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Spiritual Philosophy of Hajj

God's favor to man

Indisputably, God has created man of earth in order to nurture him during his worldly life with the heavenly teachings of the prophets, remove pollutions from him, make him pure, and promote him to the highest stage of affinity with Himself.

Since an earthy man is not worthy of affinity with God, and if such a man is left to himself, he will be drowned in the quagmire of lusts, God Who has made man evolutionize from the stage of mineral to plant and from plant to animal and then to human, can promote man to a stage making him unison with the angels.

God does not withhold His favor from man and protects him with His special kindness and mercy. To prepare man to ascend to a metaphysical world, God has made a house of stone and mud in this world calling it His House and inviting his helpless and shelterless servants to shower them with His special blessings.

God has called all servants on the earth to make pilgrimage to Mecca, circumambulate His House, and link their hearts to the Lord of the House so as to gradually prepare themselves for visiting the Lord of the universe. God says (in a Hadith Qudsi[1]):

لم تَسَعْني أَرضِي ولا سَمائِي وَوَسِعَني قَلبُ عَبدِيَ المُؤمِنِ اللّيّنُ الوادِعُ.

"I am not contained in the earth nor in the heavens, but I am contained in the soft and tranquil heart of My believing servant."[2]50

Whoever goes to Mecca on foot will circumambulate the Kaaba, but whoever goes there with his heart present, the Kaaba will circumambulate him.

The King Makes A Palace in A Ruined Village

What a great favor God has done to human beings to choose a House for Himself on the earth! What need does God have for a house in a ruined village? To fondle the villagers and to shower them with favor, God has chosen a house of the village as His to invite the helpless people to it once a week, a month, or a year calling them His guests and bestowing gifts on them so that they will improve their living conditions, learn manners, obtain knowledge and gnosticism, come to the city from the village and come to the capital city to be worthy of being received by the king and become his favorites.

God is too Great to be contained in a ruined village and take a house there. But the favor He has done to the villagers had made them feel dignified in a way to say that we are so much respected by the King that He has made a house among us and we have a link with Him. He is near us and we seek the settlement of our need from Him.

What a favor it is that God Who is free from any defect and need has been so kind as to make a house of stone and mud for Himself making Him a neighbor of the servants to imply that 'I am with you; ask Me for everything.' He has also appointed all mosques as His Houses making Himself available to His servants.

God has not said: You have necessarily to come to the heavens to seek help from Me or you have to come to Mecca to visit Me. I accept any corner you choose in My Name as My House and will receive you. I consider any hour in day or night you stand for prayer at home in the direction of My House as pilgrimage to My House and will answer your call and attend to your needs. Therefore, glorify Allah, the Merciful King, there is no god but He; the Lord of the universe.

Hajj, A Display of Man's Spiritual Journey

The external acts of Hajj symbolize the spiritual stages of the prophets and the Imams. Hajj is a display of the spiritual journey of the devotees and the stages of servitude. The essence of worship is the journey towards God and the external acts of Hajj, devoid of presence of the heart, are not considered as worship. The Holy Prophet (saw) says:

> إنمَا فُرِضَتِ الصّلاةُ وأُمِر بِالحَجِّ والطّوافِ وأُشْعِرتِ المَناسِكُ لإقَامَةِ ذِكْرِ اللهِ، فإذا لم يكُنْ في قَلبِكَ لِلمذكُورِ الّذي هو المَقصُودُ والمُبتَغى عَظَمَةٌ ولا هَيبَةٌ فَما قيمَةُ ذِكْرِك؟

"The daily prayer, Hajj, circumambulation, and the other rites are aimed at remembering Allah. But when there is no remembrance of Him in your heart, what value will your oral remembrance have?"[351]

The Holy Qur'an has blamed the heedless worshippers

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"So, woe to the praying ones who are unmindful of their prayers. (***107:4, 5***)***"–,***

and forbidden offering prayers while being drunk –

... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

"O you who believe! Do not go near prayer when you are intoxicated until you know what you say. (***4:43***)

Genuflection and prostration are worthy if they indicate humbleness of soul and broken heart. The spiritual path too is real only when it is manifested in the form of bodily acts. As long as man continues to live in this world, his soul and body are not separate.

Man's body is a manifestation of his soul and the acts of the body are manifestations of his inner feelings. In the same way that physical acts represent spiritual acts, the physical acts push the soul towards spiritual journey.

إليهِ يَصْعَدُ الكَلِمُ الطّيِّبُ والعَمَلُ الصّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ.

"To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deeds life them up. (***The Holy Qur'an 35:10***)***"***

Physical prostration that symbolizes humbleness and a broken heart is true only when it illuminates man's inner being, making the soul ascend to the heavens to sit with the angels, otherwise prostration based on hypocrisy, pretense, and habit will have no spiritual effect on the soul.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحاً مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً.

"Whoever does good whether male or female and he is believer, We will most certainly make him a happy life. (***The Holy Qur'an; 16:97***)***"***

Reflect on the following Hadith in which God spoke to the Holy Prophet (saw) on his Midnight Ascension –*israa and Mi'raj*:

فَمَن عَمِلَ بِرضَائِي أُلزِمْهُ ثلاثَ خِصال: أُعَرِّفُهُ شُكْراً لا يُخَالِطُهُ الجَهلُ وَذِكْراً لا يُخَالِطُهُ النّسْيانُ ومَحَبّةً لا يُؤثِرُ على مَحَبّتي المَخلُوقِين. فَإِذا أَحَبّني أَحْبَبْتُهُ وأَفتَحُ عَينَ قَلبِهِ إلى جَلالِي فلا أُخْفِي عَلَيهِ خَاصَّةَ خَلقِي فَأُناجِيهِ في ظُلَمِ اللّيلِ ونُورِ النّهارِ حتّى يَنقَطِعَ حَدِيثُهُ مع المَخلُوقِينَ ومُجالَسَتُهُ مَعَهُم وأُسْمِعُهُ كَلامِي وكَلامَ مَلائِكَتي وأُعَرِّفُهُ السِّرَّ الّذِي سَتَرْتُهُ عَن خَلْقِي وأُلبِسُهُ الحَياءَ حتّى يَستَحيِي مِنهُ الخَلقُ كُلُّهُم ويمْشِي في الأرضِ مَغفوراً لهُ وأَجعَلُ قَلبَهُ واعِياً وبَصِيراً ولا يَخفَى عَلَيهِ شَيْءٌ مِن جَنَّةٍ ولا نارٍ وأُعَرِّفُهُ ما يمُرّ عَلى النّاسِ في يَومِ القِيامَةِ منَ الهَولِ والشّدَّةِ وما أُحاسِبُ بِهِ الأغنِياءَ والفُقَراءَ والجُهّالَ والعُلَماءَ وأُنوِّرُ في قَبرِهِ وأُنزِلُ عَليهِ مُنكَراً ونَكيراً حتّى يَسأَلاهُ ولا يَرى غَمَّ المَوتِ وظُلْمَةَ القَبرِ واللَّحْدِ حتّى أَنصُبَ لهُ ميزانَهُ وأَنشُرَ لهُ دِيوانَهُ ثُمَّ أَضَعُ كِتابَهُ في يَمِينِهِ فَيَقرَأُهُ مَنشُوراً ثُمّ لا أَجعَلُ بَيني وبَينَهُ تَرجُماناً. فهذِهِ صِفاتُ المُحِبّين.

Whoever tries to win My pleasure, I will commit him to three characteristics; I will acquaint him with an approach of gratitude that is free from ignorance, a form of (continuous) remembrance of Me that is free from oblivion, and a kind of love with which he will never prefer the love for any creature to Mine.

When he loves Me, I will love him and will then open the eyes of his heart to My Glory making him so intimate to Me and will confide him with supplication to Me in the heart of nights and daylight to the degree that he will stop speaking and associating with people. I, too, will make him hear My own words and those of the angels and reveal to him the invisible facts that I hide from My creatures. I will garb him with the uniform of prudency that all My creatures will act modestly towards him.

He will walk on the earth guiltlessly, I will cause his heart to be cognizant and discerning, and he will be acquainted with all the affairs of Paradise and Hell. I will reveal to him the hardships of the Day of Judgment, including the way how I will settle account with the rich, poor, ignorant, and scholars.

I will light up his grave, ask Munkar and Nakeer –the two angels in charge of the interrogation in graves– to interrogate him, he will neither experience the agony of death nor the darkness of the grave until the Balance –of his deeds– will be deposited for him and the registry –of his deeds– will be opened and the book of his deeds will be finally put into his right hand and he will read it peacefully and there will be no interpreter between Me and him. These are the characteristics of the lovers of Allah."[452]

From Qur'anic Verses and Hadiths it is inferred that it is in the inner part of man that spiritual journey takes place and it is in the light of the physical acts that man's soul becomes so illuminated that it will see no other being as real but God. In this connection, the Holy Qur'an says:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آياتِنا في الآفَاقِ وفي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لهُمْ أَنَّهُ الحَقُّ.

