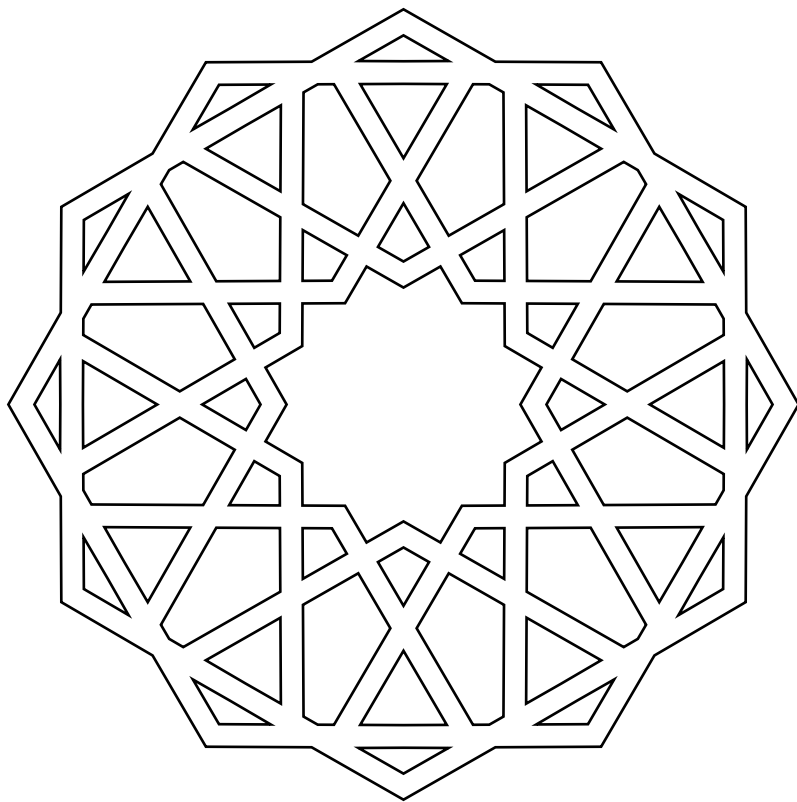


WORSHIP AND PRAYERS IN ISLAM



A Guide to the Spiritual Aspects



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Introduction

This book has been prepared in order to enlighten our readers on the less well-known aspects of Islamic worship and prayers. It has been compiled from the works of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, a contemporary Muslim scholar who spent his life on expounding the truths of Qur'an and Islam. Topics relating to various aspects and forms of worship and prayers have been selected from the Words, the Letters, the Flashes and the Rays, which are four major volumes in Bediuzzaman's famous Risale-i Nur collection.

In Risale-i Nur collection Bediuzzaman responded to many questions a true human being has regarding creation, existence and unity of Allah, divine determining (destiny), hereafter, worship and many other spiritual and religious topics. The answers are mainly from two sources: the Qur'an and the Universe (the latter he calls "the greater book of universe"). He wrote his works addressing firstly his own self in order to convince it. Those who found similarity in their selves benefited from these works and that is how an informal circle of millions of students has formed.

We invite our readers to read the following extracts with open mind and heart and pray that this work will be beneficial for the whole humanity.



Basic terminology:

Salat: Refers to the prayers offered in ritual form. Physical movements include standing, bowing, prostration and sitting. During salat one faces Kabah in Makka and engages in recitation of the Qur'an and some prayers prescribed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). With very small variation it is same across Muslim world and always performed in Arabic language at five certain periods of the day. Here it is translated as prescribed prayers.

Dua: Literally means calling. It refers to the prayers offered to express need, gratitude, praise and so on. It can be offered in one's own language although prayers in Arabic from Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad are encouraged. Here it is usually translated as supplication.

Rab: Means Lord and Master. Used to refer to Allah Almighty. It is a relative word in relation to 'Abd (servant or slave). Usually translated as Sustainer here.

Rububiyat: The acts of Rab (Lord/Master) on his creatures including creating them, bestowing bounties, communicating with them, examining them with life and death and providing reward as well as punishment. It is usually translated as dominicality here.

'Abd: Literally means slave. In a religious sense it is understood as someone who willfully obeys rules and commands of his Creator.

'Ubudiyat: This includes all activities of worship prayers and good deeds done for the sake of Allah. It is a word related to again is a relative word in relation to Rububiyat.



What are the types of supplication and worship?

Twenty Fourth Letter-First Addendum

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
قُلْ مَا يَعْجِبُكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا



In His Name, be He glorified!
And there is nothing but it glorifies Him with praise.
In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
Say, "What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?"
Qur'an, 25:77.

