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Preface

A general review of the Islamic system demonstrates that rituals and acts of worship play an important role in deeds, behavior, words, ceremonies and anniversaries.

Rituals and acts of worship in Islam are inseparably related. Rituals (*sha'ir*)—defined as ceremonies, rules of etiquette, and activities that distinguish the Muslim nation from other nations—are mixed with the Islamic practice of worship in both form and content. Islamic practices of worship are rituals, such as prayer, fasting, Hajj, and *zakat*, and Islamic rituals are practices of worship, such as the celebrations on the feast days and other days related to Islamic occasions.

Even social ceremonies, such as marriage and the like, not to mention social activities, such as offering salutations and beginning with the *basmalah* (i.e. utterance of *bismi-llahir-rahmanir-rahim*), are originally acts of worship through which nearness to Almighty Allah is sought.

In the Holy Qur'an, acts of worship during the Hajj Pilgrimage have been described as rituals on more than one occasion, such as the following:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا ۚ وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ
اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ {158}

Behold! Safa and Marwah are among the RITUALS of Allah. So, there shall be no blame on those who visit the House in the Month or at other times and go round them. And if anyone does good deeds voluntarily, be assured that Allah is He Who recognizes and knows. (2: 158)

{وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ ۚ {36}

As for the camels, We have made them RITUALS of the religion of Allah for you. For you, therein

is much good. (22:36)

Discussing the obligatory practices of the Hajj Pilgrimage, the Holy Qur'an says:

{ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمِ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ} 32

Such is his state. And whoever holds in honor the RITUALS of Allah (in the sacrifice of animals) this is surely from piety of heart. (22:32)

Discussing the situation of al-Muzdalifah, where we are commanded to mention Almighty Allah, the Holy Qur'an calls it al-mash'ar al-haram (the Sacred Place of Rituals) saying:

{فَإِذَا أَقَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۖ وَادْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الضَّالِّينَ} 198

When you pour down from Mount 'Arafat, then celebrate the praises of Allah at the Sacred Place of Rituals, and celebrate His praises as He has directed you, even though before this, you went astray. (2: 198)

The distinctive battle cry upon which all the individuals of a party in a war agree and which distinguishes them from the other party, is called *shi'ar* (i.e. a slogan). This word is derived from the root *sh-r*, which is also the root of the word *sha'ir* (rituals).

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is thus reported to have said:

شِعَارُنَا يَا مُحَمَّدُ. وَشِعَارُنَا يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ يَا نَصَرَ اللَّهِ إِقْتَرِبْ. وَشِعَارُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ يَا نَصَرَ اللَّهِ إِقْتَرِبْ. وَيَوْمَ بَنِي النَّضِيرِ يَا رُوحَ الْقُدُسِ أَرْحْ، وَيَوْمَ بَنِي قَيْنِقَاعٍ يَا رَبَّنَا لَا يَغْلِبُنَاكَ، وَيَوْمَ الطَّائِفِ يَا رِضْوَانَ، وَشِعَارُ يَوْمِ حُنَيْنٍ يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، وَيَوْمَ الْأَحْزَابِ هُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ، وَيَوْمَ بَنِي قُرَيْظَةَ يَا سَلَامُ أَسْلَمْتُمْ، وَيَوْمَ الْمُرَيْسِعِ وَهُوَ يَوْمُ بَنِي الْمُصْطَلِقِ إِلَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ الْأَمْرُ، وَيَوْمَ الْحُدَيْبِيَّةِ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ، وَيَوْمَ خَيْبَرَ يَوْمَ الْقَمُوصِ يَا عَلِيُّ آتِهِمْ مِنْ عَلٍ، وَيَوْمَ الْفَتْحِ نَحْنُ عِبَادُ اللَّهِ حَقًّا حَقًّا، وَيَوْمَ تَبُوكَ يَا أَحَدُ يَا صَمَدُ، وَيَوْمَ بَنِي الْمُلُوحِ أَمِتْ أَمِتْ، وَيَوْمَ صِفِّينَ يَا نَصَرَ اللَّهِ، وَشِعَارُ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ يَا مُحَمَّدُ، وَشِعَارُنَا يَا مُحَمَّدُ