"We will soon show them Our sings in the universe and in their own souls until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth.* (*41:53*)*"

It is in the state that a godly man is so plunged in the sea of knowledge and God's love that he will hear, see, and recognize everything with the light of God and he will become manifestation of God's Attributes

and recipient of God's Mercy. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says:

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتاً فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُوراً يَمْشِي بِهِ في النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ في الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا.

"Is he who was dead then We raised him to life and made for him a light by which he walks among the people like him whose likeness is that of one in utter darkness whence he cannot come forth?* (*6:122*)*"

Worship is the journey of the soul and a continued spiritual life in divine light. Since there is unity and interaction between man's body and soul, the journey of the spirit will be naturally manifested in body, and physical acts in prayer too will influence the soul's spiritual life. Since spiritual journey is found in the prophets and the Imams in its highest degree, their spiritual lives are said to be presented to man in the form of prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and other religious duties. The Holy Qur'an says:

لقَدَ كَانَ لَكُمْ في رَسُولِ اللهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ.

"Certainly, you have in the Apostle of Allah an excellent exemplar.* (*33:21*)*"

In this Qur'anic Verse, the Messenger of God has been introduced as excellent exemplar, and people are duty-bound to adapt their deed and ethical lives to those of the Holy Prophet (saw). Addressing the Holy Prophet (saw), the Holy Qur'an says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

"Say: if you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your faults.* (*3:31*)*"

In this Qur'anic Verse, adherence to the Holy Prophet (saw) through journey towards God, affinity, and being loved by Him has been mentioned.

The Imams; the Truth of the Religion and Religious Duties

Many Hadiths testify that the purpose of prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and the other acts of worship mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is the Imams (as) as interpreted by the exegetes of the Holy Qur'an:

Dawud ibn Kathir quotes Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

يا داوُدُ، نحنُ الصّلاةُ في كِتابِ اللهِ ونحنُ الزّكاةُ ونحنُ الصّيامُ ونحنُ الحَجُّ ونحنُ الشّهرُ الحَرامُ ونحنُ البَلدُ الحَرامُ ونحنُ كَعبَةُ اللهِ ونحنُ قِبلَةُ اللهِ ونحنُ وَجهُ اللهِ ـ قَالَ تعَالى: فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللهِ – ونحنُ الآياتُ ونحنُ البَيّناتُ.

"O Dawud, we are (the purpose of) the prayer in the Book of Allah, we are the (meaning of) almsgiving, fasting, Hajj, Sacred Month, the Sacred City, the Kaaba, Kiblah, and the Face of Allah Who says: ***"Whither you turn, thither is Allah's Face.*** (***The Holy Qur'an; 2:115***)***"*** We are the clear signs of Allah.553

Al-Mufazzal ibn Umar quotes Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

> ثُمّ إني أُخبِرُكَ أنَّ الدّينَ وأَصلَ الدّينِ هُو رَجُلٌ؛ وذلِك الرّجُلُ هو اليَقينُ والإيمانُ وهو إمامُ أُمَّتِهِ أو أهْلُ زَمانِهِ فَمن عَرِفَهُ عَرِفَ اللهَ ودينَهُ ومَنْ أَنكَرَهُ أَنكَرَ اللهَ ودينَهُ ومَن جَهِلَهُ جهِلَ اللهَ ودينَهُ ولا يُعرَفُ اللهُ ودينُهُ وحُدودُهُ وشَرائعُهُ بغَيرِ ذلِك الإمامِ فَذلِك معنى أَنّ معرِفَةَ الرّجالِ دينُ اللهِ... ـ الى أن قال عليه السلام ـ وأُخبِرُكَ أَنّي لو قُلتُ أنّ الصّلاةَ والزكَاةَ وصومَ شهرِ رَمَضانَ والحَجَّ والعُمرةَ والمسجِدَ الحَرامَ والبيتَ الحرامَ والطّهورَ والإغتِسالَ مِن الجَنابةِ وكُلَّ فريضَةٍ كان ذلِك هو النبيَّ الذي جَاء به مِن عندِ ربّهِ لَصَدقْتُ لأنّ ذلك كُلّهُ إنمَا يُعرَفُ بالنّبيّ ولولا معرِفةُ ذلِك النبيّ والإيمانُ بهِ والتّسليمُ له ما عُرِفَ ذلِك. فهذا كلّهُ ذلِك النبيُّ.

"Let me inform you that the religion and the root of the religion is a man; a man of faith and certainty. He is the same Imam of the ummah and the Imam of his time. Whoever knows him has known Allah and the religion of Allah, whoever denies him has denied Allah and His religion, and whoever keeps ignorant of him has kept ignorant of Allah and His religion. Except through that Imam, no one can understand Allah, His religion, and the religious laws. This is the meaning of 'the religion of Allah is the cognition of men.'

...I inform you that I have told the truth if I say that the prayer, almsgiving, fasting, Hajj, the Sacred Mosque, the House of Allah, ablution, ritual washing, and all the religious duties are the same prophet who has brought all these precepts from Allah. Getting to know these religious duties is the only way for getting to know the Prophet. If you cannot get to know, believe in, and submit to the Prophet, you cannot get to know the truths. Therefore, the purpose of all these truths is the prophet."654

The Imam is the criterion of the belief, ethics, and deeds

The criterion of the truth of man's belief, ethics, and deeds in the world and the Hereafter is the Imam. Sheikh as-Saduq quotes Husham ibn Salim as saying:

> سَأَلتُ أبا عبدِاللهِ عليهِ السلامُ عَن قولِ اللهِ تعَالى: "وَنَضَعُ المَوازِينَ القِسْطَ لِيَومِ القِيامَةِ فَلا تُظلَمُ نَفسٌ شَيئاً." قال: هُمُ الأنبياءُ والأوصِياءُ. –وفي رواية أخرى عنهم عليهم السلام: ـ نحْنُ المَوازينُ القِسطُ.

I asked Imam Sadiq (as) about the meaning of the Qur'anic Verse, ***'And We will set up a balance on the Day of Resurrection; so, no soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least.*** (***21:47***)***.'*** He (as) answered: "They are the prophets and their successors. –According to another narration related to the Imams (as):– "We are the balance of justice."755

The Imam, the straight path of god

As he was asked about the meaning of ‘the straight path’ in the Qur’anic Verses, Imam Sadiq (as) answered:

هوَ واللهِ عَلِيٌّ. هوَ واللهِ الصّراطُ والمِيزانُ.

“By Allah, it is ‘Ali. He is the Straight Path and the Balance.”856

Sheikh Saduq says: As Imam Sadiq (as) was asked about the ‘Straight Path’, he answered:

هوَ الطّريقُ إلى معرِفةِ اللهِ عزَّ وجلَّ وهُما صِراطانِ: صِراطٌ في الدّنيا وصِراطٌ في الآخِرةِ. وأمّا الصِّراطُ في الدّنيا فهُو الإمامُ المُفتَرَضُ طاعتُهُ؛ مَن عرِفَهُ في الدّنيا واقتَدى بِهُداهُ مَرَّ على الصِّراطِ الّذي هو جِسرُ جَهَنَّمَ في الآخِرةِ ومَن لم يَعرِفْهُ في الدّنيا زلّتْ قَدَمُهُ عَن الصِّراطِ في الآخِرةِ.

“It is the path to the knowledge of Allah, Glorified and Majestic is He. They are two paths; one is in the world and the other in the Hereafter. The path in this world is the Imam the obedience to whom is obligatory. Whoever knows him and follows his guidance will pass the Bridge of the Requital in the Hereafter. But whoever does not know him in this worldly life will stumble and fall into Hell.”957

Imam Sadiq (as) also says:

الصِّراطُ المُستَقيمُ أميرُ المؤمِنينَ عليه السلامُ

“The Straight Path is Amir ul-Mu’mineen (The Commander of the Faithful; namely Imam ‘Ali).”1058

Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

أَنا صَلاةُ المُؤمِنينَ وصِيامُهُم

“I am the prayer and the fasting of the believing men.”1159

Some people however have misinterpreted the above-mentioned Hadith, claiming that when one recognizes his Imam, he is not obliged to perform the religious duties, for the recognition of the Imam is considered as prayer, fasting, Hajj, almsgiving, and jihad. They invoke the Hadith, ‘When you reach the stage of cognition, do as you wish.’