Listen now to Five Points concerning this verse.

FIRST POINT

Supplication is a mighty mystery of worship; indeed, it is like the spirit of worship. As we have mentioned in many places, supplication is of three kinds.

The First Sort of Supplication: This is the tongue of latent ability, through which all seeds and grains supplicate to the All-Wise Creator, saying: "Make us grow! Make our tiny truths sprout and transform us into the mighty reality of a tree, so that we may display the elaborate embroideries of Your Names!"

A further sort of supplication through the tongue of latent ability is this: the gathering together of causes is a supplication for the creation of the effect. That is to say, the causes acquire a position whereby they become like a tongue of disposition through which they supplicate for and request the effect from the All-Powerful One of Glory. For example, water, heat, earth, and light take up positions around a seed, and their positions form a tongue of supplication which says: "O Our Creator, make this seed into a tree!" For the tree, which is a wonderful miracle of power, cannot be attributed to those unconscious, lifeless, simple substances; it is impossible to attribute it to them. That means the coming together of causes is a sort of supplication.

The Second Sort of Supplication: This is through the tongue of innate need. It is a sort of supplication made by all living creatures to the All-Compassionate Creator to give them the things they need and desire, which are beyond their power and will, from unexpected places and at the appropriate time. For an All-Wise and Compassionate One sends them all these things at the right time,



from places they do not know, beyond their power and will. Their hands cannot reach them. That is to say, the bestowal is the result of supplication.

In Short: All that rises to the Divine Court from the universe is a supplication. Those things that are causes seek the effects from Allah.

The Third Sort of Supplication: This is the supplication of conscious beings arising from need. It is of two kinds.

If it is made at a time of desperate need, or is completely conformable with innate need, or if it is close to the tongue of latent ability, or is made with the tongue of a pure, sincere heart, this supplication is virtually always acceptable. The greater part of human progress and most discoveries are the result of a sort of supplication. The things they call the wonders of civilization and the matters and discoveries they think are a source of pride are the result of what is in effect supplication. They were asked for with a sincere tongue of latent ability and so were given to them. So long as there is nothing preventing them and they are conformable with conditions, supplications made through the tongue of latent ability and the tongue of innate need are always acceptable.

The Second Kind: This is the well-known supplication and it too is of two kinds. One is by action and the other by word. For example, ploughing is a supplication by action. It is not seeking the sustenance from the earth, rather, the earth is a door to a treasury of mercy, and the plough knocks on the earth, the door to Divine Mercy.


We shall skip details of the remaining sorts, and explain in the following two or three Points one or two of the secrets of supplication by word.

SECOND POINT

The effect of supplication is great. Especially if the supplication gains universality and persists, it almost always has a result, indeed, its result is continuous. It may even be said that one of the reasons for the creation of the world was supplication. That is to say, after the creation of the universe, the supplications of chiefly mankind, and of them principally the Islamic world, and mainly the sublime supplications of Muhammad the Arabian (Upon whom be blessings and peace) were a cause of it being created. That is to say, the Creator of the World knew that in the future Muhammad (PBUH) would ask for eternal happiness and for a manifestation of the Divine Names in the name of mankind, indeed, on account of all beings, and He accepted that future supplication and created the universe.

Since supplication possesses this great importance and capacity, is it at all possible that the supplications offered all the time for one thousand three hun-





dred and fifty years by three hundred million of mankind and by uncountable number of blessed beings from among men, jinn, angels, and spirit beings for the Person of Muhammad (PBUH), and for all-encompassing Divine Mercy, eternal happiness, and the accomplishment of their aims would not be accepted? Is it in any way possible that their supplications would be rejected?

Since these supplications have acquired universality, extensiveness, and continuousness to this extent and have reached the level of the tongues of latent ability and innate need, for sure, as a result of them, Muhammad the Arabian (PBUH) is at such a rank and degree that if all minds were to gather together and become one mind, it could not completely comprehend it.

And so, O Muslims! The intercessor you shall have on the Day of Resurrection is thus; in order to attract the intercession of this intercessor towards yourselves, follow his Practices!...

If you say: Since he is Allah's Beloved, what need does he have of all these blessings and supplications?

The Answer: This Being (PBUH) is connected with the happiness of all his community and shares in every sort of the happiness of each member of it, and he is anxious at every sort of their tribulations. Although in regard to himself the degrees of happiness and perfection are endless, since he desires ardently the numberless kinds of happiness of the numberless members of his community for an unlimited time, and is saddened at the numberless kinds of their wretchedness, he is surely worthy and needy for endless blessings and supplications and mercy.

