

## Worship {‘ibadah} and Servitude {‘ubudiyyah}

### [What is worship {‘ibadah}?](#)

Worship {‘ibadah} is the purpose behind our creation. The Qur’an states:

﴿ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴾

***“I did not create the jinn and humans except that they may worship Me.”*** [1](#)

If the work we are doing is for the sake of seeking the pleasure of God, then it is an act of worship. It is so even though it may be a business or professional venture, the pursuit of knowledge, marriage, service to people, or anything that is meant to meet our needs or that of society.

That which makes an action an act of worship {‘ibadah} is the sacred motives behind its performance and in the parlance of the Qur’an, it has the “divine baptism” {*sibghat Allah*}.[2](#)

### [Natural disposition {fitrah} and worship {‘ibadah}](#)

Some of our actions or activities are based on worship {‘ibadah} while others are anchored in natural disposition {*fitrah*}. A habit can be meritorious such as sports or not meritorious such as smoking. But if an action was anchored in natural disposition—that is, if it was done based on the natural disposition and pure mold which God has bestowed on the constitution of every human being—then it would always be meritorious.

The merit of natural disposition compared to worship is that time and place, gender and race, and age and condition have no effect on it, and every human being, on account of his being a human, possesses it. An example of this is the affection given to one’s child that is not true only to a particular generation and period rather, it is common for every parent to do so.[3](#) Issues such as form and style of dress or food are governed by habit and they vary in different times and places. In some regions, a certain thing

is a custom while the same is not regarded as such in other places.

Worship and devotion are also among those actions that pertain to the natural disposition of man, and thus, the most ancient, beautiful and durable buildings constructed by man are related to worship such as temples, churches, mosques, and fire-temples.

Of course, many differences can be seen with respect to forms and types of devotion. One difference pertains to the objects of worship extending from stone, wood and idols to the Beloved Lord, and another difference is in the form and style of worship, which varies from dancing and singing to the most profound and subtle litanies {*munajat*} of the *awliya*' {saints} of God.

The objective of the prophets ('a) has not been to create the spirit of devotion in man but rather to reform worship in terms of its object and form.

The large sums of money spent on the construction of churches, synagogues, Hindu temples, and mosques; considering as sacred the national flags and heroes; and praising the excellences and values of individuals and even objects are all manifestations of the spirit of devotion which exists in man.

Even those who do not worship God worship their spouses, children, credentials, ideology, creed, or path and they are ready to move forward along this way even to the extent of sacrificing themselves. Worship has a deep natural root in man although he may be unaware of it, as Mawlana (ar-Rumi)<sup>4</sup> says:

همچو میل کوداگان با مادران

سرّ میل خود نداند در لبان

*Just like the children's fondness of their mothers,  
He regards not the satisfaction of his desire in frankincense.*

God, the All-wise, has endowed man with all desires and instincts while also creating outside of man the means to satiate and meet these desires. If man ever becomes thirsty, water is created (to quench it), and if there is hunger, food also exists. If man is endowed with the sexual instinct, spouses have been created for him, and if the sense of smell is created, things to smell have been created too.

Among the profoundest feelings of man are the desire for eternity, love of perfection and the yearning for immortality. A relationship with God and worshipping Him guarantee the fulfillment of these natural inclinations. Prayer and worship are the relationships of man with the Fountainhead of Perfections, familiarity with the Real Beloved, and seeking refuge in the Eternal Power.

## The Root of Worship

Who could recognize God with all His perpetual qualities and perfections without resorting to subservience and obeisance to Him? Through stories and historical accounts, the Qur'an expresses the signs of His power and grandeur.

It states that God gave a child to Maryam (Mary) without her having a husband; He split the Nile River for Musa (Moses) (‘a)<sup>5</sup> and drowned Fir‘awn (Pharaoh) therein; He made the prophets (‘a) victorious while being empty-handed, against the superpowers of their respective times, and rubbed the nose of the *taghuts* <sup>6</sup> in the ground.<sup>7</sup>

It is He Who created you out of lifeless clay, and your life and death as well as honor {*‘izzah*} and humiliation {*dhillah*} are in His hand. Is there anyone who could perceive his own weakness, impotence, ignorance, and limitation as well as predictable and unpredictable perils and mishaps, but could not sense the need for the Power of Salvation and for him to submit to It?

In various verses, the Qur'an reminds man of his weakness, saying: At the time of birth, you had no awareness of anything; you were utterly in a state of weakness such that after acquiring strength, you shall also be heading toward weakness again.

In every moment, you are under the threat of different types of dangers.

If the movement (both rotation and revolution) of the earth should slow down or should the day stand still, who could expedite its movement and change it?

﴿ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ ﴾

**“Say, ‘Tell me, should your water sink down {into the ground}, who will bring you running water?’”<sup>8</sup>**

﴿ لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أَمْحًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

**“If We wish We can make it (water) bitter. Then why do you not give thanks?”<sup>9</sup>**

﴿ لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ ﴾

**“If We wish, We surely turn it (plant) into chaff, whereat you are left stunned (or regretful).”<sup>10</sup>**

﴿ إِنْ نَشَاءُ نَخْسِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطْ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسْفًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ﴾

***“If We like, We can make the earth swallow them, or let fall on them a fragment from the sky.”<sup>11</sup>***

The Qur’an mentions these and tens of other examples so as to take man out of his negligence, obliterate his pride and invite him toward worship and submissiveness to the Creator.

## **The profundity of worship**

Worship is an act, which we outwardly consider as a type of humility, but it has deeper profundity. Worship stems from the soul; it springs from gnosis {*ma‘rifah*}; it emanates from cognition; it originates from piety {*taqaddus*}; it radiates from adoration; it derives from admiration; it comes from seeking refuge and assistance; and it arises from the love of the perfections {*kamalat*} of the Worshipped Being {*ma‘bud*}.

Yes, worship is outwardly a simple act, but if it is other than the above, worship will not be entertained by man. Worship means emptying the heart of material things, letting the spirit fly, and allowing the feet to make steps beyond the seeable and hearable things. Worship guarantees the love of man whose politeness in relation to his Lord is sometimes expressed through eulogy and adoration; at other times through glorification {*tasbih*} and sanctification {*taqdis*}; and yet at some other times, through gratitude and gestures of submission.

## **Indifference toward worship**

Hadrat<sup>12</sup> ‘Ali (‘a) says:

قَرَّتْ إِذَا عَيْنُهُ إِذَا أَقْتَدَى بَعْدَ السَّنِينَ الْمَتَطَاوِلَةَ بِالْبَهِيمَةِ الْهَامِلَةِ وَالسَّائِمَةِ الْمَرْعِيَّةِ.

“May I get blind if after having passed so many years of my life (and with the possession of all talent, capabilities, facilities, intellect, knowledge, and inspiration), I now turn into an animal in human form!”

Yes, civilization, technology and the progress of new instruments have made life more comfortable, bestowing comfort and welfare as a gift (to us), but does the perfection of man lie in attaining such material comforts?

If this is so, then the animals are more advanced than man in food, clothing, habitation, and the satisfaction of carnal desire!

In terms of food, they eat better, are more comfortable, and have no need of cooking and preparation!

In terms of clothing, they have no need for sewing, washing and ironing!

In terms of carnal desire, they satisfy it without difficulty and predicament.

In procuring a place for habitation, there are so many birds and insects whose technique in making nests and dens astonishes man.

In essence, has this technological advancement brought about progress in our humanness as well?

Have individual and collective corruptions lessened?

Has this comfort also brought tranquility?

In any case, just not placing the hand of man in that of the infallible and just leaders would be an injustice to humanity, if the heart of man is not linked to God, an insult would have been made to the station of humanity.

## The pleasure of God as the axis of worship

Just as heavenly bodies and the earth always have a fixed axis though they make diverse rotations and revolutions, worship, with all its various forms and appearances, is also anchored in a fixed axis, which is the pleasure of God. This is in spite of the fact that spatial and temporal as well as individual and collective circumstances determine the type of movement along this axis.

For example, travel makes (a four-cycle {rak'ah}) prayer a two-rak'ah prayer; illness may necessitate changes in the form of the prayer. Yet, the two-rak'ah or shortened prayer is still a prayer and it is based on the axis of remembering God, seeking His pleasure and performing His command:

﴿ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴾

***“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”*** [13](#)

## The spirit of worship

Worship is the nourishment of the soul and the best food is that which is absorbed by the body. Similarly, the best act of worship is that which is internalized by the soul; that is, if it is performed with enthusiasm and presence of heart. Eating too much food is not beneficial. What is important is eating useful food.

The Holy Prophet (S) [14](#) said to Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Ansari:

إِنَّ هَذَا الدِّينَ فَأَوْغِلْ فِيهِ بِرِفْقٍ وَلَا تُبَغِّضْ إِلَى نَفْسِكَ عِبَادَةَ اللَّهِ.

Indeed this religion is firm. Therefore, act moderately in relation to it (and when you have no spiritual

readiness for worship, do not impose it on yourself) so that the worship of Allah would not be detested by you. [15](#)

In another *hadith*, we also read that the Holy Prophet (S) said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ عَشِقَ الْعِبَادَةَ وَ عَانَقَهَا.

“Blessed is he who loves worship and is always fond of it.” [16](#)

## Moderation in worship

The spirit of worship and devotion remains alive when man is moderate in its performance. This has been narrated in the books of *hadith* under the heading, *bab al-iqtisad fi'l-‘ibadah* {section on moderation in worship}. [17](#)

Man is healthy when there is proportionality in his bodily limbs, and if a certain body member is bigger or smaller than the normal size, it is considered deformed (or defective in general). In spiritual affairs, man should also harmoniously nurture all that is valuable in himself.