Rejecting this idea, Imam Sadiq (as) says:

إنَهُ مَن كَانَ يَدينُ بهذه الصّفةِ التي كُتِبَت فهُو عِندي مُشرِكٌ باللهِ بَيّنُ الشّرك لا شكَّ فيهِ. لم يبعثِ اللهُ نبياً يدعو إلى مَعرفَةٍ ليسَ معَها طاعَةٌ في أمرٍ ونهيٍ فإنما يَقبلُ اللهُ منَ العبادِ العملَ بالفَرائضِ الّتي افترضَها اللهُ على حُدودِها مع معرِفةِ مَن جاءَهُم بهِ مِن عندِهِ ودعاهُم إليهِ فأوّلُ ذلِك معرفةُ مَن دَعا إليهِ ثمّ طاعتُهُ فيما يقرّبُهُ إليهِ مِن الطاعةِ لهُ وأنّه مَن عرِفَ أطاعَ ومَن أطاعَ حرّم الحرامَ ظاهرَهُ وباطنَهُ.

"He who believes in such matter is, in my sight, evidently polytheist. Allah has not ordained any prophet to invite people to cognition without obeying the commandments and prohibitions being accompanied by cognition.

Allah has asked His servants to act to all religious duties but after getting to know the one who has brought those commandments and calls people to Allah. Therefore, cognition is of primary and obedience is of secondary importance. Whoever reaches cognition will become obedient and whoever becomes obedient will consider disobedience as sin."

Muhammad ibn Marid reported:

"قُلتُ لأبي عبدِاللهِ عليهِ السلامُ: حَديثٌ رُوِيَ لنا أنّك قُلتَ "إذا عَرفْتَ فَاعمَلْ ما شِئتَ؟

فقالَ (عليه السلام): قدْ قُلتُ ذلكَ.

قلتُ: وإنْ زَنوا أو سَرقوا أو شربوا الخَمرَ؟

فقالَ (عليه السلام) لي: إنا للهِ وإنا إليهِ راجِعونَ! واللهِ ما أنصَفونا أَنْ نكُونَ أخَذنَا بالعَملِ ووُضِعَ عنهُم. إنمَا قلتُ إذا عرِفتَ فاعملْ ما شِئتَ من قَليلِ الخَيرِ وكثيرِه فإنّه يُقبلُ مِنكَ.

I asked Imam Sadiq (as) whether he has actually said the hadith, 'When you reach the stage of cognition, do as you wish,' that is related by some people. The Imam said: "I have said it."
I asked: "Even such doings are adultery, theft, or drinking of wine?"

He (as) answered: "Surely, we belong to Allah and to Him we will return.[12] By Allah, it is not fair that we are obliged to perform religious duties and they are free! I have said that when you reach the stage of cognition (of Allah), do good deed a little or as much as you can, for it will be accepted by Allah."[13]61

Summary

To sum it up, the external feature of the Hajj rites represents spiritual journey of a perfect man who has gone through different stages of servitude, detached from worldly ties and ornaments, and rescued from

darkness and entered into the illuminated kingdom of God. Therefore, a true Hajj is an evolution in soul. It is not a plaything or entertainment as some ignorant people think, for their performance is more like a game than worship.

Malik ibn Anas says:

One year, I accompanied Imam Sadiq (as) in the Hajj pilgrimage. Being on the back of his horse and in the state of Ihram, the Imam (as) was trying to utter 'Labbayk' but his voice stuck in his throat. He therefore rode off his horse.
I said: *"O son of the Messenger of Allah! Say 'Labbayk', you have to say it."*
He (as) replied:

يا بنَ أبي عامِر، كيفَ أجسِرُ أنْ أقولَ: لَبّيْكَ اللّهمَّ لَبّيكَ، وأخْشى أنْ يَقولَ عزّ وجلّ لا لَبّيكَ ولا سَعْدَيكَ.

"O son of Abi-Amir, how dare I say it? I fear that Allah will not answer me nor let me in."[14]62

Hajj, Spiritual Journey Not Physical Acts

The Imams' sayings act as warning to the ignorant ones that Hajj is the journey of soul, not distance. If a man's soul gets into the state of Ihram, reaches the House of God, touches the Black Stone[15] with the hand of the heart, stays on Mount Arafat with full heart, stops in al-Mash'ar al-Haram with full soul, sacrifices the sheep of the carnal desires with the knife of certitude and submission (to the Lord), he has performed a true Hajj.

The Hajj of Prophet Ibrahim (as), A Spiritual One

Prophet Ibrahim (as) reached such a stage of contentment and submission (to the Lord) inspired by God that he was ready to sacrifice his son for his Lord. He rolled up his sleeves without hesitation, laid down his endeared son, put the sharp knife on his throat, and thought of nothing but carrying out God's order. Such a degree of cognition of God is the result of his true spiritual journey.

He truly visited God's House and out of sincerity took off the garment of pleasure and worldly inclinations from his soul and put on a garment of submission to God and said 'Labbayk' from the bottom of his heart, entered into the sanctuary, stayed in the lap of the mountain of cognition, immersed his senses in divine thoughts, and saw world ornaments as worthless pebbles. He took his son to the altar and put the knife on his throat in Mina saying to himself, 'I turn my face to the direction of the One Who originated the heavens and the earth.'[16]64

Reaching such a state requires traversing different stages including giving up pleasures, forgetting one's desires, and throwing pebbles at the alluring Satan to a degree that God's pleasure is considered above

the life of even the endeared son.

Content, Not Form, Is Important

It is strange to see that people in everyday life look for truth and reality but when the religion and the Hereafter is concerned, they become content with form and external feature rather than true meanings. We never expect a sugarless piece of cake to taste sweet, but consider a prayer without the presence of heart as perfect, complaining to God that we have offered our prayer but we have not seen a positive effect!

A nourishing food or a trip of leisure leave certain effects, how is it then that a month-long fasting and being guest of God do not leave any effect on souls? How is it acceptable that we do not benefit by the supplications while we have the household of the Prophet -the Ahl ul-Bayt- (as) as the best spiritual food and the means for purification? How is it that a weak-long trip to the seaside changes our complexion, but seven-fold circumambulations of the Kaaba, visiting the graveside of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Imams (as) do not change our souls?

As a matter of fact, if we take the title of Hajji off most of those who have been to Mecca, what emblem of Mecca, circumambulation, or touching the Black Stone do we see in them?

Where Are the True Feature of Islam and the Effect of Prostration?

Do Muslims not have, according to the Holy Qur'an, a special feature making them distinct from others, and that is the marks of prostration, humbleness, and submission to God?

سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ

"...Their marks are in their faces because of the prostration. (***The Holy Qur'an; 48:29***)***"***

The effect of prostration alone in the face of a Muslim is not a sign of servitude; rather it should be seen in his business, culture, and all aspects of life. Regrettably, what is not seen in the life of the ummah is the true feature of Islam and the marks of prostration. In certain cases, the feature of unbelievers is seen in Muslims' lives.

Read the Following Reports and Get To Know the Feature of A Shiite Muslim

رُويَ عَن أميرِ المُؤمنِينَ عليهِ السلامُ أنّهُ خرجَ ذاتَ ليلةٍ منَ المسجدِ – وكانتْ ليلةً قَمراءَ– فَأمَّ الجَبّانةَ ولحِقَهُ جماعةٌ يقفُونَ إثرَهُ، فَوقفَ عليهِم ثمّ قال : مَن أنتم؟

قالوا : شيعتُكَ يا أميرَ المُؤمنِينَ.

فَتفَرّسَ في وجُوهِهِم ثمّ قال : فَما لي لا أَرى عليكُم سِيماءَ الشّيعةِ؟

قالوا : وما سِيماءُ الشّيعةِ يا أميرَ المُؤمنِينَ؟

قال : صُفرُ الوجوهِ من السَّهرِ، عُمشُ العيونِ من البُكاءِ، حُدبُ الظّهورِ من القِيامِ، خُمصُ البطونِ من الصّيامِ، ذُبلُ الشِّفاهِ من الدُّعاءِ، عليهِم غَبَرَةُ الخاشِعينَ.

It was narrated that, once, during a moonlit night, Imam ‘Ali (as), coming out of the mosque, headed for wilderness. The crowd following him reached there. He asked about their identity, and they answered, ‘O Amir ul-Mu’mineen, we are your Shiites (followers). The Imam cast a deep look at them, saying, ‘How is it that I do not see any mark of Shiism on your faces?’

‘What are the marks of a Shiite Muslim?’ they asked, and the Imam (as) answered:

‘Those who are pale of keeping vigilance, weeping out of fear of Allah, bent out of too much standing for prayer, hungry due to fasting, dry-mouthed because of supplications, with marks of prostration in their faces.’[1765]

This is another narration:

عن أبي عبدِاللهِ عليهِ السلامُ قالَ: كَانَ عليُّ بنُ الحُسينِ عليهِ السلامُ قاعِداً في بيتِه إذ قَرعَ قومٌ عليهِ البابَ، فقالَ : يا جاريةُ انظُري مَن بالبابِ، فَقالوا : قَومٌ مِن شيعتِكَ. فَوثبَ عجلانَ حتّى كادَ أن يَقعَ، فَلمّا فتحَ البابَ ونظَر إليهِم رَجعَ وقال: كذِبوا فأَينَ السَّمْتُ في الوجوهِ ؟ أين أثَرُ العِبادةِ؟ أينَ سِيماءُ السّجودِ؟ إنّما شِيعتُنا يُعرَفونَ بعبادتِهِم وشَعَثِهِم؛ قَد قَرِحتْ منهُم الآنافُ، ودَثرَت الجِباهُ والمَساجدُ. خُمصُ البُطونِ، ذُبلُ الشّفاهِ، قد هيّجَتِ العبادةُ وجوهَهُم، وأَخلَقَ سهرُ اللّيالي وقَطعُ الهَواجرِ جُثَثَهُم، المُسبّحونَ إذا سَكَتَ النّاسُ، والمُصَلّونَ إذا نامَ الناسُ، والمحزُونونَ إذا فَرِحَ النّاسُ.