Our shi'ar (war cry) is ya-Muhammad ya-Muhammad (O Muhammad, O Muhammad). Our shi'ar in the Battle of Badr was ya nasrallah iqtarib iqtarib (O victory of Allah, come nigh! Come nigh!) The Muslims shi'ar in the Battle of Uhud was ya nasrallah iqtarib (O victory of Allah, come nigh!) Their shi'ar in their battle against Banu'l-Nadhir was ya ruha alqudusi arih (O Holy Spirit! Give us rest!) Their shi'ar in their battle against Banu Qaynuqa' was ya rabbana la yaghlubbunaka (O Our Lord! Let them not overcome You!) Their shi'ar in their battle in al-Ta'if was ya ridhwan (O All-pleasing!) The shi'ar in the Battle of Hunayn was ya bani 'abdillah ya bani 'abdillah (O sons of Allah's Servant! O sons of Allah's Servant!)

The *shi'ar* in the Battle of al-Ahzab (the Allies) was *hum la yubsirun* (They cannot see!) The *shi'ar* in their battle against Banu-Qurayzah was *ya salamu aslimhum* (O Source of peace! Make them surrender!) Their *shi'ar* in the Battle of al-Muraysi' (i.e. their battle against Banu'l-Mustalaq) was *ala ilallahi al-amru* (Verily, Allah's is the whole command). Their *shi'ar* on the Hodaybiyah Encounter was *ala la'natullahi 'ala alzzalimin* (Verily, the curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers). Their *shi'ar* in the Battle of Khaybar (the day of the phalanx) was *ya 'aliyyu atihim min 'aliyyin* (O All-high! Come to them from above). Their *shi'ar* on the Day of Conquest was *nahnu 'ibadullahi haqqan haqqan* (We are the servants of Allah; truly, truly). Their *shi'ar* in the Battle of Tabuk was *ya ahadu ya samadu* (O One and Only! O Eternally Besought of all!). Their *shi'ar* in their battle against Banu'l-Mulawwah was *amit amit* (Cause to die! Cause to die!). Their *shi'ar* in the Battle of Siffin was *ya nasrallahi* (O Allah's victory!). The *shi'ar* of Husayn was *ya Muhammad* (O Muhammad!). Our *shi'ar* is also *ya Muhammad* (O Muhammad!). [1](#)

About the exegesis of the following holy verse:

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْلُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشُّهُرَ الْحَرَامَ }²

O you who believe, violate not the RITUALS of Allah nor of the sacred month... (5:2)

The author of the Arabic-Arabic dictionary of *Lisan al-'Arab* has quoted al-Zajaj as saying that, the *rituals* of Allah stand for all practices through which Almighty Allah is worshipped. Almighty Allah has made these practices rituals (i.e. symbols) for us. They thus include all rituals of the Hajj Pilgrimage, such as the situations whereon a pilgrim should halt, perform *sa'y* (walk between al-Safa and al-Marwah), and perform *dhabh* (slaughter animals offered as sacrifice for the sake of Almighty Allah)... etc.[2](#)

This concept of rituals shows that Islamic rituals stand for all the acts of worship that require a special and distinctive congregation by which Muslims are distinguished from others, such as the ritual Hajj Pilgrimage, the Friday Prayer, and other congregational prayers.

