficient stores of food, water and other necessities. Each of these parts has its own role. Obviously, if it were not for these various parts, Apollo would never have come into existence, and it would not have been able to overcome the difficulties facing man on his way to the moon.

This example shows us that in a whole whose parts are connected with each other and in harmony, variety cannot be avoided.

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Now let us look at the world of existence to discover that diversity here is neither pointless nor without reason. Without doubt, the beauty and complexity of this world is due to the variety of its parts, and we cannot call this diversity meaningless or unjust.

We have shown above that injustice exists where distinction is made when all have the same right to use something equally. However, the parts of the world had no existence before they were created, and so they had no pre-existent rights which would enable us to say that the distinctions between them constitutes an injustice. In fact, the world of creation owes its existence to variety, and if there had not been any variety there would not have been any universe, there would have been just one big uniformity. It was this variety that brought into existence atoms, solar systems, galaxies, trees, plants and animals.

Turning now towards variety in human life, we see that diversity in man is not an exception to this general principle of variety. If we look at the diversity in human ability, intelligence and memory and ask why they are not the same in all humans, we must first ask why plants and minerals do not have these superior faculties. Then we can see that neither of these questions can be properly discussed, because such questions can only arise when rights are being trampled on. In this case, neither of these two conditions existed prior to creation such that a distinction between them should be seen as an injustice.

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Another point to notice is that God demands from everyone according to his ability and responsibility, and no one is asked to do more than his bodily and mental powers enable him. This is justice itself.

For example, if a principal gives the examination of the most advanced class to one of the lower classes, this is an act of injustice. However, if he gives the easy questions to the lower class and the difficult

questions to the advanced class, then no one can complain that there had been injustice. Instead, he would be regarded as just by any meaning of the word.

Therefore, if all existent things are regarded from the same point of view and their responsibilities were all the same, then to make a distinction as regards their creation would be an act of injustice. But we know that responsibilities are proportional to the individual's capabilities, and thus there is no injustice. For example, if a small screw in a machine has to do the same work as the largest cog, there would be injustice; but if each part must work according to its design and possibilities, then there is no injustice.

Moreover, we believe that God is Wise and that He does not do anything for no reason or for no good purpose, and we believe that the world has a special design so that no speck can come into existence without reckoning or design. If, in such cases, something appears useless or without a function, it is in fact because of the limited nature of our minds. Not knowing something does not mean that it does not exist.

We can conclude from this that all the variations in things have some good purpose, and that they are all perfectly useful and necessary in the system of the universe, although we may not be able to understand this by our restricted thinking.

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It may be objected that all individuals may have the same characteristics, talents and abilities, but that because of the needs of society they are forced to divide their labour among themselves. The answer to this is that if this were the case, those who seek an easy life would choose the easier occupation, and the difficult and laborious occupations and menial tasks would be left with no one to do them; for no one would be ready to do them, since they all think the same way.

The spirit of man must pass through various states in order to obtain moral perfection. Gradually, calmly and without haste, through facing difficulties and comforts, tasting the bitter and the sweet, his spirit becomes more perfect.

It is these ups and downs that teach man to acquire pleasure; sometimes he is the king of the castle, and sometimes he is thrown into the dungeons. Happy is the one who uses whatever situation he finds himself in to perfect his soul. If he is well-off, he can follow the way of perfection by helping the poor and the orphans, thus acquiring a great, humanitarian spirit, although he could be using his riches for easy living and luxury without putting them to any spiritual use.

Similarly, if he is poor, instead of encroaching upon other people's property and rights, he can be contented with his lot, be patient and cultivate self-respect, thus rolling away the stone of life's difficulties with the hand of activity and patience. Thus all the vicissitudes of life are ways to perfection, and we must follow this way, whether the passage is narrow or wide.

Our meaning is not that we should will upon ourselves difficulties and sufferings. It is clear that this would be very difficult because we would not be using the natural abilities that God has bestowed upon us. What we mean is that, if we try our best, but do not reach our objective or fall from prosperity to hardship, we should not consider ourselves to be unfortunate. Rather, we should regard the vicissitudes, ease and difficulty, as new fields for the building of our souls and the use of our minds in resistance and struggle against these difficulties. In this way, we can derive the greatest benefit for our spiritual strength. One who acts thus does not find in life anything against the principles of justice and purpose, and everywhere he turns he finds victory and prosperity. In this respect, the Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***He has raised some of you in rank above others, that He may try you in what He has given you.***

**(6: 165)**

The meaning of the words 'that He may try you' here is that we should use to our benefit the present moment, and so, whatever situation happens to man, it is for his spiritual development, and this is the Grace and Justice of God.

This is the philosophy of differences and vicissitudes which can never be in contradiction to Justice. If we fail to understand some of the world's events we should not consider them to be unjust and wrong, because the system of creation is built firmly by the Powerful hands of the One with whom there can be no injustice, and all that He demands from us is through His Love.

This is a fact that we have clearly observed many times in the things which have happened to us and to others. Sometimes we consider something to be bad, but after a while we realize that not only was it without harm, but that it was also positively beneficial. The Qur'<sup>ān</sup> says:

***Yet it may happen that you will hate a thing which is better for you; and it may happen that you will love a thing which is worse for you. Allah knows, and you know not. (2:216)***

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This lesson is based on the followings: Dar Rah–e Haq Board, *The Roots of Religion*, Qum 1982. It has been compiled and edited for this course by S.M. Rizvi.

## **Question Paper on Lesson 7**

*Question 1:* [2 points for each correct statement]

Circle the letter of two correct statements:

- (a) Injustice stems out of arrogance.
- (b) Injustice means physically harming other person.
- (c) Injustice can be defined as removing something from its proper place.

(d) Injustice is an act of making distinction when all have equal rights.

(e) Injustice can be defined as not treating everybody equally.

*Question 2:* [10 points]

Explain in your own words the correct meaning of injustice and the real meaning of justice.

*Question 3:* [2 points for each correct answer]

Fill in the blanks with words from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

(a) The beauty and complexity of the universe is due to the \_\_\_\_\_ of things and \_\_\_\_\_ of creation.

(b) This universe is a huge, gigantic machine whose parts \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are performing their designated \_\_\_\_\_ .

(c) If no \_\_\_\_\_ are violated, no \_\_\_\_\_ occurs.

(d) No one in this universe is asked to do \_\_\_\_\_ than what one is \_\_\_\_\_ of doing.

(e) Since God is Wise, He does not create anything without a \_\_\_\_\_ or a good \_\_\_\_\_ .

(f) Without diversity and variety, this universe will be a dreadful \_\_\_\_\_ .

(g) Justice means responsibilities should be \_\_\_\_\_ to capability.

1. rights

2. proportional

3. reason

4. injustice

5. more

6. variety

7. purpose

8. capable

9. small

10. diversity

11. large

12. uniformity

13. function

*Question 4:* [10 points]

The Qur'anic verse "So that He may try us in what He has given us" means:

- (a) He would like to see how we conduct ourselves in a given situation.
- (b) He may test us by giving us certain things.
- (c) He wants us to perfect ourselves morally by dealing patiently and strongly with whatever situation we are facing.
- (d) In happiness or sorrow, our objective remains the pleasure of God.
- (e) He subjects some people to greater difficulties than others.

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