Imam Sadiq (as) narrated: As he was sitting in his house, a group of people knocked the door at Imam Sajjad (as). He asked his slave girl to see who it was. They shouted, ‘It is a group of your Shiites.’ The Imam (as) jumped so hurriedly that he was about to fall down. When he opened the door, he took back

and said, 'They must be lying. Where is the mark of Shiism on their faces? Where are the marks of prostration on them?

Our Shiites are known of fear of the Day of Judgment, their foreheads having the marks of prostration, being thin due to fasting, and dry-mouthed because of supplications. The prayer makes their faces wrinkled, keeping vigilance, and fasting on hot days make their bodies exhausted. When (other) people are at rest, they (the true Shiites) glorify Allah, when people are asleep, they are in prayers, and when people are merry making, they are sad.'[18]66

Note

The same God-fearing, enlightened people, in their love for the Hereafter, have fought the enemies of God throughout the history of Islam. They considered martyrdom in the way of God as the highest degree of happiness and the best means for affinity with God.

We therefore realize that a true Shiite is pious and heedless of the worldly ornaments but does not live the life of a recluse. He stands against the oppressing powers with his strong faith and steadfastness. Describing such people, the Holy Qur'an says:

"Those who fight in His way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall. (***61:4***)***"***

Therefore, no one can say that the school based on piety, detachment from this world, prostration, and prayer fails to nurture heroes.

Nevertheless, we stand in prayer with our heart full of love for this world without God's remembrance. We fast with a soul polluted with sins. We go on Hajj pilgrimage with illegally gotten money, abandon what is obligatory but do what is praiseworthy and expect the positive effects on our lives and wish to be among the angels at the same time!

Addressing to Jesus (as), God says:

> يا عِيسَى، قُل لِظَلَمَةِ بني إسْرائِيلَ: لا تَدعُوني والسُّحْتُ تحتَ أَحضَانِكُم والأصْنامُ في بُيوتِكُم، فإِني آلَيتُ أنْ أُجيبَ مَن دَعانِي وأَنْ أجعَلَ إِجابَتي إيّاهُم لَعناً حتّى يَتفرَّقوا.

"O Jesus, tell the Israeli wrongdoers not to call upon Me while they have illegal riches under their arms and keep idols at home, for I have sworn I will answer one who calls upon Me. My answer to the call for these wrongdoers is to curse them until they part from one another."[19]67

> يا عِيسَى، قُل لهُم قَلِّموا أَظفارَكُم مِن كَسْبِ الحَرامِ وأَصِمُّوا أَسماعَكُم مِن ذِكْرِ الخَنى وأَقبِلوا عَلَيَّ بِقلوبِكم فإِنّي لستُ أُريدُ صُورَكُم.

“O Jesus, tell them: Take your nails off illegal business, cover your ears from obscenity, and come to Me with full heart, for I certainly do not want your external faces.”[20]68

A religious report says:

مَن حَجَّ مِن غَيرِ حِلِّهِ ثمّ لبّى قالَ اللهُ عزّ وجلّ له: لا لَبّيكَ ولا سَعدَيكَ حتّى تَرُدّ ما في يَديكَ.

“Whoever goes on Hajj with illegal money when saying Labbayk, Allah will say: I will not accept your ‘Labbayk’ until you return the money to its owner.”[21]69

Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“How much wailing and how few devoted hajjis are!”[22]*70*

(In other words, the noise of the performers of Hajj is extremely loud but, unfortunately, real performers of Hajj are very few.)

What Is the Cause of Skepticism

Skepticism about religious laws made by certain individuals has different motivations. Part of it is by prejudiced and malevolent individuals aimed at diluting Muslims’ ideology so as to carry out their destructive plots in the Islamic society and to attain their satanic goal.

Another part arises from ignorance of the truth and philosophy of the heavenly teachings. These skeptics see the external face but they are unaware of the philosophy behind them. These people are ignorant, arrogant, egotist, and unwilling to understand the philosophy of the religion.

The Skepticism of A Materialist Thirteen Centuries Ago

Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa was unbeliever. He was an abusive orator whom scholars avoided for his sharp tongue. It was Hajj season when he was sitting with a group of unbelievers in the Sacred Mosque looking at pilgrims mockingly. In another corner of the Mosque,

Imam Sadiq (as) was sitting surrounded by the Shiites who benefited by his heavenly knowledge. The unbelievers turned to Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa saying: *“How good it is to debate with the man sitting there surrounded by his devotees making him ashamed!”*

Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa who was too proud of himself said: *“I will go right now and make him helpless.”* Entering into the Imam’s assembly, Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa said:

يا أبا عبدِ الله، إنّ المجالسَ أماناتٌ ولا بُدّ لكُلِّ مَن كان به سُعالٌ أن يسعلَ، فتأذنُ لي بالسؤالِ؟

“O Abu-Abdullah, assemblies are safe. (He was afraid of being killed by the believers.) Everyone having phlegm in his chest has to cough it out. (i.e. one who has a question has to ask it.) Can I ask you a question?”

The Imam (as) gave him permission. Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa bared his heart shamelessly of his atheistic ideas in an enchanting rhymed prose, mocked the Hajj rites, and insulted the pilgrims, adding:

إلى كمْ تدُوسونَ هذا البَيدرَ وتلوذُونَ بهذا الحَجرِ وتعبُدونَ هذا البيتَ المرفوعَ بالطّوبِ والمدَرِ وتُهرولونَ حولَهُ هروَلَةَ البعيرِ إذا نفرَ؟ مَن فكّر في هذا وقدّرَ علِمَ أنهُ فِعْلُ غيرِ حكيمٍ ولا ذي نظرٍ. فقُل فأنتَ رأسُ هذا الأمرِ وسَنامُهُ وأبوكَ أُسُّهُ ونِظامُهُ

“Till when will you work in this threshing-floor, seek refuge to this stone, worship this house made of mud and stone, and go round it like frightened camels? Anyone reflecting on the matter will find out that it is unwise act. Give me the answer, you who are at the top, a prominent personality, and a person whose fathers set up and maintained this religion.”

Even nowadays such a question is asked by some of the so-called intellectuals!

However, Imam Sadiq (as) who was the propagator of the monotheistic school of Islam and had trained students in his mystical sessions, uttered sentences that exposed the evil intention of Ibn-Abi’l-Aujaa and his co-thinkers and bewared them of the sinister fate awaiting them. He (as) said:

إنّ مَن أضلّهُ اللهُ وأعمى قلبَهُ استَوخمَ الحقَّ ولم يستعذِبْهُ وصارَ الشَيطانُ وليَّهُ وربَّهُ ويورِدُهُ مناهِلَ الهَلَكَةِ ولا يُصدِرُهُ

“Whomever Allah causes to go astray and to be blind in heart will find the truth bitter and will have Satan as guardian and lord, and will be damned to perdition from which there is no return.”[23]71

The Imam (as) then made statements the summary of which is as follows: This Kaaba is the House that God has appointed as a means to test His servants making them duty-bound to respect and visit and to be a balance from man’s devotion and obedience to God. Through the Kaaba, the devoted believers are made distinct from hypocrites.

This House is the resting-place for the prophets, Kiblah of worshippers, and a means to please God. Therefore, the aim of Hajj is to worship God—the Creator of the heavens and the earth and the human soul and body—, not the stone. Kissing or caressing the Black Stone, too, is aimed at carrying out God’s order.

Why Was God's House Not Built in A Pleasant Area?

Imam 'Ali's sermon known as 'al-Khitba al-Qassiya –Sermon of Disparagement-' answers the above and similar questions. A part of the sermon, which is related to the Holy Kaaba, will be quoted hereinafter:

أَلا تَرَوْنَ أَنّ اللهَ سُبحانهُ اخْتَبَرَ الأوّلينَ مِن لَدُنْ آدَمَ صَلواتُ اللهِ عَليهِ إلى الآخِرينَ مِن هذا العالمِ بِأحْجارٍ لا تَضُرّ ولا تَنفَعُ ولا تُبصِرُ ولا تَسمَعُ فَجَعلها بَيتَهُ الحَرامَ الّذي جَعَلَهُ اللهُ لِلنّاسِ قِياماً ثُم وَضَعَهُ بِأوْعَرِ بِقاعِ الأرْضِ حَجَراً وأَقَلَّ نَتائِقِ الدّنيا مَدَراً وأَضيَقَ بُطونِ الأَوديَةِ قُطْراً بَينَ جِبالٍ خَشِنَةٍ ورِمالٍ دَمِثَةٍ وعُيونٍ وَشِلَةٍ وقُرىً مُنْقَطِعَةٍ لا يَزكُو بِها خَفٌّ ولا حافِرٌ ولا ظِلْفٌ.