It was reported to the Holy Prophet (S) that under the pretext of worship, a group of his *ummah* {community} had abandoned their spouses and children and had secluded themselves in the mosque. The Prophet stated in a loud voice: “This is not my way and method. I myself am living with my spouses and reside in my house. Anyone who acts contrary to this does not belong to me.” [18](#)

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) narrates the story of a Muslim who had a Christian neighbor that embraced Islam. That Muslim had awakened the former Christian during the first dawn (prior to the time for the dawn prayer {*salah as-subh*}), brought him to the mosque and said to him: “Perform your supererogatory night prayers {*tahajjud*} till the time for the dawn prayer and thereafter, engage in supplication {*du‘a*} till the sunrise.

Then, read the Qur’an up to the time for the noon prayer {*salah az-zuhr*}.” In this manner, the Muslim urged the former Christian to engage in prayer, recital of the Qur’an and supplication day and night. When the new Muslim returned home, he abandoned Islam and did not go to the mosque anymore. [19](#)

Yes, such extremism and lack of moderation in worship will drive people away.

The martyred professor, Murtada Mutahhari, [20](#) narrates that ‘Amru ibn al-‘As had two sons. One was a votary of Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) while the other was a supporter of Mu‘awiyah. One day, the Prophet (S) said to the good son of ‘Amru ibn al-‘As (named ‘Abd Allah): “I have heard that you spend your night in worship and your day in fasting.” He said: “Yes, O Messenger of Allah.” The Prophet (S) said: “This way is not acceptable to me.” [21](#)

We read in the traditions:

إِنَّ لِلْقُلُوبِ إِقْبَالَ وَإِدْبَارًا

“Indeed, there is inclination and disinclination in the heart (of man).”<sup>22</sup>

You have to take advantage of wherever it inclines and leans to. And whenever it is not ready, do not exert pressure on it otherwise it will unconsciously show a negative reaction.

In the Islamic instructions it is mentioned that you have to divide your time into four parts, and allot time for entertainment and enjoyment, for if you do so, you will also have enthusiasm for other activities.<sup>23</sup>

The Holy Qur’an gives the title of “violators” to the Jews who engaged in work and went fishing during the Sabbath Day:

﴿وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ﴾

**“And certainly you know those of you who violated the Sabbath.”**<sup>24</sup>

In any case, keeping zeal and ardor in worship is a principle which comes into being through moderation.

## Management in worship

Management is confined not only to social, political and economic issues. In fact, devotional affairs are also in need of management.

The principles discussed in management are: Planning and work design; selection of an efficient workforce; discipline and supervision; encouragement and control and the like. In the domain of worship, these principles should also be observed in order to engender advancement and perfection.

Prayer has a specific design; it starts with *takbir* {utterance of *Allahu akbar*} and ends with *salam* or *taslim* {salutation}. Its number of *rak‘ahs* {cycles}, *ruku‘* {bowing down} and *sujud* {prostration} is specified. Its time of performance is determined and its direction is toward the *qiblah* {the *Ka‘bah* in Mecca}.

The mere design, however, is not enough. Its performance also necessitates the selection of a competent and socially oriented congregational prayer leader {*imam*}. Through good manners, morality, supervision, and enthusiasm, the people encouraged and persuaded to perform prayer and attend the mosque.

Order and arrangement in the lines of the congregation as well as in following the *Imam* should be

observed. In any case, it requires perfect management for it to be conducted in the best possible manner.

## Worship as a 24-hour pharmacy

Anyone can have communion with God at any time, under any circumstance, and without any prior arrangement and mediation. Although special times such as the time of dawn, sunset on Friday, after the deliverance of the Friday prayer sermons, when it is raining, and the Night of Power *{layla al-qadr}*<sup>25</sup> have particular importance for supplication *{du'a}* and worship *{ibadah}*, supplication and devotion are not confined to these periods.

Worship, at any rate, is the medicine for negligence, oblivion and disobedience: *“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”*<sup>26</sup> It is the source of tranquility and serenity and the effacer of anxieties and worries—*“Look! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!”*<sup>27</sup>

## Worship as the source of tranquility

You know of ruffian *taghuts*, big capitalists, and possessors of knowledge, industry and technology, but do you know anyone among them who has peace of mind and tranquility of heart?

Do Western societies today have peace of mind and tranquility of heart?

Have the possession of power, industry and wealth brought about serenity, friendship, tranquility, and peace of mind?

Yet, worship and obedience to God bring about such a state for the saints of God that under no circumstance whatsoever would they experience anxiety. At this juncture, it is appropriate for me to narrate two recollections of the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini (q):<sup>28</sup>

After the escape of the Shah from Iran, even though his subservient puppet, Shapur Bakhtiyar was ruling, Imam Khomeini decided to return to his country after 14 years in exile. A reporter in the airplane asked him: “What do you feel now?” He replied: “Nothing!”

This is while millions of enthusiastic Iranians were worrying for the safety of the Imam. Having peace of mind, the Imam was busy in the night supererogatory prayers and remembrance of God.

This tranquility was only because of his constant remembrance of Him.

The other recollection, which I heard from the son of the Imam, the late Hajj Sayyid Ahmad Khomeini, is this: “On the day of the Shah’s escape from Iran, tens of reporters and photo journalists from around the world gathered in the house of the Imam in Paris in order to relay his speeches to the world. The Imam stood on a chair and uttered a few statements.

Then, he turned to me and asked: ‘Ahmad, has the time for the noon prayer {*salah az-zuhr*} arrived?’ I said: ‘Yes.’ Without any delay, the Imam concluded his speech and came down from the chair for the performance of prayer at its initial (and best) time. All were perplexed as to what had happened. I said: ‘The Imam performs his prayer on time.’”

What the Imam did in Paris was a lesson he had learned from his leader, Imam ar-Rida (‘a). It has been recorded in history that the chief of the group of Sabeans, a group that has been mentioned in the Qur’an,<sup>29</sup> was an arrogant and fanatic scholar.

Whenever he would sit down in a dialogue with Imam ar-Rida (‘a), he would not surrender and concede until when, during a certain intricate discussion, his mind became so confused that he said: “Now, my heart has softened and I accepted your logic.” At that time, the call to prayer {*adhan*} was recited. Imam ar-Rida (‘a) left the assembly in order to pray.

Although the companions of the Imam (‘a) insisted that if he continued the discussion for some moments, the chief of the Sabeans and all his followers would become Muslims, he (‘a) said: “To perform the prayer at its earliest (and best) time is more important than discussion. If he really deserves it, he can also accept the truth after the prayer. The Sabean scholar, who saw this dignity, decisiveness, obedience and love for the truth in the Imam (‘a), became more interested.<sup>30</sup>

## Worship and acquisitions

Worship is a means to acquire divine help and graces.

﴿ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴾

**“And worship you Lord until certainty (or death) comes to you.”<sup>31</sup>**

Hadrat Musa (Moses) (‘a) engaged in worship and litanies for 40 days and nights on the Mount of Tur for the acquisition of the heavenly book, *Tawrah* (Torah). The Holy Prophet of Islam (S) was busy in the performance of acts of worship in the cave of Hira for a long time before the acquisition of divine revelation. It is thus stated in the traditions:

مَنْ أَخْلَصَ الْعِبَادَةَ لِلَّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا ظَهَرَتْ يَنَابِيعُ الْحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَى لِسَانِهِ.

“He who sincerely worships Allah for forty days, springs of wisdom shall appear from his heart to his tongue.”<sup>32</sup>

Yes, sincere worship is an academy that trains in the course of forty days the sage who would acquire wisdom from the divine fountain and share it with others.

## The reciprocal effects of faith and worship

Just as faith draws man toward worship, worship is also effective in strengthening faith. Their similitude is that of a root which delivers water and food to the branches, and in turn, the branches transfer heat and light to the root. Yes, whenever worship improves and increases, man's enthusiasm toward the Object of Worship is also enhanced.

## The philosophy of worship according to the Qur'an

The Qur'an regards the remembrance of God as the philosophy of prayer:

***"And maintain the prayer for My remembrance."***<sup>33</sup>

And the remembrance of God is the source of tranquility of the heart:

***"Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!"***<sup>34</sup>

And the consequence of tranquility of the heart is soaring to the celestial realm:

***"O soul at peace! Return to your Lord!"***<sup>35</sup>

In other cases, the Qur'an considers gratitude to God as the reason behind worship:

﴿ اَعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ﴾

***"Worship you Lord, who created you."***<sup>36</sup>

﴿ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ \* الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ﴾

***"Let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them {and saved them} from hunger, and secured them from fear."***<sup>37</sup>

In some verses, the educational function of prayer has been pointed out:

﴿ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ﴾

***"Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs."***<sup>38</sup>

For the sake of the authenticity or acceptance of prayer, the performer of prayer has no option but to observe the religious precepts as a whole, the observance of which is itself a strong foundation for

abstaining from sin and indecency. Yes, anyone who would wear a white garment will naturally not sit on a dirty and polluted ground.

After enjoining prayer, the Qur'an states:

﴿ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ﴾

***“Indeed good deeds efface misdeeds.”***<sup>39</sup>

Thus, prayer is a practical repentance for past sins, and through this verse, God gives hope to the sinner that if he would perform meritorious acts such as prayer and worship, his misdeeds will be erased.