If you say: Sometimes supplications are offered for matters that are definite. Like, for example, the supplications in the prayers offered at the time of lunar and solar eclipses. Also, sometimes supplications are made for things which will never come about?

The Answer: As is explained in other Words, supplication is worship. Through supplication, the servant proclaims his own impotence and poverty. The apparent aims mark the times of the supplication and the supplicatory worship; they are not the true benefits. The benefits of worship look to the hereafter. If the worldly aims are not obtained, it may not be said: "The supplication was not accepted." It should rather be said: "The time for the supplication has still not ended."

Also, is it at all possible that eternal happiness, which all the believers have asked for at all times, continuously, with complete sincerity and yearning and entreaty, should not be given to them, and that the Absolutely Generous One, the Absolutely Compassionate One, Who according to the testimony of all the



universe possesses boundless mercy, should not accept their supplications and that eternal happiness should not exist?

THIRD POINT

There are two ways in which voluntary supplication by word is acceptable. It is either accepted exactly as desired or what is better is granted.

For example, someone asks for a son, and Almighty Allah gives a daughter like Mary. It may not be said: “Her supplication was not accepted,” but that “It was accepted in a better form.”

Also, sometimes a person makes supplication for his own happiness in this world, and it is accepted for the hereafter. It may not be said: “His supplication was rejected,” but that “It was accepted in a more beneficial form.” And likewise, since Almighty Allah is All-Wise, we seek from Him and He responds to us. But He deals with us according to His wisdom.

A sick person should not cast aspersions on the wisdom of his doctor. If he asks for honey and the expert doctor gives him quinine, he may not say: “The doctor did not listen to me.” Rather, the doctor listened to his sighs and moans; he heard them and responded to them. He provided better than what was asked for.

FOURTH POINT

The best, finest, sweetest, most immediate fruit and result of supplication is this, that the person who offers it knows there is someone who listens to his voice, sends a remedy for his ailment, takes pity on him, and whose hand of power reaches everything. He is not alone in this great hostel of the world; there is an All-Generous One Who looks after him and makes it friendly. Imagining himself in the presence of the One Who can bring about all his needs and repulse all his innumerable enemies, he feels a joy and relief; he casts off a load as heavy as the world, and exclaims: “All praise be to Allah, the Rab of All the Worlds!”

FIFTH POINT

Supplication is the spirit of worship and the result of sincere belief. For one who makes supplication shows through it that there is someone who rules the whole universe; One Who knows the most insignificant things about me, can bring about my most distant aims. Who sees every circumstance of mine, and hears my voice. In which case, He hears all the voices of all beings, so that He hears my voice too. He does all these things, and so I await my smallest matters from Him too. I ask Him for them.



Thus, look at the great breadth of sincere belief in Allah's Unity which supplication gives and at the sweetness and purity of the light of belief that it shows. Understand the meaning of the verse,

قُلْ مَا يَعْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا



Say, "What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?"

Qur'an, 25:77.

listen to the decree of,

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ



And your Sustainer says: Call on Me; I shall answer you.

Qur'an, 40:60.

As the saying goes: "If I had not wanted to give, I would not have given wanting."

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ



Glory be unto You! We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed, You are All-Knowing, All Wise!

Qur'an, 2:32.

O Allah, grant blessings to our master Muhammad from pre-eternity to post-eternity, to the number of things present in Divine knowledge, and to his Family and Companions, and preserve us and protect us from harm, and preserve our religion. Amen. And all praise be to Allah, the Sustainer of All the Worlds.



Why does Qur'an severely warn those who neglect prayers and worship?

The Flashes- The Twenty-Third Flash- Addendum

FIRST QUESTION

“We hear many lazy people and those who neglect the five daily prayers ask: ‘What need has Allah Almighty of our worship that in the Qur’an He severely and insistently reproves those who give up worship and threatens them with such a fearsome punishment as Hell? How is it in keeping with the style of the Qur’an, which is moderate, mild and fair, to demonstrate the ultimate severity towards an insignificant, minor fault?’”


The Answer: Allah Almighty has no need of your worship, nor indeed of anything else. It is you who needs to worship, for in truth you are sick. As we have proved in many parts of the Risale-i Nur, worship is a sort of remedy for your spiritual wounds. If someone who is ill responds to a compassionate doctor who insists on his taking medicines that are beneficial for his condition by saying: “What need do you have of it that you are insisting in this way?”, you can understand how absurd it would be.