There are some rituals that Muslims alone celebrate that distinguish them from other nations, such as the feast days, especially the Lesser Bairam ('Id al-Fitr) and the Greater Bairam ('Id al-Adhha). Then there are those rituals performed at certain places dedicated to Islamic litanies and devotional acts which Muslims deem sacred and reverential—such as mosques, especially the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, the Prophet's Mosque in al-Madinah, and the Furthest Mosque in al-Quds (Jerusalem). In addition to these, are places whereon pilgrims are commanded to stop, such as Mount 'Arafat, al-Muzdalifah, and the Hills of Safa and Marwah. Other religious acts, both verbal and practical, on which Muslims agree unanimously and use to get to know each other and be distinguished from other communities, include forms of salutation and greeting.

Acts of worship are the formulae and special practices that Almighty Allah has established for His

servants to express their relation with Him and bring them nearer to Him. These include prayers, supplications, fasting, almsgiving, defraying of the *zakat* and *khums* taxes, and expressions of praise that glorify and magnify the Lord within certain formulae and at certain times.

Almighty Allah, out of His grace and favor, has opened the door wide for human beings to dedicate all their acts to seek nearness to Him and worship Him. In turn, they respond to the divine command and appeal for divine guidelines. The acts of worship mentioned in this discussion are specific prescribed formulas.

Before we start, let us refer, albeit briefly, to the significance of rituals and acts of worship, as well as their roles in Islam and the logic for their legislation.[3](#)

Significance of Rituals

Rituals are one of the consistent strategies in the religious code of Islamic law because they point out invariable social needs in human life. For this reason, such rituals are not subject to variability when the methods of social lives or the circumstances of civil progress in human life change. This becomes clear by pursuing the following four needs:

First: These rituals signify a framework that safeguards the virtuous community from loss, and guarantees its persistence and unity against breakup and disunion. This, of course, indicates an invariable social need in the existence of humanity.

Second: These rituals pinpoint the genuineness of the Muslim nation and its identity among other nations and enhance the feelings of glory and dignity in relation to Islam, such feelings being the invariable need of humanity.

Third: These rituals play a role in the achievement of the essential objective of the divine mission of Islam. This objective is to grant success to the processes of divine enlightenment and bring about a social shift towards righteousness. The rituals, at an individual level, through sustained verbal or practical repetition produce an effect on the mental (i.e. sensory, emotional, and rational) substance of man, creating conformity of the interior with the exterior, the form with the content.

They also play a role on the social level, by creating a general tradition that can influence people more than laws and enactments. In other words, these rituals contribute effectively in creating a state of constancy, steadiness, and public harmony in both the individual and society.

Fourth: The rituals influence numerous immutable needs.

In the field of education, they create a public custom that contributes to controlling the social behavior of individuals.

In the field of politics, they manifest the power, coherence, dignity, and honor of the Muslim community through collective practices, such as the congregational prayers, Friday prayers, and the Hajj Pilgrimage, which build the confidence of insecure individuals by participating in collective movements with others.

In the field of social relations, they strengthen social relations among Muslims and create a spirit of collective responsibility, cooperation, mutual understanding, and cordiality among them, in addition to reciprocity of benefits and interests, as is in the Hajj Pilgrimage about which Almighty Allah says:

{لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ} 28

...That they may witness benefits for them. (22:28)

In the field of propagation, these rituals provide doctrinal contents and intellectual and moral concepts. In addition, they can provide the best means of expressing political and social ideas.

The Role of Acts of Worship

In the religious code of Islamic law, acts of worship do not change when social lifestyles or the circumstances of civil progress in human life change.⁴

This indispensable invariability stems from the fact that worship gives expression to the relationship between man and his Lord, which is an invariable, perpetual, and innate relationship. This urgency can be better manifested through the following points:

First: Humanity is in urgent need of association with Allah, the Perfect in excellence, so that people can continue to progress and avoid exposing themselves to deviation due to a state of aloofness or stagnancy. Sometimes, people fall in the swamp of paganism and immoderation when they change their relatively tight allegiances into boundless allegiances, thus causing the advance towards perfection to stop.

Representing a balanced practical expression of affiliation, worship develops a belief in Almighty Allah by means of devotional acts that strengthen affiliation and, at the same time, give a boost to refutation of all other boundless allegiances and deities.