## **Prayer in the words of Imam 'Ali ('a)**

Hadrat 'Ali's ('a) many references to prayer and the remembrance of God as recorded in *Nahj al-Balaghah*<sup>40</sup> have been compiled in a book entitled, *Namaz dar Nahj al-Balagheh* {Prayer in *Nahj al-Balaghah*}. Here, I shall quote a statement of the Imam ('a) concerning the philosophy of glorification and the remembrance of God whose most important manifestation is prayer:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَعَلَ الذِّكْرَ جَلَاءً لِلْقُلُوبِ تَسْمَعُ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْوَقْرَةِ وَ تُبْصِرُ بِهِ بَعْدَ الْعَشْوَةِ

Certainly, Allah, the Glorified, the Sublime, has made His remembrance the light for hearts which hear with its help despite deafness, see with its help despite blindness and become submissive with its help despite unruliness.<sup>41</sup>

Then, concerning the blessings of prayer, the Imam ('a) said:

قَدْ حَفَّتْ بِهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَ نُزِلَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّكِينَةُ وَ فُتِحَتْ لَهُمُ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَ أُعِدَّتْ لَهُمُ مَقَاعِدُ الْكِرَامَاتِ

The angels have surrounded them (performers of prayer) and peace is showered upon them. The doors of heaven are opened for them and abodes of blessedness, of which He had informed them, have been prepared for them.<sup>42</sup>

In another sermon, the Imam ('a) says:

وَ أَنْهَا لَتَحْتَ الذُّنُوبِ حَتَّ الْوَرَقِ وَ تُطْلِقُهَا إِطْلَاقَ الرَّبِقِ

***“Certainly, prayer removes sins like autumn strips leaves off from trees, and it liberates you from the rope (of sins) tied around your neck.”***<sup>43</sup>

In continuation, he narrates an interesting comparison from the Holy Prophet (S):

“Prayer is like a hot spring situated at someone’s door. If he takes a bath in it five times a day, will then any dirt remain on him?”[44](#)

In Sermon 196, the Imam (‘a) enumerates some of the moral vices such as pride {*kibr*}, disobedience and oppression {*zulm*}, and then he (‘a) says: “It is on account of these perils that God has encouraged His believing servants to perform *salah* and *zakah*,[45](#) to fast during the days when it is made obligatory.” Then, concerning the effects of prayer, he (‘a) says:

تَسْكِيناً لِأَطْرَافِهِمْ، تَخْشِيعاً لِأَبْصَارِهِمْ، تَذَلِيلًا لِنُفُوسِهِمْ تَخْفِيزًا، لِقُلُوبِهِمْ، إِزَالَةً لِلْخَيْلَاءِ عَنْهُمْ إِنْ أَوْ حَشْتَهُمُ الْوَحْشَةَ  
أَنْسَهُمْ ذِكْرَكَ.

{This act of worship} gives their (God’s believing servants’) limbs peace and rest, casts fear in their eyes, softens their spirits, cultivates a sense of humility in their hearts and purges them from pride. At the time of fear, anxiety and loneliness, remembrance of You gives them enthusiasm and intimacy.[46](#)

Of course, it is obvious that everyone does not receive such benefits from prayer; rather, it is only that group which is enamored by prayer and the remembrance of God. This group will not exchange them for the entire world.

## The effects and blessings of servitude and submission

### 1. Sense of honor and esteem

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) says in his litanies {*munajat*}:

إِلٰهِي كَفَىٰ بِي عِزًّا أَنْ أَكُونَ لَكَ عَبْدًا.

“O Lord! It is already enough of an honor for me that I am Your servant.”[47](#)

Which honor is more sublime than that man could talk to his Creator and He in turn would listen to the words of man and grant them?!

In this fleeting world, if a person speaks with a scholar or a great man, he feels a sense of honor because of his presence and the opportunity to be in conversation with him, and that a person who was once a student of a certain distinguished professor also gives him self-esteem.

### 2. Sense of strength

So long as a child is holding the hand of his strong and kind father, he feels a sense of strength, but if he

is alone, he experiences fear and apprehension lest others annoyed him.

A person who is linked to God feels a sense of strength vis-à-vis the superpowers, *taghuts* and arrogant (powers).

### 3. Sense of dignity

Dignity {‘*izzah*} means not to come under the influence of others. In the school {*maktab*} of the prophets {*anbiya*} (‘*a*), all dignity belongs to God just as all power belongs to Him. Thus, the Qur’an criticizes those who incline to other than God, saying: “Do you want dignity from other than God?”[48](#)

It is natural that linking with the Absolute Beloved and Eternal Power gives dignity to man, just as words such as “*Allahu akbar*” {Allah is greater} humiliate the *taghuts* in the eyes of man and make him dignified in comparison to them.

So, the Qur’an orders us to seek power and strength from prayer and worship when we face difficulties and adversities:

﴿ وَالصَّلَاةِ بِالصَّبْرِ وَاسْتَعِينُوا ﴾

**“And take recourse in patience and prayer.”[49](#)**

During critical moments, the saints of God also used to strengthen themselves through prayer. On the afternoon of the ninth day of Muharram in Karbala’, the army of Yazid made an assault on the camp of Imam al-Husayn (‘*a*). The Imam (‘*a*) said: “Postpone the battle for one night as I am fond of prayer and I would like to engage in worship tonight till morning.”[50](#)

The righteous servants of God are not only fond of the obligatory {*wajib*} prayers but also of the recommended {*mustahab*} prayers. The recommended prayer is a sign of fondness for prayer. There are many people who perform the obligatory prayers due to fear of divine wrath for missing them. With respect to the recommended prayer, however, love rather than fear is not the issue.

Yes, anyone who loves somebody likes to talk with him more and does not want to separate from him. How could man claim that he loves God when he has no enthusiasm for speaking with Him?!

Of course, this distaste for prayer and recommended acts is not without reason. In fact, according to the traditions, sins take away the opportunity for the night and dawn supererogatory prayers.[51](#)

In any case, the one who does not perform the optional prayers is not worthy of expecting virtues from God, just like someone who is waiting for the advent of the Reformer {*muslih*} (Imam al-Mahdi (‘*a*)) while he himself is not reformed or righteous {*salih*}.

The recommended prayers also compensate for the defects and shortcomings of the obligatory prayers.<sup>52</sup> A certain person asked the Imam (‘a): “My heart is not in my prayer and I do not benefit from the blessings of prayer. What should I do?” The Imam (‘a) said: “After the obligatory prayers, perform the optional prayers as they compensate for the shortcomings of the former and lead to the acceptance of the obligatory prayers.”

It is on account of these effects and blessings that the saints of God paid much attention not only to the obligatory prayers but also to the optional prayers, and they used to keep aloof from those things that obstruct and disturb this religious wayfaring and spiritual ascension such as excessive eating, excessive talking, excessive sleeping, eating unlawful or unlawfully earned food, debauchery, and worldly engagements, which keep man away from worship and make prayer heavy for him. As the Qur’an says:

﴿ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴾

**“And it (prayer) is indeed hard except for the humble.”<sup>53</sup>**

#### **4. Training agent**

Although prayer is spiritual and religious communion whose aim is the remembrance of God, Islam seeks to implement this spirit (of communion) under the framework of a set of educative programs, and thus, it has set many requirements for it—i.e. requirements for the correctness of the prayer, requirements for its acceptance and requirements for its perfection.

Cleanliness of the body and clothing, facing the *qiblah*, correct recital of the words, permissibility {*mubah*} of the place and clothing of the performer of prayer are some of the factors necessary for the correctness of prayer, which are related to the body of the performer and not his soul.

However, Islam has framed this prayer in this manner so as to give lessons to the Muslims about hygiene, cleanliness, independence, and the observance of the rights of others.

Just like concentration, complete devotion, acceptance of the leadership of the infallible Imams (‘a) and payment of those financial obligations such as *khums*<sup>54</sup> and *zakat* are requirements for the acceptance of prayer, so too are the performance of prayer at its earliest time, in the mosque and in congregation, that the performer of the prayer wears clean garments, applies perfume, brushes his teeth, and observes the order of the lines and the like are among the requirements for the perfection of prayer.

A keen scrutiny of these requisites makes it clear that each one of them plays a key role in training human beings.

Whichever direction we stand in prayer is toward God, as the Qur’an states:

﴿ فَأَيُّمَّا تُوَلُّوا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ﴾

***“So whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah!”<sup>55</sup>***

However, in order for Muslim society to understand that it must have a single direction and learn the lesson of unity and solidarity, everyone is ordered to face a single direction. But why is that direction toward the *Ka’bah*?

It is because the *Ka’bah* is the first place to have been selected as a place for the worship of mankind:

﴿ إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

***“Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah,<sup>56</sup> blessed and a guidance for all nations.”<sup>57</sup>***

On one hand, the founder and custodians of the *Ka’bah* throughout history have been prophets (‘a). Thus, standing facing the *Ka’bah* is a sort of ideological solidarity throughout the ages.

On the other hand, the *Ka’bah* is the source of independence. It is because when the Muslims were still facing the Bayt al-Muqaddas, the *qiblah* of the Jews and Christians, the latter taunted the former, saying: “You are standing while facing our *qiblah*; why do you have no independence?” The Qur’an thus states with utmost explicitness:

﴿ قَوْلٍ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ ﴾

***“Turn your face toward the Holy Mosque, and wherever you may be, turn your faces toward it, so that the people may have no argument against you.”<sup>58</sup>***

In sum, the *Ka’bah* is the source of independence, unity and solidarity, and these are the educative lessons of prayer.