As for the severe threats and fearsome punishments in the Qur’an concerning the giving up of worship, they may be likened to a king, who, in order to protect his subject’ rights, inflicts a severe punishment on an ordinary man in accordance with the degree that his crime infringes those rights.

In the same way, the man who gives up worship and ritual prayer is violating in a significant manner the rights of beings, who are like the subjects of the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, and is in fact acting unjustly towards them. For the perfections of beings are manifested through the glorification and worship performed by that aspect of them which is directed towards their Maker. The one who abandons worship does not and cannot see this worship. Indeed, he denies it. Furthermore, beings occupy an exalted position by reason of their worship and glorification, and each is a missive of the Eternally Besought One, and a mirror to the Names of its Sustainer. Since he reduces them from their high positions and considers them to be unimportant, lifeless, aimless, and without duties, he is insulting them, and denying and transgressing their perfections.

Indeed, everyone sees the world in his own mirror. Allah Almighty created man as a measure and scale for the universe. And from the world He gave a particular world to each person. This world He colours for him in accordance





with his sincere beliefs. For example, a despairing, lamenting, weeping person sees beings as weeping and in despair, while a cheerful, optimistic, merry person sees the universe as joyful and smiling. A reflective man given to solemn worship and glorification discovers and sees to a degree the certain, truly existent worship and glorification of beings, while a person who abandons worship through either neglect or denial sees beings in a manner totally contrary and opposed to the reality of their perfections, thus transgressing their rights.

Furthermore, since the one who gives up prayer does not own himself, he wrongs his own soul, which is a slave of its True Owner. His Owner delivers awesome threats in order to protect His slave's rights from his evil-commanding soul. Also, since he has given up worship, which is the result of his creation and the aim of his nature, it is like an act of aggression against Divine wisdom and dominical will, and he therefore receives punishment.

In Short: The abandoner of worship both wrongs his own soul, which is the slave and totally owned property of Almighty Allah, and wrongs and transgresses the rights of the perfections of the universe. Certainly, just as unbelief is an insult to beings, so is the abandonment of worship a denial of the universe's perfections. And since it is an act of aggression against Divine wisdom, it is deserving of awesome threats, and severe punishment.

Thus, it is to express this deservedness and the above facts that the Qur'an of Miraculous Exposition chooses in a miraculous way that severe style, which, in complete conformity with the principles of eloquence, corresponds to the requirements of the situation.

Can one expect worldly results from worship and prayers?

The Flashes - The Seventeenth Flash - Thirteenth Note

The Second Matter

Worship and servitude of Allah look to the Divine command and Divine pleasure. The reason for worship is the Divine command and its result is Divine pleasure. Its fruits and benefits look to the Hereafter. But so long as they are not the ultimate reason and not intentionally sought, benefits looking to this world and fruits which come about themselves and are given are not contrary to worship. They are rather as though to encourage the weak and make them choose worship. If those fruits and benefits are the reason for the invocation or recita-



tion, or a part of the reason, it in part invalidates the worship. Indeed, it renders the meritorious invocation fruitless, and produces no results.

And so, those who do not understand this mystery, recite for example the *Awrad-i Qudsiya-i Shah Naqshband*, which yields a hundred benefits and merits, or *Jawshan al-Kabir*, which yields a thousand, making some of those benefits their prime intention. Then they do not receive the benefits, and shall not receive them, and do not have the right to receive them. For the benefits may not be the reason for the invocation and may not themselves be intended and sought. For they are obtained when unsought for, as a consequence of the sincere invocation, as a favour. If they are intended, it damages the sincerity to an extent. Indeed, it ceases being worship and loses all value. There is just this, that weak people are in need of something to encourage them to recite meritorious invocations such as those. If they think of the benefits and eagerly recite them purely for Allah's sake and for the Hereafter, it causes no harm and is even acceptable. It is because this instance of wisdom has not been understood that when they do not receive the benefits narrated from the spiritual poles and righteous ones of former generations, many people come to doubt, or even to deny them.

How is worship, prayer and resurrection connected?


The Words - Tenth Word - Fifth Truth

The Gate of Compassion and Muhammedan Worship, the Manifestation of the Names of Answerer of Prayer and Compassionate

Is it at all possible that a Lord possessing infinite compassion and mercy, Who most compassionately fulfils the smallest need of His lowliest creatures in the most unexpected fashion, Who heeds the muffled plea for help of His most obscure creature, and Who responds to all the petitions He hears, whether vocal or mute - is it at all possible that such a Lord should not pay heed to the greatest petition of the foremost among His servants, the most beloved among his creatures, that He should not hear and grant his most exalted prayer? The kindness and ease manifested in the feeding and nurturing of weak and young animals show that the Monarch of the cosmos exercises his dominicality with infinite mercy.