Second: For practical (i.e. social) progress, humanity is required to do certain acts intended for the good of the community as a whole. However, at times, individuals carry out other acts for their personal interest. In the former acts (i.e. acts intended to achieve public interests), the matter is the opposite. In these acts, the efforts exerted may not be compatible with the personal advantage that one might be able to gain within the community; rather, they can be at the expense of personal interests. Such being the case, acts of worship play a significant role in urging human beings to act for the sake of Almighty Allah alone, thus playing a significant role in encouraging people to do things for the sake of public

interest, leaving behind egoism and personal interests.

Third: Human society is always in need of undertakings that bind individuals to abide by the system that rules their society. These undertakings, at times, take the form of material and physical punishments enacted by society against those who violate its regulations and, at other times, they take the form of an inner feeling of responsibility towards these regulations and laws. However, the penal law has limited influence since it is impossible for this law to pursue all the actions and movements of individuals, whereas an inner feeling of responsibility is always present. Worship can develop this feeling of responsibility because worship can enhance in man his relationship with Almighty Allah and his feeling that he is under an incessant monition of Him *“from Whom is not hidden the least little atom in the heavens or on earth.”*

Distinctive Features of Worship in Islam

There is also another set of distinctive features marking worship in the religion of Islam. These distinctive features are as follows:

All-inclusiveness

In the religion of Islam, worship includes all aspects of human life—personal, social, and political. In addition, Islam expects its believers to demonstrate devotion to divine worship in every act (drinking, eating, enjoying entertainment and appetencies, etc.), opening the door to seek nearness to Almighty Allah and confirming one’s connection with Him in all his deeds and activities.

Transcendentality

For each act of worship, there is a psychological and spiritual, visible and observable, external and material, or generally social explanation. Sometimes, scientific advancement proves this fact because it presents new horizons of understanding the transcendental role of acts of worship.

In addition to this, in the ritual acts of worship, like prayer, fasting, and Hajj, we observe an aspect of transcendentality in devotional behavior, the objective of which is to strengthen people’s relationships with the unseen world and escalate belief in it. For instance, such transcendental aspects can be witnessed in the number of the cycles (or units) of each prayer, as well as the circumambulation of the Holy Ka’bah (*tawaff*), the walking between Safa and Marwah (*sa’y*) and other acts, which cannot be explained by any word except devoutness or compliance with divine commands.

Physical Awareness

In addition to transcendentality, we observe physical awareness in the Islamic acts of worship, since man is a compound of spirit and material. In order to bring the acts of worship within the fold of these two aspects, Islam has laid much emphasis on intention and sincerity on one hand, and compliance with

Allah's commands on the other. Attention to Almighty Allah (i.e. presence of heart) and compliance with His commands represent the spiritual aspect of the human self.

Islam has laid equal emphasis on the aspect of physical awareness in acts of worship, as is noticed in the performance of the ritual prayer and Hajj Pilgrimage. Details like the necessity of directing the face towards the Holy Ka'bah, standing erect, genuflecting, prostrating in prayers, circumambulating the Holy Ka'bah, walking between Safa and Marwah, and throwing pebbles at the statues of Satan in the ritual Hajj Pilgrimage, explain this aspect, which is also visible in other obligatory and supererogatory acts.

Islam is a religion unlike the other two extremist trends seen today. One of these cancels out the physical embodiment of devotional acts, supposing them to be a purely spiritual and psychological state, while the other trend considers worship to be no more than an external, physical practice that is devoid of any intentional and spiritual significance, thus changing it into a pagan state.

Social Aspect

In addition to those things mentioned, a social aspect can be observed in the majority of Islamic devotional acts which intends to establish and cement mutual relationships between the individuals of society. It is true that the basic objective of worship is to cement the relationship between humanity and the Lord, but the social aspect is still a secondary yet vital objective in some acts of worship, such as the ritual Hajj Pilgrimage, the congregational prayers, the Friday prayer, the 'ud prayers, *jihad*, *zakat*, and others.