## **5. Summoning up spirits!**

The market for hypnotism and summoning up spirits has flourished nowadays in the world, but our point is not those things. Our point is that we have to summon up our runaway soul toward the Creator through prayer and let this truant pupil be present in class. One of the blessings of prayer is the summoning up of the rebellious and runaway soul to the Presence of God.

In the *Munajat ash-Shakkin*, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) complains in the Presence of God against his own soul, saying: “O God! I am complaining to You against a soul which is inclined toward carnal

desires and is escaping from the truth.”

It is this soul that considers sin to be sweet and light to man, justifying it thus: “You will repent afterward anyway,” or “Others have also done these deeds.” The soul is like a wanton child. If his father is not watchful of him, he will separate from his father and go wherever he wants, and in every moment he is susceptible to every kind of danger.

The best way of controlling this rebellious soul is for man to summon it several times a day to the Presence of God and thereby remove its negligence and save it from drowning in the quagmire of material things.

## **6. Guardianship {wilayah} over creation!**

Among the blessings of prayer and worship is that gradually man acquires dominance over the universe.

**First step:** The Qur’an says:

﴿إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا﴾

***“If you are wary of Allah, He shall appoint a criterion<sup>59</sup> for you.”<sup>60</sup>***

In another place, it states:

﴿يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ﴾

***“And give you a light to walk by.”<sup>61</sup>***

So, God-wariness {*taqwa*}—the most important aspect of which is servitude to God and prayer—is a step toward the acquisition of light {*nur*} and insight {*basirah*}.

**Second step:** Those who accept divine guidance and are within the orbit of truth, God will enhance the guidance they possess:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى﴾

***“As for those who are {rightly} guided, He enhances their guidance.”<sup>62</sup>***

Hence, their light and guidance shall not cease; rather, on account of the submission and servitude, they are always in a state of advancement and proximity {*qurb*} (to God), and the radiance of their existence shines brighter.

**Third step:** Since these individuals are exerting effort in the way of God, God will show them many paths leading toward perfection:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ﴾

**“As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways.”**[63](#)

**Fourth step:** Whenever Satan makes an insinuation to them, they will immediately be reminded and ask forgiveness from Allah:

﴿ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِّنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا ﴾

**“When those who are God-wary are touched by a visitation (or insinuation) of Satan, they remember {Allah}.”**[64](#)

**Fifth step:** Prayer is the best means for self-building and keeping aloof from indecency and evil:

﴿ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ﴾

**“Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs.”**[65](#)

After following these steps, man will acquire dominance over his soul. He harnesses it and will not be entangled by insinuations and desires. As a matter of fact, whenever the pressure of inner insinuation {*waswasah*} and outer *taghut* is intensified, he will again seek assistance through prayer and patience:

﴿ وَالصَّلَاةُ بِالصَّبْرِ وَاسْتَعِينُوا ﴾

**“And take recourse in patience and prayer.”**[66](#)

**Sixth step:** God-wary {*muttaqi*} individuals, whose existence is illuminated with the divine light move a step forward with every prayer, for prayer is not repetition; it is an ascension. The stairs of a ladder are all similar, but every stair brings man to a higher stage. It is like someone who digs a well. Apparently, he is doing a repetitive task and is always digging, but in reality, with every strike that he makes, his well is becoming deeper.

The *rak'ahs* {cycles} of prayer are apparently repetitive, but in reality, they are stairs in climbing the ladder of perfection and for deepening gnosis {*ma'rifah*} and faith {*iman*}.

The performer of prayer does not allow his life to become a grazing land for Satan or to be dominated by

him. In the *Du'a' Makarim al-Akhlaq*, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) asks this from God: "O Lord! If my life is a meadow for Satan, terminate it!"

Satan not only gives illusion and fancy but also crushes the soul of man under his feet and makes man negligent of the truth and the reality.

Yes, the Holy Prophet (S) was awake even when he was asleep whereas we are asleep while awake and even while we are praying our souls are the victims of Satan and the imagination. As Mawlawi says:

گفت پیغمبر که عینای ینام

لا ینام القلب عن ربّ الأنام

چشم تو بیدار و دل رفته به خواب

چشم من خفته، دلم در فتح باب

*The Prophet said, "My two eyes are asleep while my heart doesn't sleep and forget the Lord of the creatures.*

*Your eyes are awake and the heart fell asleep. My eyes are asleep while my heart is looking for the opening door."*

In another place, he says:

گفت پیغمبر که دل، همچون پری است

در بیابانی اسیر صرصری است

باد، پر را هر طرف راند گزاف

گه چپ و گه راست با صد اختلاف

*The Prophet said that the heart is like a feather, which is captured in a desert by a wind.*

*The wind shoots away the feather to every corner vainly. Sometimes to the left and sometimes to the right with a hundred difference.*

If this soul is not bridled, every moment it can draw man toward corruption:

﴿ إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي ﴾

**“For the {carnal} soul indeed prompts {men} to evil, except inasmuch as my Lord has mercy.”<sup>67</sup>**

For this reason, the Qur’an regards paradise as exclusive for those who have no desire for dominance and corruption not only in words but also in the heart.<sup>68</sup> And for those who prevent their souls from following their desires, paradise shall be their abode.<sup>69</sup>

The saints of God are the rulers {*hukama*} over their minds and thoughts and not condemned {*mahkumin*} by them. As a result of their servitude to God, they have such guardianship {*wilayah*} and dominance {*sultah*} over their souls that they do not allow even an insinuation {*waswasah*} to enter their hearts.

من چو مرغ اوجم، اندیشه مگس

کی بود بر من مگس را دسترس

*I am like a bird, He is like Jamshid, and the thought over the fly.*

*When can I have access over the fly?*

After man attains light, cognition and awareness; controls the soul through gnostic, zealous and conscious prayers; sets his soul toward the pleasure of God; and acquires guardianship and dominance over his soul, he will also acquire dominance over creation. His supplications will be effective and he can perform divine works.

The miracles of the prophets (‘a) are the same authority over creation and mastery over nature, which they performed with divine permission.

They are thus saying:

العُبُودِيَّةُ جُوهْرَةٌ كُنْهَهَا الرَّبُّوبِيَّةُ.

“Servitude {*ubudiyyah*} is a gem that brings about lordship {*rububiyyah*}.”

It refers to the dominance over the creation which results from servitude to God.

It is recorded in the *hadith* that God says:

“Through optional and recommended acts, man gets nearer to Me step by step until such a time that he becomes My beloved {*mahbub*} and once he attains this station, I will become his eyes, ears, tongue, and hand, and all his actions will become divine and purposeful. He will reach a point where like Hadrat Ibrahim (Abraham) (‘a), he will say:

﴿ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

***“Indeed my prayer and my worship, my life and my death are for the sake of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.”<sup>70</sup>***

## **The visage of prayer**

Whatever can be said and written about prayer would still not be enough to fully describe it. How could it be possible to express in a few words the pillar of religion, the banner of Islam, the reminiscence of religions and prophets, and the pivot of the acceptance of all deeds?

- Prayer is the program for every morning and evening. In the morning the first obligatory word is prayer and in the evening the last obligation is prayer. So, the beginning and the conduct of every day is through remembrance and for the sake of God.
- Prayer is the secret of the one who—wherever he is and whoever he is, whether traveling or not, on the ground or in the air, whether in poverty or in affluence—is subservient to Him and not to other than Him.
- Prayer is the practical ideology of the Muslim in which he expresses his beliefs, ideas, aspirations, and models.
- Prayer means strengthening values and preventing the disintegration of the personality of individuals and members of the society in the same way that if the materials of a building are weak, the building will collapse.
- The call to prayer {*adhan*} is the clarion of monotheism {*tawhid*}, which summons the scattered soldiers of Islam in a single line and under a single banner, and places them behind a just leader {*imam*}.
- The *imam* of the congregation {*jama‘ah*} is one person so as to serve as a clue that the *imam* of the society {*jami‘ah*} should also be one person so as to have centralization in the conduct of affairs.
- The *imam* of the congregation is supposed to attend to the weakest among the people, and this is a lesson that in decision-making, the deprived class of the society must be attended to. While praying,

when the Messenger of Allah (S) heard the cry of a child, he hurriedly performed the prayer so that in case the mother of the child had ever participated in prayer, she could quickly attend to the needs of her child![71](#)

- The first command after the creation of man was the command for prostration addressed to the angels: “Prostrate before Adam (Adam)!”[72](#)
- The first place on earth that surfaced and became dry was the site of worship (Mecca and the *Ka’bah*).[73](#)
- The first task done by the Messenger of Allah (S) after his emigration {*hijrah*} to Medina was the construction of a mosque.
- Prayer is both the enjoinder of what is good {*amr bi’l-ma’ruf*} and the forbiddance of what is evil {*nahyi ‘ani’l-munkar*}. We say every day in the *adhan* and *iqamah*: “Come to prayer; come to (the means of) success; come to the best of deeds.” That is, of all affairs, the best deed is prayer. Also, prayer keeps man away from corruption and indecency:

﴿ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ﴾

***“Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs.”***[74](#)

- Prayer consists of movements which have emanated from consciousness and cognition. It is through the cognition of God that by His order, for His sake and because of zeal for Him, we stand in prayer, and thus, the Qur’an has prohibited us from praying while in a state of drunkenness[75](#) and indolence[76](#) so that whatever we recite in prayer must be with consciousness and attention.
- Prayer gives awareness. The *Jum’ah* prayer is held every Friday of the week and prior to it two sermons {*khutbahs*} are delivered. These two sermons are made in lieu of two *rak’ahs* of prayer, and in a sense, are part of the prayer. According to Imam ar-Rida (‘a), the sermons must inform the people of all the issues in the world.[77](#) Listening to the sermons and then praying means being informed and then praying.
- Prayer means exit from one’s self and soaring toward God. The Qur’an says in this regard:

﴿ وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ﴾

***“And whoever leaves his home migrating toward Allah and His Apostle, and is then overtaken by death, his reward shall certainly fall on Allah.”***[78](#)

Imam Khomeini says:

Migration {*hijrah*} from the abode of the heart to God is one of the manifestations of this verse. Migration from self-admiration, self-centeredness and self-conceit toward worship of God, love of God and God-wariness is the greatest of migrations.<sup>79</sup>

- Prayer is in the rank {*manzilah*} of the Greatest Name of Allah {*ism al-a'zam*}, nay it is the Great Name of Allah itself!
- In prayer, the honor {*izzah*} of the Lord {*rabb*} and the lowliness {*dhillah*} of the servant {*abd*} is manifested, and this station is already sublime.
- Prayer is the banner of Islam.