ثمّ أَمَر آدَمَ عليهِ السلامُ وولِدَهُ أن يُثْنوا أَعطافَهُم نحْوَهُ فَصارَ مَثابَةً لمُنْتَجَعِ أَسفارِهِم وغايَةً لمُلقَى رِحالِهِم تَهوي إليهِ ثِمارُ الأفْئِدَةِ مِن مَفاوِزِ قِفارٍ سَحيقَةٍ ومَهاوي فِجاجٍ عَميقَةٍ وجَزائِرِ بحارٍ مُنقَطِعَةٍ حتّى يَهُزّوا مَناكِبَهُم ذُلُلاً يُهَلِّلونَ للهِ ويَرمُلونَ عَلى أقْدامِهِم شُعْثاً غُبْراً له، قَد نَبَذوا السّرابيلَ وَراءَ ظُهورِهِم وشَوَّهوا بإعفَاءِ الشُّعورِ محَاسِنَ خَلقِهِمُ ابْتِلاءً عَظِيماً وامْتِحاناً شَديداً واخْتِباراً مُبيناً وتمْحِيصاً بَلِيغاً جَعَلَهُ اللهُ سَبَباً لِرحْمَتِهِ وَوُصْلَةً الى جَنَّتِهِ.

وَلوْ أَرادَ سُبحانَهُ أَنْ يَضَعَ بَيتَهُ الحَرامَ ومَشاعِرَهُ العِظامَ بَين جَنّاتٍ وأَنهارٍ وسَهْلٍ وقَرارٍ جَمّ الأشْجارِ دانِي الثِّمارِ مُلْتَفِّ البُنَى مُتَّصِلِ القُرى بَينَ بُرَّةٍ سَمْراءَ وَرَوضَةٍ خَضْراءَ وأَرياف مُحْدِقَةٍ وعِراصٍ مُغدِقَةٍ وزُروعٍ ناضِرةٍ وطُرُقٍ عَامِرَةٍ لَكانَ قدْ صَغَّرَ قَدْرَ الجَزاءِ عَلى حَسْبِ ضَعْفِ البَلاءِ.

ولَو كَانَ الأَساسُ المَحْمُولُ عَلَيها والأَحْجارُ المَرفُوعُ بها بَين زُمُرُّدَةٍ خَضْراءَ ويَاقُوتَةٍ حَمْراءَ ونُورٍ وضِياءٍ لخَفَّفَ ذلِك مُصارَعَةَ الشَّكِّ في الصُّدورِ ولَوَضَعَ مُجاهَدَةَ إبليسَ عَن القُلوبِ ولنَفى مُعتَلَجَ الرَّيبِ مِن النّاسِ.

ولَكنَّ اللهَ يَخْتَبِرُ عِبادَهُ بِأنواعِ الشَّدائِدِ ويَتَعَبّدُهُم بِأنْواعِ المجَاهِدِ ويَبتَلِيهِم بِضُرُوبِ المَكَارِهِ إخْراجاً لِلتَّكَبُّرِ مِن قُلوبِهِم وإمْكَاناً لِلتَّذَلُّلِ في نُفوسِهِم ولِيَجعَلَ ذلِكَ أَبواباً فُتُحاً إلى فَضْلِهِ وأَسبَاباً ذُلُلاً لِعَفْوِهِ.

"Do you not see the Allah, the Glorified, has tried all the people among those who came before, beginning with Adam up to the last ones in this world with stones which yield neither benefit nor harm nor see nor hear. He made those stones into His sacred house, which He made a standby for the people. He placed it in the most rugged stony part of the earth and on a highland with least soil thereon, among the narrowest valleys between rough mountains, soft sandy plains, springs of scanty water, and scattered habitants, where neither camels not horses nor cows and sheep can prosper.

Then, he commanded Adam and his sons to turn their attention towards it. In this way, it became the center of their journey in seeking pastures and the rendezvous for meeting of their carrier-beasts, so

that human spirits hasten towards it from distant waterless deserts, deep and low-lying valleys and scattered islands in the seas.

They shake their shoulders in humbleness, recite the slogan of having reached His audience, march with swift feet, and have disheveled hair and dusted faces. They throw their pieces of cloth on their backs; they have marred the beauty of their faces by leaving the hair uncut as a matter of great test, severe tribulation, open trials, and extreme refining. Allah has made it a means to His mercy and an approach to His Paradise.

If Allah, the Glorified, had places His Sacred House and His great signs among plantations, streams, soft and level points, plenty of trees, and abundance of fruits, a thick population, close habitats, golden wheat, lush gardens, green land, watered plains, thriving orchards, and crowded streets, the amount of recompense would have been decreased because of the lightness of the trial.

If the foundation on which the House is borne and the stones with which it has been raised had been of green emerald and red rubies, and there had been brightness and effulgence, then this would have lessened the action of doubts in the breasts, would have dismissed the effect of Satan's activity from the hearts, and would have stopped the surging of misgivings by means of different troubles, wants them to render worship through hardships and involves them in distress, all in order to extract out vanity from their hearts, to settle down humbleness in their spirits, and to make all this an open door for His favors and an easy means for His forgiveness (for their sins).[24]72

Why Do Hajj Acts Not Please the Intellect and Temperament?

It is noteworthy that the religious duties have various categories. Some, while being performed for God, have physical pleasure with them too, and man is naturally inclined toward them, such as marriage, eating, and sleeping. They can be both godly and means for satisfying one's nature. Other religious duties are not accompanied by physical pleasure but logically desirable, such as acquisition of knowledge, benefaction, helping the poor, and guiding those who have gone astray.

Although such acts are not sought by desire, they are logically desirable, and if they are done for the sake of God, their godly aspects will be mixed with their logical aspects. Hence, it is difficult to acquire devotion in them. Therefore, man cannot claim that his motivation for doing such acts has been God or another factor. If man carefully looks at most of these acts performed as religious duties, he will realize that the share of logic and desire in these acts is more than that of God, and the religious aspect has been naturally overshadowed by the aspect of logic and desire. Hence an effective weapon has not been used for suppressing the concupiscence. In these acts, Satan pollutes man's pure intention with pretense, love of fame, and other desires rendering the good deeds worthless.

Other religious duties have neither sign of physical pleasure nor logical benefits. A series of acts are neither desirable by temperament nor logic, such as taking off one's normal clothes and putting on

clothes of Ihram (two pieces of unstitched clothes) making one's head and feet bare, quitting many of everyday habits, going round a house of stone, kissing a black stone installed in the corner of the Kaaba, sevenfold shuttle between two mountains—Safa and Marwa, compulsory stay in specified times on the plain of Mina, Arafat and al-Mash'ar and throwing pebbles, which are desirable neither for temperament nor intellect.

It is God's order that persuades a Muslim to do these acts without expecting to get a physical pleasure or intellectual benefit. This is because Islam is the only factor ensuring the prosperity and perfection of a Muslim who has been trained in the school of monotheism and inspired by the Holy Qur'an.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللهِ الإِسْلامُ

"The true religion with Allah is Islam. (***The Holy Qur'an; 3:19***)***"***

Islam means to be submissive to God. Even if there are no socio-political as well as hygienic and economic benefits in enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, the virtue of being submissive to God alone is enough to encourage a wise man to do religious duties and to abstain from committing sins

ثُمَّ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

"...and best of all is Allah's pleasure. (***The Holy Qur'an; 9:72***)***"***

A believing Muslim does not care whether a religious duty has a benefit or not. What is important to him is the pleasure of God. Since most of us do not pay attention to the great impact of devotion and do not know what a great blessing devotion is, we look at it dubiously not knowing that the best acts are those done for the satisfaction.

We should note that those acts not having physical or logical motivation, which are merely done for God, are extremely positive in generating devotion and submission, making man devoted servant of God. We all get married but it is not known who does it for the sake of God and who does it for satisfying his instincts. We all study but it is not known who studies with the intention of promoting the Name of God and who does it for pursuing worldly goals. We all help the poor but hypocrites are not distinct from the God-seekers. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِيناً مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ للهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ

"And who has a better religion than he who submits himself entirely to Allah? (***4:125***)***"***

The Holy Qur'an further says:

لِيَهْلِكَ مَنْ هَلَكَ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ وَيَحْيَى مَنْ حَيَّ عَنْ بَيِّنَةٍ

"...That he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof. (***8:42***)***"***

God's Trial Is Difficult

God's commandments are aimed at revealing man's submission to the Creator. But, unfortunately, man being unaware of the secret behind those commandments keeps on asking about the benefits of the Islamic laws and their socio-economic effects, which have their roots in materialism. This way of thinking is not limited to a specific period. All prophets have been asked such questions with sinister results.