Additionally, the rituals themselves have a social aspect. They aim at unifying the Muslim nation and establishing its identity by acts such as turning ones face towards the Ka'abah in prayer, celebrating two feast days, and participating in the Friday prayers.

In keeping with the Islamic theory, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) encouraged their followers to pay much attention to this aspect and emphasized it in an exhaustive and splendid way. They presented examples and models and explained details of these rituals and acts of worship to make them encompass the daily, weekly, and annual life of every Muslim individual. Through such means, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have been in a position to strengthen the spiritual and social structure of the virtuous community, deepen the Shi'ite Muslim's connections with Almighty Allah, and build a righteous entity inside the Muslim community.

In the coming discussion, I will not deal with such well-known Islamic models of devotional acts like the ritual prayer, fasting, Hajj Pilgrimage, *zakat*, and *jihad*, or such rituals like celebrating the two feast days, the ritual offering of salutation, or like matters, which are obviously familiar to all. I will take up the rituals and acts of worship exclusively discussed by the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in their endeavors to build a virtuous community.

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and Public Rituals

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a), through their discourses and methods of education, took much interest in the congregational rituals of Islam. They are thus reported to have said:

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَالصَّوْمِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالْوِلَايَةِ، وَلَمْ يُنَادَ بِشَيْءٍ كَمَا نُودِيَ بِالْوِلَايَةِ

*Islam is based on five things: salat (performance of obligatory prayer), zakat (poor-rate), hajj (pilgrimage to the Holy House in Makkah), sawm (observance of fasting), and wilayah. Nothing stands confirmed like the confirmation of wilayah.*⁵

According to an authentic narration that is reported from 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, Zurarah has reported Imam al-Baqir ('a) as saying:

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسَةِ أَشْيَاءَ: عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَالْحَجِّ وَالصَّوْمِ وَالْوِلَايَةِ

Islam is based on five things: salat (performance of obligatory prayer), zakat (poor-rate), hajj (pilgrimage to the Holy House in Makkah), sawm (observance of fasting), and wilayah.

Zurarah asked, "What is the best among these things?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

الْوِلَايَةُ أَفْضَلُ، لِأَنَّهَا مِفْتَاحُهُنَّ، وَالْوَالِي هُوَ الدَّلِيلُ عَلَيْهِنَّ

The best of them is the wilayah, because it is the key to the others and the wali (divinely designated leader) is the guide for them.

Zurarah asked, "What is next in being the best?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

الصَّلَاةُ؛ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ عَمُودُ دِينِكُمْ

Then comes the prayer, for the Messenger of Allah (S) has said, 'Prayer is the pillar of your religion.'

Zurarah asked, "What is next?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

الزَّكَاةُ، لِأَنَّهُ قَرَنَهَا بِهَا وَبَدَأَ بِالصَّلَاةِ قَبْلَهَا. وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الزَّكَاةُ تُذْهِبُ الذُّنُوبَ

Zakat. Almighty Allah has coupled it with prayer and mentioned prayer first. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, 'Defrayment of the zakat relieves one of sins.'

Zurarah asked, "What is next?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

الْحَجُّ، قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

{وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ} 97

وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لِحِجَّةٍ مَقْبُولَةٍ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عَشْرِينَ صَلَاةً نَافِلَةً، وَمَنْ طَافَ بِهَذَا الْبَيْتِ طَوَافًا أَحْصَى فِيهِ أُسْبُوعَهُ وَأَحْسَنَ رَكَعَتَيْهِ غَفَرَ اللَّهُ لَهُ. وَقَالَ فِي يَوْمِ عَرَفَةَ وَيَوْمِ الْمُزْدَلِفَةِ مَا قَالَ

Hajj. Almighty Allah has said,

'Pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, upon every one who is able to undertake the journey to it. Whoever disbelieves, then surely Allah is Self-sufficient above any need of the worlds. (3:97)'

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, 'One accepted Hajj is better (in reward) than offering twenty supererogatory prayers. Whoever circumambulates this House seven times and follows it with offering a correctly-done two-unit prayer, Almighty Allah shall forgive him his sins.' He (S) has also said many things about the 'Arafat Day and the Muzdalifah Day.