Just as a banner is a symbol, prayer is the symbol and the emblem of Islam. Just as a flag is respected, and insulting it is tantamount to insulting a nation and country, insulting and neglecting prayer also means insulting and neglecting the religion as a whole. Just as hoisting the flag is a sign of political vitality and military prowess, performance of prayer is also the same.

## Prayer and the Qur'an

In many cases, the Qur'an and prayer have been mentioned together such as in this verse:

﴿ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ﴾

***“Indeed those who recite the Book of Allah and maintain the prayer.”<sup>80</sup>***

And in another place, it states:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُمَسِّكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ ﴾

***“As for those who hold fast to the Book and maintain the prayer.”<sup>81</sup>***

Sometimes, one attribute has been mentioned for prayer and the Qur'an, just as the word 'remembrance' {*dhikr*} has also been mentioned for the Qur'an:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴾

***“Indeed We have sent down the Reminder and indeed We will preserve it.”<sup>82</sup>***

In addition, the philosophy of prayer has also been mentioned as 'remembrance':

﴿ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴾

**“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”<sup>83</sup>**

What is interesting is that sometimes instead of the word ‘prayer’ {*salah*}, the word ‘recital’ {*qur’an*} has been mentioned, such as in this verse:

﴿ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ﴾

**“Indeed the dawn recital is attended {by angels}.”<sup>84</sup>**

It is said that what is meant by the ‘dawn recital’ {*qur’an al-fajr*} is the dawn prayer {*salah as-subh*}.

Apart from the fact that the recital of the Qur’an in the form of *Surah al-Fatihah* and another *surah* is one of the obligatory parts of the prayer, prayer is discussed in most *surahs* {*suwar*} of the Qur’an including both the longest *surah* (*Surah al-Baqarah*, n. 2) and the shortest *surah* (*Surah al-Kawthar*, n. 108).

## Prayer and qisas!

The law on *qisas*<sup>85</sup> is discussed not only in Islam but in all divine religions according to which the punishment for a person who cuts somebody’s ear is to cut his ear and the penalty of one who breaks somebody’s tooth is to break his tooth as well, in order to implement justice. One of the cases of *qisas* is that the hand of a thief must be amputated. But only four fingers are to be amputated and the palm of his hand should not be included; for, the Qur’an says:

﴿ وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا ﴾

**“The places of worship belong to Allah, so do not invoke anyone along with Allah.”<sup>86</sup>**

This is because at the time of prostration {*sujud*} in prayer, he has to put the palm of his hand on the ground. Thus, concerning the penalty for theft, the issue of prayer and prostration must be taken into account and the palm of his hand should not be amputated, so even a thief’s right of worship is respected!

## Worship {‘ibadah} and guardianship {wilayah}

Worship {‘*ibadah*} has value when it is not superficial. In fact, it should be associated with cognizance of the heavenly leader and his guardianship {*wilayah*} and associated with humility and its particular disciplines.

Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) was encumbered by a group of holier-than-thou prayer performers who were known in history under the labels, *Mariqun* and *Khawarij*.<sup>87</sup> They were those whose foreheads were calloused on account of long and frequent prostrations in prayer. Yet, they revolted against ‘Ali (‘a) and unsheathed their swords against him. We also read in the *hadiths* that when the Imam of the Time (‘a) would appear, a group of mosques will act against him.

Do not imagine that those who had gone to Karbala’ to kill Imam al-Husayn (‘a) were all neglectors of prayer {*tarik as-salah*}. In fact, they used to even attend congregational prayers! Mu‘awiyah and Yazid themselves were mosque-goers!

Yes, worship, which is associated with ignorance {*jahalah*}, regards killing the most devoted worshipper {‘*abid*} among mankind as the greatest form of worship, and goes to kill ‘Ali (‘a) on the Night of Power {*laylah al-qadr*} with the aim of seeking nearness to Allah!

Not only prayer but in fact all other forms of worship should be associated with cognizance of the leader of truth and obedience to him. It has been stated in the traditions that God has made *Haji* obligatory so that the people could gather around His House and establish communication with the infallible Imams (‘a) at this center of gathering.

Nowadays, however, millions of people gather around the *Ka‘bah* but because they have no divine leader they have been splintered, and in spite of having this center of unity and economic leverage, they still suffer setbacks from a handful of Jews!

Yes, Islam is a totality which is indivisible. Prayer without the acknowledgment of guardianship {*wilayah*} is unacceptable. Prayer without the payment of *zakah* is invalid. In the same manner, alms-giving without the performance of prayer is nullified.

The precepts of Islam are like limbs of a body none of which can replace the other. The eye can neither assume the function of the ear nor can the ear assume the function of the hand. In Islam also, the performance of prayer cannot replace the payment of *zakat*. In the same manner, neither of the two can be substituted for *jihad* and struggle in the way of God. Rather, the aggregate of them is Islam.

## [Prayer and leadership](#)

If the prayer is only conducted by the divine leaders, the tentacles of oppression and the *taghut* would be shattered. The ‘*Id* {feast} prayer of Imam ar-Rida (‘a) commenced with such grandeur and majesty that the oppressive government itself trembled and understood that if they allowed this prayer to be completed, the ‘Abbasid rule would also come to an end. Thus, Ma’mun ordered the Imam (‘a) to be taken into custody along the way.

The reason why the prayers of Muslims today are ineffective is that only a part of the injunctions of the Qur’an are practiced while other parts are forgotten. In this regard, the Qur’an states:

﴿ وَ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَ آتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَ أَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ ﴾

***“Maintain the prayer and give the zakat, and obey the Apostle.”<sup>88</sup>***

Today, however, some people perform prayers but do not give *zakah*. They are also those who say their prayers and give *zakah* but accept the guardianship {*wilayah*} of infidels {*kuffar*}. In other words, they have faith in God but they do not deny the *taghut*. This is defective faith.

God says:

﴿ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَ يُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى ﴾

***“So one who disavows the Rebels {taghut} and has faith in Allah has held fast to the firmest handle.”<sup>89</sup>***

That is, both the disavowal of the *taghut* and faith in God are required. Yet, nowadays Muslims have forgotten the declaration of disavowal of the *taghuts* and infidels. So, concerning those who turn to the *taghut*, the Qur’an states:

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ﴾

***“Have you not regarded those who claim that they believe...?”<sup>90</sup>***

## **The degrees of worship {‘ibadah}**

If we ask a child why he loves his father and mother, he will reply that it is because they buy him candies, clothes and shoes! But if we ask an adolescent why he loves his parents, he will say: “It is because my parents are the symbol of my identity and personality, and they are kind and sympathetic to me.”

As the child grows older, fondness and appreciation for parents increases and he no longer thinks about shoes and such things. Many children regard rendering services to their parents as a means to their own perfection and nearness {*qurb*} to Allah, and they think beyond material things.

Worship and devotion to God is also like that. Each person worships God for a particular reason.

Worship has various stages:

**First step:** Some people worship God to express gratitude to Him for His graces. In addressing the common people, the Qur’an states:

﴿ فَلْيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ \* الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُوعٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ ﴾

**“Let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them {and saved them} from hunger, and secured them from fear.”[91](#)**

The first step (stage or degree) of worship, which we shall call ‘worship for gratitude’, is exactly like the child’s love for his parents—it is because of their purchase of candies, clothes and shoes that he loves them!

**Second step:** At this stage, man worships God due to the effects and blessings of worship and they pay attention to the spiritual and religious effects of prayer. As the Qur’an discloses:

﴿ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ﴾

**“Indeed the prayer prevents indecencies and wrongs.”[92](#)**

This stage of worship which we call ‘worship for advancement’ is similar to the love of the adolescent for his parents—he pays respect to them as they have been his tutors and trainers and have protected him from deviations and dangers.

Third step: This is a higher step or stage of worship. God says to Hadrat Musa (Moses) (‘a):

﴿ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴾

**“And maintain the prayer for My remembrance.”[93](#)**

Hadrat Musa (‘a) performs prayer not because of food and water; it is not because of protection from corruption and wrongdoings either; for, he was essentially far from gluttony and misdeeds. He is among the great prophets {*ulu’l-‘azm*},[94](#) and he says his prayer for the sake of love for God and remembrance of Him. For the saints of God, love for God is the best reason for worship.