Failure of People of Sabbath in God's Trial

According to the Holy Qur'an, a Jewish tribe was living in a town near the sea and their job was fishing. On God's order, the Jewish tribe was duty-bound to keep the Sabbath, that is, to be engaged in prayer and not to catch fish on that day.

Since God's trial is always accompanied by difficulty, it so happened that fish would come to the surface of water abundantly on Saturdays, which was the Sabbath, but were scarce on other days. The abundance of fish on the Sabbath was so alluring that refusal to catch all those fishes was painful for the Jewish tribe.

فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

"...Thus did we try them because they transgressed. (***The Holy Qur'an; 7:163***)***"***

Finally, avarice overcame faith and pushed the mammonists to sin. So they tried to catch fishes on Saturday with the tricks that Satan had taught them. Hence, God sent tribulation upon them. In this relation, the Holy Qur'an says:

فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا عَمَّا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ.

" Therefore, when they revoltingly persisted in what they had been forbidden, we said to them: Be (***as***) ***apes, despised and hated.*** (***7:166***)***"***

Trial of Talut's Army

Talut (Saul) whom the Holy Qur'an admires as worthy king had a strong physique and great knowledge. The Holy Qur'an says:

قَالَ إِنَّ اللهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً في العِلْمِ والجِسْمِ

" He said: Surely, Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique. (***2:247***)***"***

This strong man was appointed by the prophet of that time to be the leader of the Israelis to fight their enemies. Talut mobilized a great army to fight Jalut (Goliath) the tyrant, who oppressed the Israelis. He (Saul) said to his soldiers: Be careful, for God will test you through a river on your way; he who will not drink from it though he might be very thirsty will be (considered as) obeying God and will be among my helpers and entitled to God's grace. But anyone who will drink from it is not my follower and will be deprived of God's assistance.

It was hot, the land was dry, and thirst prevailed. Suddenly, the river came into sight and the thirsty soldiers saw a river flowing with limped water before them. It requires great patience and strong faith to resist desire to pass by a river and not quench one's thirst for the sake of God. The river was a great test for the army of Talut.

Satan began to tempt them as what the philosophy of suffering from thirst is while being near to a river. Why water, a source of life, should be banned. No, one must drink from it, feel fresh, and fight the enemies; not knowing that man's number one enemy is his concupiscence which disobeys God's orders.

First of all, one must fight this inner enemy and then be sure that after suppressing it, God's help will come. Finally, the pleasant sight of the river and Satan's temptations weakened their will. Except for 313 soldiers, the entire army whose number was 80,000 drank from the river and revealed their weak faith against physical desires.

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلاّ مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ، فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلاّ قَلِيلاً مِنْهُمْ.

"So, when Talut departed with the forces, he said: Surely, Allah will try you with a river; whoever then drinks from it, he is not of me, and whoever does not taste of it, he is surely of me, except he who takes with his hand as much of it as fills the hand; but with the exception of a few of them, they drank from it. (***The Holy Qur'an; 2:249***)***"***

Another trial of the children of Israel

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ القَرْيَةِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَداً وَادْخُلُوا البَابَ سُجَّداً وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطَايَاكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ المحُسْنِينَ. فَبَدَّلَ الّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلاً غَيْرَ الّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزاً مِنَ السّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانوُا يَفْسُقُونَ.

"And when we said: Enter this city, and then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish and enter the gate making obeisance; and say, forgiveness. We will forgive you your wrongs and give more to those who do good.

But those who were unjust changed it for a saying other than that which had been spoken to them, so We sent upon those who were unjust a pestilence from heaven, because thy transgressed. (The Holy Qur'an; 2: 58-9)"

The unyielding tribe of the Israelis, due to the dignity of Prophet Moses (as) was entitled to God's grace. So, they had the impression that they became really honorable in the sight of God and became God's favorites and the most devoted servants. To test them and to make them subject to curse and punishment, God appointed certain duties for them.

The prosperous land of Damascus was envisaged for their settlement provided that they, first, would enter the city through a specific gate, they, second, would enter the city while bowing as sign of humbleness to God, and, third, they would say, 'forgive us,' so that God would pardon their wrongdoings. But they said to themselves, 'why should we enter the city through a narrow gate while there were wider ones?' They entered the city not only without bowing but also with their backs forward; and instead of saying, 'forgive us,' they said indecent words. The result was a pestilence from heaven.

Prophet Ibrahim and God's Strange Trial

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَى في المَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى، قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدَنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ. فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ. وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ. قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي المُحْسِنِينَ. إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ البَلاَءُ المبِينُ.

"And when he attained to working with him, he said: O my son, surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see. He said: O my father, do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones. So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him, saying: O Ibrahim, you have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do We reward the doers of good. Most surely, this is a manifestation trial. (The Holy Qur'an; 37: 102-6)"

This is a strange scene and a strange duty! A handsome youth, much loved by an elder father has to be sacrificed for God. What a strange order and what a difficult duty! How can a kind father throw down his son and put a sharp knife on his throat with his own hands? This act is approved neither by temperament nor common sense. But here neither man's intellect nor does his common sense have any saying, for it is the realm of love of God Who is the Only Beloved in the world. The love for others is subject to His permission and pleasure.

Prophet Ibrahim (as) then prepared himself for carrying out God's order without any delay. He told the story to his son to know both his duty and to test the devotion of his son. The son, too, asked his father to do what he had been commanded and asked God to make him patient. What devotion it is! May God bless this stage of submission forever. Both father and son submitted. The father threw him down ready to cut his throat. A shocking scene amazed the whole world against the power of faith and love for God. Therefore, God praised the devotion of these two devoted monotheists. This is sufficient to indicate their greatness:

وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ

"And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. (***The Holy Qur'an; 37: 107***)

To acknowledge this devotion, God said:

سَلامٌ عَلَى إِبْراهِيمَ. إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا المُؤْمِنِينَ.

"Peace be upon Ibrahim. Surely, he was one of Our believing servants. (***The Holy Qur'an; 37: 109, 111***)

To sum it up, if we look at the acts commanded in God's trial, we will not see any benefit or advisability. In certain cases, there is harm, too, like the ban on catching fish on the Sabbath, which entailed economic loss, or the ban on drinking water from the river in the story of Talut, Ibrahim's dream to sacrifice his son, and the Israelis' entering into Damascus. In none of these cases, logical and tangible benefits could be seen.

The best advantage of the said acts lies in God's commandments and the inhibitions themselves to be followed by obedience and submission, the result of which is affinity with God and attaining His pleasure.

Since certain religious duties are based on devotion to God without having social, economic, political, or hygienic benefits, certain acts related to the Hajj rites are aimed for revealing man's devotion and submission to God.

One of the advantages of Hajj is that its aspect of devotion is more evident than other religious duties.

Throwing pebbles at Satan is extremely effective, for he is attempting to prevent man from obeying God by skepticism and raising questions in man's mind. For example, Satan through temptations makes man ask himself if Prophet Ibrahim's wife; Hagar, shuttled seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwa in search for water, why should be do the same and in search of water?

Or when Prophet Ibrahim (as) was in Mina for completing his mission and Satan appeared on his way trying to prevent him from obeying God's order, Prophet Ibrahim (as) drove him away by throwing stones at him, what is he doing in Mina now? Has he, too, seen Satan on his way to throw stones at him? A devoted servant of God finds out that Satan is always on the way to steal faith. Hence, he gets ready to expel the satanic temptations from his heart. The Holy Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

" Surely, those who guard against evil, when a visitation from the Satan afflicts them, they become mindful, then lo! They see. (***7:201***)***"***

I, too, as I have learnt lessons of devotion in the school of the prophets, take God as my Guardian and consider myself devoted servant of Him. I do not care whether certain act is beneficial or not. What I do is for obtaining God's pleasure. If I am told to shuttle between Safa and Marwa all my life for the pleasure of God, I will do it whole-heartedly.

Summary

The Hajj rites, consisting of apparently unjustifiable acts, are means of trial of men's devotion to God. Hajj makes those who follow 'self' and superficial intellect distinct from those following God.

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُوا اللهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

"And they were not enjoining anything except that they should serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience. (***The Holy Qur'an; 98:5***)***"***

Questions of Practical Laws of Islam

Perhaps it would not be out of place to discuss the practical laws of Islam here, for questions have been raised in this relation. For example, it is asked why Sura of al-Fatihah and Sura of at-Tawhid must be recited in undertone in the Dhuhr (Noon) and Asr (Afternoon) –obligatory- Prayers and recited aloud in the Maghrib (Evening) and Eshaa (Night) Prayers. Why are men banned to wear gold rings?