Zurarah asked, "What is next?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

الصَّوْمُ.

Then comes fasting.

Zurarah asked, "Why has fasting come last of all?"

The Imam ('a) answered:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ. إِنَّ أَفْضَلَ الْأَشْيَاءِ مَا إِذَا فَاتَكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنْهُ تَوْبَةً دُونَ أَنْ تَرْجِعَ إِلَيْهِ فَنُودِيَهُ بِعَيْنِهِ. إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ وَالزَّكَاةَ وَالْحَجَّ وَالْوَلَايَةَ لَيْسَ يَقَعُ شَيْءٌ مَكَانَهَا دُونَ أَدَائِهَا. وَإِنَّ الصَّوْمَ إِذَا فَاتَكَ أَوْ قَصُرَتْ أَوْ سَافَرْتَ فِيهِ أَدَيْتَ مَكَانَهُ أَيَّامًا غَيْرَهَا وَجَزَيْتَ ذَلِكَ الذَّنْبَ بِصَدَقَةٍ وَلَا قَضَاءَ عَلَيْكَ. وَلَيْسَ مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأَرْبَعَةِ شَيْءٌ يَجْزِيكَ مَكَانَهُ غَيْرُهُ. ذُرْوَةُ الْأَمْرِ وَسَنَامُهُ وَمِفْتَاحُهُ وَبَابُ الْأَشْيَاءِ وَرِضَا الرَّحْمَنِ الطَّاعَةُ لِلْإِمَامِ بَعْدَ مَعْرِفَتِهِ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ

(مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا) (80)

أَمَّا لَوْ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَامَ لَيْلُهُ وَصَامَ نَهَارَهُ وَتَصَدَّقَ بِجَمِيعِ مَالِهِ وَحَجَّ جَمِيعَ دَهْرِهِ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ وَلا يَتَذَكَّرْ وَلا يَلِيَّ اللَّهَ فَيُؤَالِيَهُ وَيَكُونَ جَمِيعَ أَعْمَالِهِ بِدَلَالَتِهِ إِلَيْهِ، مَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَقٌّ فِي ثَوَابِهِ وَلا كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْإِيمَانِ. أُولَئِكَ الْمُحْسِنُ مِنْهُمْ يُدْخِلُهُ اللَّهُ الْجَنَّةَ بِفَضْلِ رَحْمَتِهِ.

The Messenger of Allah (S) has said, 'Fasting is an armor against Hellfire.' The best of all things is a duty that if you miss it, you do not need to repent; rather, you can later carry it out exactly as you are required to do. As for the prayer, the zakat, the Hajj Pilgrimage, and wilayah, nothing can compensate for them when they are missed, while you can make up for the fasting if you miss it, fail to observe it, or travel during its days. Such being the case, you can recompense the sin of missing fasting with almsgiving, without need for fasting during other days as compensation. As for the other four pillars, nothing at all can replace them and save you from failing to do them. After recognition of Almighty Allah, the prime act, acme, key, door to all things and the pleasure of the All-beneficent Lord is the obedience to the Imam. Allah, the Exalted and Majestic says,

'Whoever obeys the Messenger, indeed he has obeyed Allah, and as for those who turn away, We have not sent you as a keeper over them. (4:80).'