Yes, there are children who sit in the front of a religious assembly {*majlis*} along with the adults so that they would be better entertained or served with refreshments better! But there are also individuals who sit along with the adults so as to receive more spiritual benefit from them and they are concerned with entertainment or refreshments. For them, this very fondness of the scholars is a value in itself.

**Fourth step:** This stage, which is the highest and the most superior stage of worship, is not for gratitude, advancement and enthusiasm; rather, it is for the sake of nearness {*qurb*}—nearness to God.

We have four verses in the Qur’an which make the performance of prostration {*sujud*} incumbent on the one who recites any of them. One of these verses mentions the same issue of nearness {*qurb*} to Allah

through worship. The Qur'an states:

﴿وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ﴾

***“But prostrate and draw near {to Allah}.”*** [95](#)

Worship has various degrees and stages which are different from each other depending upon the spiritual degree and faith of the individual.

## **The visage of worship {‘ibadah}**

- Worship {‘ibadah} and servitude {‘ubudiyah} brought the Messenger of Allah (S) to ascension {mi‘raj}:

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى﴾

***“Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque.”*** [96](#)

- Worship paves the ground for the descent of angels:

﴿وَإِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا﴾

***“We have sent down (the revelation through angels) to Our servant.”*** [97](#)

- Worship causes the supplication of man to be granted, for prayer is the covenant of God [98](#) and whoever fulfills the covenant of God, God in turn will also fulfill his covenant:

﴿أَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِكُمْ﴾

***“And fulfill My covenant that I may fulfill your covenant.”*** [99](#)

- The person who does not worship God is more abject than stones and other inanimate objects, for the Qur'an reveals:

﴿وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ﴾

***“And indeed there are some of them (stones) that fall for the fear of Allah.”*** [100](#)

This is while some people do not submit to the Fountainhead and Creator of the universe.

- Worship is the symbol of the will power and the personality of man. The person who is in the midst of his own desires and instincts, if he would wish and decide to move toward God, that act is valuable. If not, the angels who have no desire {*shahwah*} and wrath {*ghadab*} are perpetually in the state of worship.
- Worship makes the most unknown person on the earth the most renowned person in heaven.
- Worship links the small island of man to the Spring of existence.
- Worship means to take a glance at all of existence from above.
- Worship means the blossoming of the dormant, mystical and spiritual faculties in man's being.
- Worship is a value acquired by man through resolution and will power. It is different from value attained because of family status or because of innate talents which are inborn and not acquired by choice.
- Worship is the renewal of allegiance to God and the new fostering of spiritual life.
- Worship is the barrier to sin and the extinguisher of its effects. It is remembrance and consciousness of God that prevents man from committing sin, and not man's knowledge of the sin.
- Worship is filling the vessel of the soul with the remembrance of God, which if it is filled with other than Him, is an act of injustice to the essence of humanity.
- Worship is so valuable for the earthly ground in that entrance to this sacred ground without ritual purity is not permissible, such as entrance to the mosque, the *Ka'bah* and Quds.
- Worship and servitude to God is itself a value even if our supplications and requests are not granted.
- Worship is expressed both in the state of happiness and sadness. When God gives the glad tidings of *Kawthar* to His Prophet (S), He exhorts him to pray:

﴿ إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ \* فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ ﴾

***"Indeed We have given you abundance. So pray to your Lord."*** [101](#)

God also enjoins prayer in facing difficulties and painful events:

﴿ وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ﴾

***“And take recourse in patience and prayer.”*** [102](#)

## **Prayers that relieve difficulty**

Whenever we encounter difficulty or want to ask for something, Islam enjoins us to pray to God particularly for the removal of our difficulty or the granting of our request. At this point, it is appropriate to mention one example of these prayers:

### **The prayer of Ja‘far at-Tayyar**

Ja‘far at-Tayyar was a brother of Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) who, during the emigration {*hijrah*} to Abyssinia, was able through his apt argument and behavior to draw the attention of King Negus and many others toward Islam, and to become the pioneer of Islamic propagation in the continent of Africa.

During the Battle of Mu‘tah, he lost both his hands in the way of God and in lieu of hands God gave him two wings in paradise. He, therefore, became well-known as *at-tayyar* {the winged one}.

When Ja‘far went to Medina from Abyssinia, the Prophet (S) said: “Would you like me to offer you a precious gift?” The people imagined that the Prophet (S) would give him a certain amount of gold or silver and thus they thronged forward in order to see the Prophet’s (S) gift. But the Prophet (S) said: “I shall teach you a prayer as a gift which, if you perform it daily, it will be better for you than the whole world and what is in it, and if you perform it every day, every Friday, every month or every year, God will forgive your sins during the interval of the two prayers (even if it is an interval of one year).” [103](#)

Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Whenever you have a problem or something to ask, supplicate after saying the prayer of Ja‘far (at-Tayyar) {*salah ja‘far*} and it will be granted, God willing.”

This prayer has been narrated with reliable Sunni and Shi‘ah chains of transmission {*isnad*}, and it has acquired the name, *Iksir al-A‘zam* and *Kibriyyah al-Ahmar*. [104](#)

The manner of performing this prayer has been recorded in the first part of *Mafatih al-Jinan* [105](#) under the deeds {*‘amal*} for Friday after the prayers of the infallible Imams (‘a).

Of course, this prayer is one of the tens of recommended {*mustahabb*} prayers for the removal of difficulties which have been transmitted. Recently, a book entitled, *Namaz-ha-ye Mustahabb* {Recommended Prayers}, has been written, which has mentioned approximately 350 recommended prayers with their particular names and manner of performance. This diversity itself attests to the importance of prayer, and a prayer for every occasion has been recorded.

## The sanctity of prayer

The sanctity of prayer is such that it has been recommended that the time for the execution of some deeds such as making a vow {*qasam*} or giving testimony {*shahadah*} should be after the recitation of prayers.

In *Surah al-Ma'idah* 5:106, the Qur'an states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِنْكُمْ أَوْ آخَرَانِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ ﴿١٠٦﴾  
إِنْ أَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَصَابَتْكُمْ مُصِيبَةُ الْمَوْتِ تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ آرْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِي  
بِهِ تَمَنَّا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذًا لَمِنَ الْآثِمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

***“O you who have faith! The witness between you, when death approaches any of you, while making a bequest, shall be two fair men from among yourselves—or two from among others, 106 if you are journeying in the land and the affliction of death visits you. You shall detain the two of them after prayer, and, if you have any doubt, they shall vow by Allah, ‘We will not sell it for any gain, even if it were a relative, nor will we conceal the testimony of Allah, for then we would indeed be among the sinners.’” 107***

It is widely practiced nowadays that oath-taking ceremonies are done in the presence of the Qur'an and by putting the hand on the Qur'an, but the Qur'an itself in this regard states that taking an oath should be done after the performance of prayer!

## The Universality of Prayer

Both in cosmic creation {*afarinesh-e takwini*} and in religiously legal precepts {*dasturat-e tashri'i*}, God has applied the loftiest and most perfect programs. For example, in the creation of mother's milk, He has accumulated all the nutrients, which are needed by the infant.

If we take a glance at the creation of man, we realize that whatever is present in nature has also been placed in man.

If there is the sound of thunder in nature, there is the voice (shouting) in man.

If there are plants and herbs in nature, there is growth of hair on man.

If there are rivers in nature, there are veins both large and small in man.

If there are fresh and salty waters in nature, there are salty tears and fresh saliva in man.

If there are many minerals in nature, there are also abundant talents latent in man.

There is a poem attributed to Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) which states:

أَتَزَعَمُ أَنَّكَ جَرْمٌ صَغِيرٌ

و فِيكَ أَنْظَرَى الْعَالَمَ الْاَكْبَرِ

*O man! You imagine that you constitute a small body where in fact a big world is placed in you.*

Prayer is also a divine handiwork in which God has somehow placed all values.

Which perfection is it that is valuable to man and cannot be found in prayer?

Remembrance of God is a value and it is the only means of giving tranquility to the heart, and prayer is a remembrance of God—“*Allahu akbar*” {Allah is greater}.

Remembrance of the Day of Resurrection is a value and it prevents the commission of sin and corruption, and prayer is remembering the “*Yawm ad-din*” {Day of Judgment}. [108](#)

To be in the ranks of the prophets, the martyrs and the righteous is a value, and in prayer we beseech God for us to be in the “*sirat alladhina an‘amta ‘alayhim*” {the path of those whom You have blessed}. [109](#)

We declare our aversion and disavowal {*bara‘ah*} of the tyrants and deviants by saying: “*ghayri‘l-maghdubi ‘alayhim wa la‘d-dallin*” “such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray”. [110](#)

Justice which is the foremost of the values has been considered a necessary prerequisite for the leader of the congregation {*imam al-jama‘ah*}.

Following the leader of the congregation in prayer is a valuable social principle, which stipulates that instead of obstinacy and individualism, we have to follow a just leader.

In selecting the congregational leader, qualities which are valued are always taken into account: the most just, the most knowledgeable, the most eloquent, etc.

Standing while facing the *qiblah* calls to mind many values. Mecca is the torture site of Bilal; the place of sacrifice of Isma‘il (Ishmael) (‘a); the birthplace of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a); the base of the uprising of al-Mahdi (‘a); the testing ground of Ibrahim (Abraham) (‘a); and the place of worship of all prophets and saints.