Why is it banned to use golden and silver vessels? Why is it religiously unlawful to have the meat of pork? What is the philosophy of Hajj? When does it become necessary to perform the Tayammum (Dry

Ablution)? Why is it forbidden for a Muslim to marry two sisters at the same time?

Many whys and for what reasons are answered correctly or incorrectly and on many occasions the answers increase the asker's amazement.

Note

The first and most important requirement of one who asks such questions is his belief in the acknowledged principles of Islam, that is, belief in One God, prophethood, God's justice, Day of Judgment, and Imamate. In the meantime, the degree of his belief in the aforesaid principles has to be taken into consideration so as to discuss with him the ideology of Islam in case of his imperfect knowledge about it.

Evidently, it is waste of time to discuss the secondary precepts of Islam with an unbeliever or someone whose belief is imperfect. How absurd it is to speak about the Ascension of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the moon's split for him or the life span and occultation of Imam Mahdi (as) with a materialist who does not believe in the absolute power of God. To debate with a Twelver[25] who does not firmly believe in the sinlessness of the prophets and Imams is also useless, for he needs to perfect his ideology first. Incidentally, most of the individuals who are skeptic of the practical laws of Islam are those who are weak in their beliefs.

The Aim of Questioning the Philosophy of the Practical Laws of Islam

Generally speaking, questions about the philosophy of the practical laws of Islam are raised for two reasons:

To understand the philosophy of the divine laws, and to get more interested in doing religious duties, this is the result of getting to know the philosophy of the divine laws.

As for someone who wishes to understand the logic of the divine laws, we should say that he is in error. Such a person needs to perfect his knowledge of the religion, get to know the prophet and the revelation as well as come to realize that the position of a prophet is above that of ordinary human beings.

He should, also, realize that what the prophets say do not come from themselves, but they are inspired by the Creator of the heavens and the earth. So, we come to the conclusion that the Holy Book and the religious laws are of the same Source. In other words, it is the All-knowing and All-wise God Who has prescribed what is lawful and what is unlawful and revealed it to the heart of His Messenger.

Why Are We in Need For A Divine Revelation?

Since we, human beings, do not have comprehensive knowledge about life and the Afterlife, and since the only One being aware of all the details of the universe is God, we are in need for guidance and religious laws, which is the same as revelation received by the prophets.

We have no option but to submit to the religious instructions. To practice the religious duties is to practice what the prophets and God have said. That is to say that I, considering myself as Muslim, obey God and His Messenger not because I have come to know about the philosophy of the religious laws, but I obey Him and His Messenger regardless of the harms and benefits that accompany certain religious acts.

What Is Religious Obedience?

Muhammad ibn Sinan wrote a letter to Imam Ridha' (as) saying, 'Some Muslims have the impression that the dos and don'ts in Islam are not based on people's interest or disadvantages and that there is no reason for them save obedience and devotion to God.' Responding to this letter, Imam Ridha' (as) wrote:

> قَد ضَلَّ مِن قال ذلكَ ضَلالاً بَعيداً. وَوجَدْنا المحُرّمَ مِن الأشْياءِ لا حاجَةَ لِلعبادِ إليهِ ووجدناهُ مُفسِداً داعِياً إلى الفَناءِ والهَلاكِ

"Whoever has such impression of the religious precepts is in gross error, for we realize that what Allah has forbidden is not only unnecessary for human life but also it is a source of corruption pushing man to perdition."

Sheikh Saduq, may his soul rest in peace, relates that a person went to Imam Baqir (as) asking, 'Why has God forbidden drinking wine and eating carrion and pork as well as blood?' The Imam (as) answered:

> إنّ اللهَ تبارَكَ وتعَالى لم يُحَرّمْ ذلكَ على عِبادِهِ وأَحلَّ لهُم ما سِوى ذلكَ مِن رَغبَةٍ في مَا أَحَلَّ لهُم ولا زُهدٍ في مَا حَرّمَهُ عليهِم. ولكِنّه عزّ وجلّ خَلَقَ الخَلقَ فَعلِم ما يَقومُ بهِ أَبدانُهُم وما يُصلِحُهُم فَأَحَلَّهُ لهُم وأَباحَهُ وعَلِمَ ما يَضُرُّهُم فَنَهاهُم عنهُ وحَرّمَهُ عليهِم

"Allah has not made certain things lawful or unlawful because He Himself likes or dislikes them, for neither the lawful nor do the unlawful benefit or harm Him. Since Allah has created man and known what is good or bad for him, He has enjoined or forbidden certain things."[26]74

From these sayings of the Imams (as) it is inferred that devotion is not strict adherence like an inferior's

obedience to the orders of a superior. Obedience in religion is that when a human being realizes that his intellectual power is limited and that the religious precepts with all their benefits have their source in God's infinite knowledge, he will naturally feel duty-bound to submit to God's commandments.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (Saw) Says:

يا عِبادَ اللهِ أنتُم كالمَرضَى ورَبُّ العَالمِينَ كالطّبِيبِ، فَصَلاحُ المَرضَى في ما يَعمَلُهُ الطّبِيبُ وتَدبِيرِهِ بِه لا في ما يَشتَهِيهِ المَرِيضُ ويَقتَرِحُهُ، ألا فَسَلِّموا للهِ أَمرَهُ تَكُونوا مِن الفَائزِينَ.

"O servants of Allah, you are like patients and the Lord of the worlds being like a physician. Therefore, the interest of the patient is in what the physician prescribes for him, not in what he –the patient- likes. Therefore, submit to Allah so as to be delivered."[27]75

It is true that the prophets are like us, human being, but they receive divine revelation. Addressing the Holy Prophet (saw), God says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَناْ بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ

***"Say: I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me.* (*The Holy Qur'an; 18:110*)"**

To sum it up, religious obedience is not a blind following devoid of logic, rather it is submission of a human being with limited knowledge to the All-encompassing Authority.

As for the second question about the philosophy of the practical laws of Islam, if it is aimed at getting more familiarity with the benefits of God's commandments, to purify one's self and society, to ensure a sound economy, to see their compatibility with the scientific researches, to highlight the value of the religious precepts, the sayings of the Imams, the scientific miracles of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Holy Qur'an, to add to one's tranquility and peace of mind, it is welcome! In the Holy Qur'an, most of the verses express the philosophy of the commandments:

يَا أَيُّهَا الّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيامُ... لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

***"O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you... so that you many guard* (*yourselves*) *against evil.* (*2:183*)"**

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلاةَ لِذِكْرِي

***"... Keep up prayer for My remembrance.* (*20:14*)"**

فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكَ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ

"... And ask of them (women) from behind a curtain; this is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. (33:53)"

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالحَجِّ... لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ.

"And proclaim among men the pilgrimage... that they may witness advantages for them. (22:28)"

To sum it up, the necessity to act according to the religious precepts is to follow the divine revelation and not necessarily to understand their philosophy. The value of the acts of worship lies in devotion and man can have devotion when he has no motivation other than pleasing God. Then, he will become a true servant of God:

رِجَالٌ لا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللهِ.

"Men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah... (The Holy Qur'an; 24:37)"

The aim of the religion is to make the earthly man ascend to heaven. Being the most perfect religion, Islam has a double vision, that is, it sees both this world and the Hereafter; it cares for the welfare of man and his moral education as well as spiritual perfection.

اَلّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَى لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ

"As for those who believe and do good, a good final state shall be theirs and a goodly return. (The Holy Qur'an; 13:29)"

Now, instead of this discussion and instead of trying to justify all the heavenly laws with scientific theories, we should consolidate the spirit of getting to know God, the prophet, and the Imams in the hearts of the youths. It is only then that the young generation will naturally feel duty-bound to follow the Messenger of God and to obey Him with contentment and will never look for benefits in serving God.

فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الحَقِّ إِلاّ الضَّلالُ

"... What is there after the truth but error? (The Holy Qur'an; 10:32)"

Imam Sajjad (as) has said:

إنّ دِينَ اللهِ لا يُصابُ بِالعُقولِ النّاقِصةِ والآراءِ الباطِلَةِ والمَقاييسِ الفاسِدةِ، ولا يُصابُ إلا بالتّسليمِ فَمَنْ سَلَّمَ لنا سَلِمَ ومَن اهتَدى بنا هُدِيَ ومَن دانَ بالقِياسِ والرّأْيِ هَلَكَ ومَن وَجَدَ في نفْسِهِ شَيئاً ممّا نَقولُهُ أو نَقضي به حَرَجاً كَفَرَ بالذي أَنزَلَ السّبْعَ المَثاني والقُرآنَ العَظيمَ وهُو لا يَعلَمُ

"Surely, the religion of Allah cannot be comprehended with imperfect intellects, wrong opinions, or immoral criteria. Hence, there is no way to get to know the truth of the religion other than submission. Whoever submits to us will be safe from deviation, and whoever is guided in our path will be truly guided. Whoever makes religion with his own conjecture will find perdition and one who is heavy-hearted with our orders has disbelieved in the One Who revealed the Holy Qur'an."[28]76

God Is in No Need For Our Obedience

It is worth mentioning that obedience to God's commandments and performance of the divine laws do not add to God's glory and greatness, and man's disobedience to God does not reduce from His authority. In this relation, Imam 'Ali (as) says:

فإنّ اللهَ سُبحانهُ وتَعالى خَلَقَ الخَلْقَ حِينَ خَلَقَهُمْ غَنِيّاً عَن طَاعَتِهِمْ آمِناً مِن مَعْصِيَتِهِم لأنّه لا تَضُرّهُ مَعصِيَةُ مَن عَصاهُ ولا تَنفَعُهُ طاعَةُ مَن أَطاعَهُ.