Verily, if one spends his nights in acts of worship, fasts during the days of his lifetime, gives his entire fortune as alms, and goes on Hajj Pilgrimage every year of his lifetime, but does not recognize loyalty to the Representative of Allah on Earth, and does all his deeds without this basis, he will not have any right to receive the reward of Almighty Allah nor be regarded as one of the people of true faith. The doers of good among these people (i.e. those recognizing the loyalty to the Imams) will enter Paradise by Almighty Allah's mercy.[6](#)

Sulayman ibn Khalid reported Imam al-Baqir ('a) as saying:

أَلَا أُخْبِرُكَ بِالْإِسْلَامِ أَصْلِهِ وَفَرَعِهِ وَذُرْوَةِ سَنَامِهِ؟ أَمَّا أَصْلُهُ فَالصَّلَاةُ وَفَرَعُهُ الزَّكَاةُ وَذُرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ. إِنَّ شَيْئًا أَخْبَرْتُكَ بِأَبْوَابِ الْخَيْرِ. الصَّوْمُ جُنَّةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَالصَّدَقَةُ تَذْهَبُ بِالْخَطِيئَةِ، وَقِيَامُ الرَّجُلِ فِي جَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

16) تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا

May I inform you about the foundation, branch, and pinnacle of Islam? The foundation of Islam is prayer, its branch the zakat, and its pinnacle jihad. I can also inform you about the doors to goodness, if you wish... Fasting is a protective shield against Hellfire. Almsgiving and spending the late hours of the night in remembrance of Almighty Allah, remove sins. Almighty Allah says,

“Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope...” (32: 16)”⁷

It seems important to consider the fact that *jihad* is a branch of the pillar of *wilayah*, which is one of the foundations of Islam, as has been mentioned in the abovementioned tradition. The same is applicable to the duty of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. Moreover, the duty of defraying the *khums* tax is also a component of the pillar of *wilayah*, even if it is not attached to the *zakat*. The one who alone has the right to command *jihad*, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong is the religious referential authority, and the basis of paying the *khums* tax is loyalty to the divinely designated leadership of the Holy Imams (‘a).

We, thus, understand why *jihad* is the pinnacle of the religion in the same way as *wilayah* and obedience to the Imam is its pinnacle also, because *jihad* is one of the examples of obedience to the Imam (‘a).

In fact, various statements confirm this about each of the other Islamic public devotional acts as well.

Prophetic Tradition and Sectarian Rituals

In the sphere of rituals and devotional acts in which the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) took great interest, the following question arises:

Can the mentioned rituals and acts of worship be considered innovations (*bid’ah*) because they are not familiar to Muslims in general?

Such questions have been raised by some people, especially the Wahhabi sect. They are answered in detail within the sectarian aspect of this discussion.⁸ However, let us present two brief synoptic answers here:

First Answer: As has been confirmed in many Prophetic traditions that are reported by both Sunni and Shi’ite narrators, the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) represent the other Weighty Thing, besides the Holy Qur’an, that interprets the Holy Qur’an and explains the Prophet Tradition (Sunnah) and the religious code of Islamic law. They are also the one and only referential authorities of Islam in its genuine form, to whom the Holy Prophet (S) explained all the details of the code of Islamic law and the Holy Qur’an and ordered Muslims to refer to them. As has been proven in my research about the referential authority of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) in the field of the exegesis of the Holy Qur’an,⁹ they are the most acquainted with the Islamic mission, the most truthful of all people, the most knowledgeable, and the most accurate in understanding and recognizing the religion of Islam.

In this field, Shaykh al-Kulayni, through a valid chain of authority, has reported Imam al-Baqir ('a) as saying:

Archangel Gabriel brought down from Heaven two pomegranates to the Holy Prophet. Imam 'Ali ('a) met him and said, "What are these in your hand?" He answered, "This one is for Prophethood; so, you have no share in it. The other is for knowledge." The Holy Prophet (S) then split the second pomegranate into two halves, gave Imam 'Ali ('a) one half, took the other half for himself, and said, "You are my partner in knowledge and I am yours." Accordingly, each single item of knowledge that the Holy Prophet (S) received from Almighty Allah was taught by him to 'Ali. This knowledge then came to us.