Everything is movement in prayer—every day and night; in bowing down {*ruku‘*}, prostration {*sujud*} and standing straight {*qiyam*}; and movement in going to the mosque and the place of prayer. Therefore, do

not be static, silent and solitary. Rather, always strive and move; of course, for the sake and in the way of God.

In prayer the spirit and soul of man is purged. Prayer removes the dust of pride and vanity because every night and day for many times man places the most sublime part of his body (forehead) on the ground, and prostration on the earth is better than on a stone because lowliness is placing oneself on the ground.

Prostrate on the ground and what grows in it provided that it is not edible so that you would not think of your stomach!

Prostrate on pure earth for traversing impure paths will not lead to purity and the Fountainhead of Purities!

Crying for fear of God is a value, and the Qur'an has praised prostration accompanied by weeping:  
*"(They would fall down) weeping in prostration."*[111](#)

Prayer is a divine code of life which has been prescribed for us from the moment of birth till the point of death. When a baby is born, recite the *adhan* and *iqamah* in his right and left ears, respectively, as it is an admonition for prayer (when he grows up): "*Hayya 'ala's-salah*" "Come to prayer".

At the time of his death, you also bury him with the performance of the "prayer for the dead" *{salah al-mayyit}*. Throughout your life you should always be in a state of worshipping and glorifying God:

***"And worship you Lord until certainty (or death) comes to you."***[112](#)

Prayer is man's union with nature. In determining the prescribed time for prayers particularly the dawn *{subh}* and noon *{zuhr}* prayers, you have to look at where the sun is; in order to determine the direction of the *qiblah*, we have to look at the stars; in performing the recommended prayers on auspicious days, you have to monitor the movement of the moon (in order to determine the exact day). In taking a bath and performing ablution, you have to utilize water, and in performing prostration *{sujud}* and dry ablution *{tayammum}*, you have to touch the ground.

Which Wise Designer has designed this relation of the prayer with the sun, the moon, the stars, water, and the ground?

In one way or another, the other obligatory religious acts are also present in the prayer:

Like the person fasting, the person praying has no right to eat, drink and engage in sexual activity.

The *Ka'bah* is the *qiblah* and the axis of activity of the person praying, just like a person performing *Hajj*.

Like someone engaging in *jihad*, the person praying is also engaged in a *jihad*—the greater *jihad* *{jihad al-akbar}* which is combat with the self *{jihad an-nafs}*.

Prayer is itself the highest form of the enjoinder of good {*amr bi'l-ma'ruf*} and the forbiddance of evil {*nahyi 'ani'l-munkar*}.

Migration {*hijrah*} is one of the most important values in our religion. Hadrat Ibrahim (Abraham) (‘a) migrated on account of prayer, bringing his wife and son to the *Ka'bah* and saying:

﴿ رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ ﴾

***“O Lord! I have settled part of my descendants in a barren valley, by Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may maintain the prayer.”*** [113](#)

What is interesting is that Hadrat Ibrahim (‘a) does not say: “I made *hijrah* in order to perform *Hajj* pilgrimage.” Instead, he says: “Saying the prayer was my aim in *hijrah*.”

In any case, God has encapsulated all values in prayer, with prayer and for prayer.

If adornment and hygiene constitute a value (as they do), Islam thus enjoins:

﴿ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ ﴾

***“Put on your adornment on every occasion of prayer.”*** [114](#)

That is, put on your clean and perfumed garments when going to the mosque.

At the time of prayer, women are also enjoined to wear their jewelry with which they adorn themselves. [115](#)

Even the issue of cleaning the teeth is given attention, and we read in the traditions that praying with cleaned {*miswak*} teeth is equivalent to praying 70 times without *miswak*. [116](#) And it has been said: “Do not eat onion and garlic before going to the mosque” [117](#) so as not to annoy others with the odor of your mouth and drive the people away.

In any case, this is the prayer of Islam, but our prayer is the prayer which we do not perform, or perform carelessly and incorrectly, or perform without being in congregation, or which we perform at its last moments!

The mosques whose custodians were once Ibrahim, Isma‘il and Zakariyya (Zechariah) (‘a), [118](#) and the place where the mother of Maryam (Mary) had made a vow in asking God to let her child be its custodian, [119](#) become places whose custodians in most cases are disabled, aged, sickly, uneducated, and sometimes even bad people! Why is it that being a custodian of the holy shrine of Imam ar-Rida (‘a) is an honor, but being a custodian of the House of God is not?!

Why should our mosques be such that anyone who comes inside will get sad, melancholic and indolent? Is the mosque a house of mourning? An assembly convened to pray for the dead and on whose door black banners should be hung? Of course, thanks be to God, in recent years a movement has been initiated in the mosques (in Iran) and most of them are now equipped with libraries and provide such other service-oriented activities as interest-free loan funds.

What a beautiful *hadith* it is, which states: “On the Day of Resurrection, these three shall complain against the people: The ‘*alim* {scholar} to whom the people would not refer; the Qur’an which was in the house but was not read; and the mosque to which the people paid no attention. [120](#)

There are many things that can be said about the mosque and recently, a book entitled, *Sima-ye Masjid* {The Visage of the Mosque} that explains the status of mosque in Muslim society has been published.

Nevertheless, in a nutshell, the mosque during the early period of Islam was the venue Muslims to gather to make decisions and conduct consultations, in acquiring knowledge and information; it was the base for combatants and strugglers on the Path {*mujahidun*}; the place to attend to the needs of the poor and sick; and the base for rising up against tyrannical governments and delivering fiery sermons against them.

It has been this same sublime status of the mosque that prompted Muslims throughout history to apply the best architectural designs in building them and to endow huge amounts of wealth for their administration so that they could keep on flourishing and thriving.

[1.](#) Surah adh-Dhariyat 51:56. In this volume, the translation of Qur’anic passages is adapted from Sayyid ‘Ali Quli Qara’i, The Qur’an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies Press, 2004). {Trans.}

[2.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2: 138: “The baptism of Allah {sibghat Allah}, and who baptizes better than Allah? And Him do we worship.”

[3.](#) Question: If affection to one’s child is indeed part of one’s natural disposition {fitrah}, how is it that in some epochs such as the Pre-Islamic Period or Age of Ignorance {yawm al-jahiliyyah} some people used to bury their daughters alive? Reply: The issues pertaining to natural disposition {fitrah} are numerous. Just as affection for one’s offspring is part of our natural disposition, regard for one’s honor is also a part of it. The Arabs during the pre-Islamic period used to regard their daughters as a source of shame and ignominy as they would be taken captive during wars and had no productive power and economic earning. Thus, in a bid to preserve their honor and dignity, they used to dispose of their daughters. Love for wealth and love for life are both related to the natural disposition {fitri}. Some people sacrifice their lives for wealth while others do the opposite, i.e. sacrifice wealth for the sake of their lives. Therefore, sacrificing one’s daughter for the sake of preserving one’s honor is not inconsistent with the natural disposition of man, although it might be a result of ignorance or confusion.

[4.](#) Mawlawi: Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi (1207–1273) was the greatest mystic poet in the Farsi language and founder of the Mawlawiyyah order of dervishes (“The Whirling Dervishes”). He is famous for his lyrics and for his didactic epic, Spiritual Couplets. {Trans.}

[5.](#) The abbreviation, “a” stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘alayhis-salam, ‘alayhimus-salam, or ‘alayhas-salam {may peace be upon him/them/her}, which is used after the names of the prophets, angels, Imams from the Prophet’s progeny, and saints (‘a). {Trans.}

[6.](#) The term taghut applies to any idol, object, or individual that prevents men from doing what is good, and leads them

astray. The term has been used eight times in the Qur'an. Prior to Islam, taghut had been the name of the one of the idols of the Quraysh tribe. This name is used also to mean the Satan. Moreover, the term is used to indicate one who rebels against lofty values, or who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself whether explicitly or implicitly. {Trans.}

[7.](#) That is, God subjected the taghuts to the lowest ebb of humiliation and abjectness. {Trans.}

[8.](#) Surah al-Mulk 67:30.

[9.](#) Surah al-Waqi'ah 56:70.

[10.](#) Surah al-Waqi'ah 56:65.

[11.](#) Surah as-Saba' 34:9.

[12.](#) Hadrat: The Arabic word Hadrat is used as a respectful form of address. {Trans.}

[13.](#) Surah Ta Ha 20: 14.

[14.](#) The abbreviation, "S", stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam {may God's salutation and peace be upon him and his progeny}, which is used after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S). {Trans.}

[15.](#) Bihar al-Anwar vol. 71, p. 212.

[16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar vol. 71, p. 212.

[17.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 86.

[18.](#) Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 496.

[19.](#) Murtada Mutahhari, Sayri dar Sireh-ye Nabawi {A Survey of the Life Conduct of the Prophet (S)}, p. 213.

[20.](#) Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari (1298–1358 AHS) was a scholar of unusually wide learning, a prolific writer, eloquent speaker, lecturer, and a cherished student of Imam Khomeini. He was a leading member of the Revolutionary Council until his assassination on May 1, 1979 by the terrorist Furqan group. {Trans.}

[21.](#) Murtada Mutahhari, Taharat-e Ruh {Spiritual Purification}, p. 122.

[22.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 78, p. 357.

[23.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 14, p. 41.

[24.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:65.