"Now then, Allah, the Glorified the Sublime, created (the things of) the creation; He created them without any need for their obedience or being safe from their sinning, because the sin of anyone who sins does not harm him nor does the obedience of anyone who obeys Him benefit Him."[29]77

The fate of those who disobeyed God is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الّذِينَ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ، كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَآثَاراً فِي الأَرْضِ فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنَ اللهِ مِنْ وَاقٍ. ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالبَيِّنَاتِ فَكَفَرُوا فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللهُ إِنَّهُ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ العِقَابِ

"Have they not traveled in the earth and seen how was the end of those who were before them? Mightier than these were they in strength and in fortifications in the land, but Allah destroyed them for their sins; and there was not for them any defender against Allah. That was because they came to them their apostles with clear arguments, but they rejected them; therefore, Allah destroyed them; Surely He is Strong, Severe in retribution. (40:21-2)"

Jesus Christ (as) is quoted as saying:

أَلم تَعلَموا أنّه مَن شَمَخَ بِرأسِه الى السّقفِ شَجَّهُ ومَن خفَضَ بِرأسِه عَنه استَظلَّ تحتَهُ وأكَنَّهُ، وكَذلكَ مَن لم يَتواضعْ

للهِ خَفَضَهُ ومَن تواضعَ للهِ رَفَعَه

“Do you not know that anyone who raises his head so high that it touches the ceiling, the ceiling will break his head? But one who lowers his head, the same ceiling will serve as a canopy to give him shelter and comfort under its shade. Likewise, one who is not humble before Allah will be degraded, whereas one who is humble before Allah will be promoted.”[30]78

As long as the human society obeys the divine laws under the heavenly canopy, it will enjoy welfare and receive God’s mercy, but if it disobeys God and becomes arrogant, God will say:

إِنّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ.

“Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian. (***The Holy Qur’an; 21:32***)***”***

The devils can never infiltrate into this guarded canopy and any time the followers of Satan have attempted to transgress, they have been badly defeated and become examples for others.

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ وَمَزَّقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ.

“So, We made them stories and scattered them with an utter scattering. (***The Holy Qur’an; 34:19***)***”***

Have a look at history and see what God has done to those who fought against the heavenly canopy:

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرّحْمنِ الرّحِيمِ. أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الفِيلِ. أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ. وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْراً أَبَابِيلَ. تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِنْ سِجّيلٍ. فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَأْكُولٍ.

“In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate the Most Merciful. Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, and send down to prey upon them birds in flocks casting against them stones of baked clay; so, He rendered them like straw eaten up? (***The Holy Qur’an; 105:1–5***)***”***

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ. إِرَمَ ذَاتِ العِمَادِ. الّتِي لَمْ يَخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي البِلادِ. وَثَمُودَ الّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالوَادِ. وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الأَوْتَادِ. الّذِينَ طَغَوْا فِي البِلادِ. فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهَا الفَسَادَ. فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ. إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمِرْصَادِ.

“Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with Ad; the people of Ihram and the possessors

of lofty buildings, the like of which were not created in the other cities; and with (the people of) Thamud who hewed out the rocks in the valley, and with Pharaoh, the lord of hosts; who committed inordinacy in the cities; so, they made great mischief therein? Therefore, your Lord let down upon them a portion of the chastisement. Most surely, your Lord is watching. (The Holy Qur'an; 89:7-15)"

In the Holy Qur'an; Sura of al-Ankabut –the spider-, after speaking about the painful fate of the former nations afflicted with heavenly and earthly tribulations, God says:

فَكُلاًّ أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِباً وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَغْرَقْنَا، وَمَا كَانَ اللهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ.

"So, each We punished for his sin; of them was he on whom We went down a violent storm, and of them was he whom the rumbling overtook, and of them was he who We made to be swallowed up by the earth, and of them was he who We drowned; and it did not beseem Allah that he should be unjust to them, but they were unjust to their own souls. (29:40)"

For thousands of years, those who disobeyed God have tried to transgress the bounds of decency with their lusts and arrogance but they have been defeated with humiliation. Nevertheless, the prophets' laws have survived and the pleasant call of 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,' is heard at dawn, noon, and in the evening forever:

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ.

"And We exalted for you (Prophet Muhammad) your esteem. (The Holy Qur'an; 94:4)"

Speaking about what earns people and what is worthless, God says:

فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الأَرْضِ.

"Then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits people, it tarries in the earth. (The Holy Qur'an; 13:17)"

In the same way that the sun shines upon the decayed bodies of the unjust tribes of Ad and Thamud whom were chastised by God, it will shine upon our dead bodies. The earth keeps on going round the sun forever.

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ المُلْكِ تُؤْتِي المُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ المُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى

كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الحَيَّ مِنَ المَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ المَيِّتَ مِنَ الحَيِّ

"Say: O Allah; Master of the Kingdom, Thou givest the kingdom to whomsoever Thou pleasest and take away the kingdom from whomsoever Thou pleasest and Thou exaltest whom Thou pleasest and abasest whom Thou pleasest; in Thine hand is the good. Surely, Thou hast power over all things. Thou makest the night pass into the day and Thou makest the day pass into the night, and Thou bringest forth the living from the dead and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living. (***The Holy Qur'an; 3:26-7***)***"***

To sum it up, the divine laws are invincible and unchangeable:

فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللهِ تَبْدِيلاً وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللهِ تَحْوِيلاً

"For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah. (***The Holy Qur'an; 35:43***)***"***

It is the disobeying man who will come to perdition.

وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ

"... Whoever goes beyond the limits of Allah indeed does injustice to his own soul. (***The Holy Qur'an; 65:1***)***"***

For what we have said we come to the conclusion that God neither needs our obedience to Him nor does He fear our disobedience to Him, and that neither our obedience to Him benefit Him nor does our disobedience to Him harm Him.

Rather it is we, human beings, who are strongly in need for God. We, human beings, are obliged to be humble for Him. If God has accepted our servitude and submission, it is a favor on His part, for if we thank Him all the time, we have done little of what we should do.

1. The Hadith Qudsi is the words of Almighty God reported by the Prophets and their successors.
2. See al-Mahajjat ul-Beidhaa; vol. 5
3. See Jami'us-Sa'aadat; Vol. 3 p.322
4. Quoted from ad-Deilami's Irshad ul-Quloub
5. See Mir'aat ul-Anwaar
6. See Mir'aat ul-Anwaar; the introduction, p. 13
7. See Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz; 159
8. See Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz; 161 (as quoted from Bassa'ir ud-Darajaat)
9. See Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz; 160
10. See Kelimat Meknuneh Faiz; 161 and Tafsir al-Mizan; vol. 1 p. 39

11. See Qadi Saeed Qummi's Asrar ul-Ibadat, p. 6
12. This statement is an expression of grief.
13. See Usul al-Kafi; vol. 2 p.464
14. See Sheikh Saduq's al-Khissal; vol. 1 p. 160 Hadith 189
15. Black Stone is the sacred reddish-black stone built into the outside wall of the Kaaba
16. In the Holy Qur'an, God has related this statement to Prophet Abraham.
17. See Safinat ul-Bihar; vol. 1 p.130
18. See Safinat ul-Bihar; vol. 1
19. See Tuhaf ul-Uqoul; 369
20. See Tuhaf ul-Uqoul; 371
21. See al-Mahajjat ul-Beizaa; vol. 2 p.210
22. See Safinat ul-Bihar, Vol. 2 p.71
23. See Bihar ul-Anwar; Vol. 10 p.210
24. See Nahjul Balagha; sermon 192
25. Twelvers are the Shiites acknowledging twelve Imams beginning with Imam 'Ali and ending with Imam Mahdi (as).
26. See Ilal ush-Shara'ie; vol. 2 p.169
27. See Collection of Waram, Vol 2 p.117
28. See Bihar ul-Anwar; Vol. 2 p.303
29. See Nahjul Balagha; sermon No. 184
30. See Tuhaf ul-Uqoul; sermons of Jesus Christ

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