While saying 'us', Imam al-Baqir ('a) put his hand on his chest (i.e. referred to himself and the other Holy Imams).[10](#)

Rituals and acts of worship exclusively practiced by the Shi'ah have been mentioned and highlighted in many traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). They enjoy the highest level of legality and consideration in their capacity as genuine Islamic traditions, because the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are more knowledgeable than anybody else regarding Islam, its fundamentals, secondary issues, traditions, and etiquettes.

Second Answer: The rituals and acts of worship exclusively practiced by the virtuous community include no single item that violates Islamic rituals in form or content, nor deflects or draws them away from their goals, roles, or previously mentioned features. Rather, these rituals have come to confirm, deepen, and follow other Islamic rituals in method and manner.

These rituals and acts of worship represent a general line of conduct approved by Islam, such as in the different varieties of prayers, supplications, and *ziyarah* (a body of statements uttered while visiting the tomb of a holy person, usually reported from the Holy Imams ('a)). They also commemorate and celebrate any occasion that is firmly connected to Islam and its events and figures, such as the anniversaries of the Holy Prophet's birthday, the Holy Prophet's Mission, the Day of Ghadir, and the like. They often confirm and sublimate an Islamic thought or missionary activity, such as dedicating to worship the months of Ramadhan, Sha'ban, and Rajab, and the Nights of Qadr (the Nights of Power on one of which the Holy Qur'an was first revealed; 19th, 21st, and 23rd of Ramadhan).

The Ahl al-Bayt's interest in these special rituals was concordant with the general role of these rituals. They wanted the virtuous community and their followers to be distinguished in particularities and identity at least at the physical, spiritual, and mental levels. In fact, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) wanted their followers to coexist with people without blending in with their conditions; rather, they wanted them to be distinguished from others by acting as excellent exemplars. However, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) were not allowed to practice the general rituals and devotional acts of Islam freely and efficiently because of certain political factors. We have referred to some of these in the previous book of the security system of the virtuous community.

In the coming pages, we will discuss the system of rituals used in the building of the virtuous community,

dividing our discussion into a prelude and two chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to discussing the **rituals of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)** while the second to discussing the **general rituals of Islam**.

[1.](#) – Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah 11:105, H. 1.

[2.](#) – Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-'Arab 4:414.

[3.](#) – I have discussed in some detail the role of rituals within my thesis on the Basmalah in my exegesis of Surah al-Fatihah and Surah al-Jumu'ah, which is now in print. Our mentor, Martyr Sayyid al-Sadr, has also discussed the acts of worship in an independent thesis attached to his Risalah (a thesis on the practical laws of Islam) entitled al-Fatawa al-Wadhihah under the title of 'A General Glance at Acts of Worship'. For more information in this regard, it is advisable to refer to these theses.

[4.](#) – In the discussion of this topic, it may be useful to benefit by the essay of our mentor, Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, which is included in his Risalah in the chapter entitled, A General Glance at Acts of Worship.

[5.](#) – Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi 2:18, H. 1.

[6.](#) – Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, 2:18–19, H. 5.

[7.](#) – Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, 2:23, H. 15.

[8.](#) – Such topics are discussed in the volume dealing with the doctrinal aspect although they have also been discussed in many other books, especially the writings of the Sunnite and Shi'ite writers who have considered the doctrines of the Wahhabi faction.

[9.](#) – For further details, the reader is advised to refer to my book of 'Ulum al-Qur'an, Chapter: al-Tafsir wa'l-Mufasssirun fi 'Ahd al-Rasulillah (Exegesis and Exegetes of the Holy Qur'an in the Age of the Holy Prophet).

[10.](#) – Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi 1:263, H. 3.

There are also tens of traditions demonstrating the same topic about the knowledge of the Holy Imams ('a).

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