

Obligations of a Believer

“Those who establish prayers, and hand over ‘zakat’ and believe in the life hereafter”. (Qur'an, 48:3).

These attributes of the believers refer to the three main aspects of religious obligation in Islam. A Muslim must fulfill his obligations towards God, toward fellow human beings and towards himself.

In this 'ayat', prayer is the symbol of the obligations towards God. It is considered so important that "if a man's prayers would be worthy of acceptance by God, his all other virtuous performances would be accepted; but if his prayers are rejected (because of his base intentions), all other acts would be rejected".

The right of the fellow human beings is symbolized by giving the religious monetary dues. It should be enough to say that, in more than 80 places in the Qur'an, the exhortation to establish prayers is followed by that of paying the 'zakat'.

Last, but not the least, is a man's responsibility towards himself. I do not mean his right to the worldly enjoyments, though it may be considered a part of the over-all picture, within the limits of the religious laws. What I mean, and Islam means, by this phrase is that a man owes it to himself to save his soul from disgrace when all will be assembled together on the day of reckoning. Hence the mention of that belief in the above-quoted verse.

According to Islam, if a man commits a sin which does no harm to any other person in any way, he fails in his duty towards God (by disobeying Him) and towards himself (by putting himself liable to the displeasure of God). Yet, such a man has more hope of being forgiven by God than the one who has committed a sin against another person. The latter has failed in all three aspects of his duty: he has displeased God, has harmed another person and has disgraced himself. Such a person will not be forgiven by Allah unless he is pardoned by the person whom he had wronged.

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