[25.](#) The Night of Power (or Decree), has a very special significance in the Muslim calendar because it is the anniversary of that night when the Qur'an was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad. This night has been described as 'better than a thousand months', and tradition holds that requests made to God during Laylat al-Qadr will be granted. {Trans.}

[26.](#) Surah Ta Ha 20: 14.

[27.](#) Surah al-Ra'd 13:28.

[28.](#) The abbreviation, "q" stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, quddisa sirruh {may his soul be sanctified}, which is used after the names of pious people. {Trans.}

[29.](#) See Surah al-Baqarah 2:62; Surah an-Nisa' 4:69; Surah al-Hajj 22: 17. {Tans.}

[30.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 49, p. 175.

[31.](#) Surah al-Hijr 15:99.

[32.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 53, p. 326.

[33.](#) Surah Ta Ha 20: 14.

[34.](#) Surah al-Ra'd 13:28.

[35.](#) Surah al-Fajr 89:27–28.

[36.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:21.

[37.](#) Surah al-Quraysh 106:3–4.

[38.](#) Surah al-'Ankabut 29:45.

[39.](#) Surah Hud 11:114.

[40.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah (The Peak of Eloquence) is a collection of speeches, sayings and letters of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) compiled by Sharif ar-Radi Muhammad ibn al-Husayn (d. 406 AH/1016). The contents of the book concern the three essential topics of God, man and the universe, and include comments on scientific, literary, social, ethical, and political issues. With the exception of the words of the Glorious Qur'an and of the Holy Prophet (S), no

words of man can equal it in eloquence. So far, more than 101 exegeses have been written on the Nahj al-Balaghah, indicating the importance of this treatise to scholars and learned men of research and investigation. For more information, visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul> [1]. {Trans.}

[41.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 222.

[42.](#) Ibid.

[43.](#) Ibid., Sermon 199.

[44.](#) Ibid.

[45.](#) Zakah: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on the purposes specified in Surah at-Tawbah 9:60. {Trans.}

[46.](#) Ibid., Sermon 196.

[47.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 402.

[48.](#) Surah an-Nisa' 4:139: "Those who take the faithless for allies instead of the faithful—do they seek honor with them? {If so,} indeed all honor belongs to Allah."

[49.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:45.

[50.](#) Maqalat ash-Shams, p. 179.

[51.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 83, p. 127.

[52.](#) Tafsir Atib al-Bayan, vol. 1, p. 161.

[53.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:45.

[54.](#) Khums: literally means one-fifth. According to the Shi'ah school of jurisprudence {fiqh}, this one-fifth tax is obligatorily levied on every adult Muslim who is financially secure and has surplus in his income out of annual savings, net commercial profits, and all movable and immovable properties which are not commensurable with the needs and social standing of the person. Khums is divided into two equal parts: the Share of the Imam {sahm al-Imam} and the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat (descendants of the Prophet) {sahm as-Sadat}. Accordingly, the Share of the Imam is to be paid to the living Imam, and in the period of Occultation, to the most learned living mujtahid who is the giver's marja' at-taqlid {Source of Emulation}. The other half of the khums, the Share of the Sayyids/Sadat, is to be given to needy pious Sayyids who lack the resources for one's year respectable living in consonance with their various statuses. For more information, see Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, Khums: An Islamic Tax, <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html> [2].

[55.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:115.

[56.](#) Bakkah: the Holy Mosque or the city of Mecca, or the territory where they stand. {Q Trans.}

[57.](#) Surah Al 'Imran 3:96.

[58.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:150.

[59.](#) That is, a knowledge which will enable you to distinguish between truth and falsehood. {Q Trans.}

[60.](#) Surah al-Anfal 8:29.

[61.](#) Surah al-Hadid 57:28.

[62.](#) Surah Muhammad 47:17.

[63.](#) Surah 'Ankabut 29:69.

[64.](#) Surah al-A'raf 7:201.

[65.](#) Surah al-'Ankabut 29:45.

[66.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:45.

[67.](#) Surah Yusuf 12:53.

[68.](#) Surah al-Qasas 28:83: "This is the abode of the Hereafter which We shall grant to those who do not desire to domineer in the earth nor to cause corruption, and the outcome will be in favor of the God-wary."

[69.](#) Surah an-Nazi'at 79:40-41: "But as for him who is awed to stand before his Lord and forbids the soul from {following} desire, his refuge will indeed be paradise."

[70.](#) Surah al-An'am 6:162.

[71.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 88, pp. 41, 93.

[72.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:34: "And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam,' they prostrated, except Iblis: he refused and acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless."

[73.](#) Surah Al ‘Imran 3:96: “Indeed the first house to be set up for mankind is the one at Bakkah, blessed and a guidance for all nations.”

[74.](#) Surah al-‘Ankabut 29:45.

[75.](#) Surah an-Nisa’ 4:43: “O you who have faith! Do not approach prayer when you are intoxicated, {not} until you know what you are saying.”

[76.](#) Surah an-Nisa’ 4:142: “When they (hypocrites) stand up for prayer, they stand up lazily, showing off to the people and not remembering Allah except a little.”

[77.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 89, p. 201.

[78.](#) Surah an-Nisa’ 4:100.

[79.](#) Sirr as-Salah, p. 12.

[80.](#) Surah al-Fatir (or al-Mala’ikah) 35:29.

[81.](#) Surah al-A’raf 7:170.

[82.](#) Surah al-Hijr 15:9.

[83.](#) Surah Ta Ha 20:14.

[84.](#) Surah al-Isra’ 17:78.

[85.](#) Qisas (literally means retribution or retaliation) in the Islamic jurisprudence is to be executed against a criminal who committed such crime as murder, amputation of a body limb, or laceration and beating according to legal decree when the victim or his guardians seek retribution in lieu of receiving a fine or blood money. {Trans.}

[86.](#) Surah al-Jinn 72:18.

[87.](#) The Kharijites {khawarij} or al-Mariqun (a name given to them by Imam ‘Ali and meaning “those who missed the truth of religion”) were a group of quasi-holy, narrow-minded Muslims who were originally followers of Imam ‘Ali and fought alongside him at the Battle of Siffin. Initially they supported arbitration, pushing Imam ‘Ali to accept it; however, later they revolted against it arguing that because God was the only true arbitrator, Imam ‘Ali and those who agreed with him in the arbitration were not simply wrong; they were in fact unbelievers, hence they could have no dealings with them.

On Imam ‘Ali’s return to Iraq from Siffin, this group seceded from his army and set up camp on the banks of the Nahrawan canal. The Kharijites (or seceders) became a fierce group who believed that they were the only true Muslims, and as such they began terrorizing people whom they regarded as unbelievers. Imam ‘Ali was at first able to talk to them and persuade some of them to cease their hostilities, but eventually he was forced to take up arms against them. In 659 CE he attacked their army under the leadership of ‘Abdullah ibn Wahab al-Rasibi at Nahrawan almost annihilating them. Nahrawan was the third and last battle Imam ‘Ali engaged in with his internal enemies. {Trans.}

[88.](#) Surah an-Nur 24:56.

[89.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:256.

[90.](#) Surah an-Nisa’ 4:60.

[91.](#) Surah al-Quraysh 106:3-4.

[92.](#) Surah al-‘Ankabut 29:45.

[93.](#) Surah Ta Ha 20:14.

[94.](#) Ulu’l-‘azm: literally, resolute figures or men of decision. {Trans.}

[95.](#) Surah al-‘Alaq 96:19.

[96.](#) Surah al-Isra’ (or Bani Isra’il) 17:1.

[97.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:23.

[98.](#) Surah Ya Sin 36:60-61:

﴿ أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ وَأَنْ اعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴾

“Did I not exhort you, O children of Adam, saying, ‘Do not worship Satan. He is indeed your manifest enemy. Worship Me. That is the straight path?’”

[99.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:40.

[100.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:74.

[101.](#) Surah al-Kawthar 108:1-2.

- [102.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:45.
- [103.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 18, p. 421.
- [104.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 91, “Bab Fadl Salah Ja’far.”
- [105.](#) Mafatih al-Jinan {Keys to the Gardens of Paradise}: a standard manual of Shi’i devotion containing the supplicatory prayers of the infallible Imams (‘a) as well as formulae for recitation at particular times or during visitation of the tombs of the Imams (‘a), compiled from Bihar al-Anwar {Oceans of Lights} and other sources by Shaykh ‘Abbas al-Qummi, a scholar of vast learning who died in Najaf in 1940. {Trans.}
- [106.](#) That is, from among the non-Muslims, on non-availability of Muslim witnesses during journey. {Q Trans.}
- [107.](#) Surah al-Ma’idah 5: 106.
- [108.](#) Surah al-Fatihah 1:4.
- [109.](#) Surah al-Fatihah 1:7.
- [110.](#) Surah al-Fatihah 1:7.
- [111.](#) Surah Maryam 19:58.
- [112.](#) Surah al-Hijr 15:99.
- [113.](#) Surah Ibrahim 14:37.
- [114.](#) Surah al-A’raf 7:31.
- [115.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 80, p. 188.
- [116.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 73, p. 133.
- [117.](#) Risaleh-ye Ahkam-e Imam Khomeini, “Issue 910”.
- [118.](#) Surah al-Baqarah 2:125; Surah Maryam 19:11.
- [119.](#) Surah Al ‘Imran 3:35: “When the wife of Imran said, ‘My Lord, I dedicate to You what is in my belly, in consecration.’”
- [120.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 41.

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#### Links

[1] <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul>

[2] <http://www.al-islam.org/beliefs/practices/khums.html>