Is it at all possible that a compassion merciful to this degree in the exercise of dominicality should not accept the prayer of the most virtuous and beautiful of all creation?¹ This truth is explained in the Nineteenth Word, but let us repeat our statement of the matter here:





O friend listening to these words together with my own soul! We said in the comparison that a meeting took place on a certain island, and a most noble commander delivered a speech there. In order to find out the truth indicated in the comparison, come, let us depart from this age, and in our mind and imagination travel to the Arabian Peninsula in the blessed age of the Prophet, in order to visit and watch him while he is performing his duties and engaging in worship. See, just as he is the means for the attainment of eternal bliss, by means of his messengerhood and guidance, so too he is the cause for the existence of that bliss and the means for the creation of Paradise, by means of his worship and prayer.

Now see! That being is praying for eternal bliss in such supreme supplication, with such sublime worship, that it is as if this island, or even the whole world, were praying and supplicating together with him. For the worship he performs contains within itself not only the worship of the community that follows him, but also that of all the other prophets, in its essential form, by virtue of the correspondence existing between him and them. Moreover, he performs his supreme prayer and offers his supplications in such a vast congregation that it is as if all luminous and perfect men, from the time of Adam down to the present, were following him in prayer and saying “amen” to his supplications!²

He is praying for so universal a need -eternity- that not merely the people of this earth, but also the inhabitants of the heavens and the entirety of creation are participating in his supplications and silently proclaiming, “Yes, o Lord! Grant his prayer; we too desire it.” He petitions for everlasting bliss with such touching sadness, in so yearning, so longing, and so pleading a fashion, that he causes the whole of the cosmos to weep and thus to share in his prayer.

1. He whose kingdom has lasted one thousand three hundred and fifty years, who has generally had more than three hundred and fifty million subjects, to whom his subjects daily renew their pledge of allegiance and to whose perfections they continually bear witness, whose commands are obeyed in perfect submission, whose spiritual hue has coloured half of the globe and a fifth of mankind, who is the beloved of men's hearts and the educator of their spirits - such a being is without doubt the greatest servant of the Lord Who holds sway over the universe. Also, since most of the realms of beings applauded that being's function and duty through each bearing the fruit of his miracles, he is for sure the most beloved creature of the Fashioner of the cosmos. Similarly, the desire for perpetuity existing in all men by virtue of their very nature, a desire that lifts men from the lowest of the low to the highest of the high, is the greatest of all desires and petitions, fit to be presented to the Provider of all Needs only by the greatest among His servants.

2. From the time that the Prophet - peace and blessings be upon him - first made his supplication down to the present, all the invocations upon him of peace and blessings made by his community are a kind of eternal amen to his prayer, a form of universal participation in it. Every invocation of peace and blessings upon him by every member of the Muslim community in the course of his prayer, as well as the prayer for him uttered after the second call to prayer according to the Shafi'i school - this too is a powerful and universal amen to his supplication for eternal bliss. So the eternity and everlasting bliss desired by all men with all of their strength, in accordance with their primordial disposition, is requested in the name of humanity by the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, and the luminous segment of humanity says “amen” after him. Is it at all possible that such a prayer should not be accepted?



See, he desires and prays for bliss, for such a purpose and goal that he elevates man and all creatures from captivity in the abysmal state of utter annihilation, from worthlessness, uselessness, and purposelessness to the apex of preciousness, eternity, exalted function, and the rank of being a script penned by Allah.


See, he makes his petition with such elevated plea for succour, makes his supplication with so sweet a request for mercy, that it is as if he caused all beings, the heavens and Allah's throne itself to listen, and to echo his prayer ecstatically with cries of "amen, o Lord, amen!"³

See, he requests bliss and eternity from a Being, One so All-Hearing, Generous and Powerful, so All-Seeing, Merciful and Knowledgeable that He sees, hears, accepts and takes pity upon the most secret wish, the slightest desire of the most obscure of his creatures, in observable form. He answers all pleas even if they are silently proffered. He bestows all things and answers all pleas in so wise, percipient and merciful a fashion that no doubt remains that all that nurturing and regulating can derive only from One All-Hearing and All-Seeing, One Generous and Merciful.

Let us listen to what the Pride of All Being is requesting, that source of honour for all of mankind, that one unique in all of creation, who bears on his back the burden of all men, who standing on this earth lifts up his hands towards Allah's throne and offers up a prayer which in its reality contains the essence of the worship of all of mankind. See, he is asking for eternal bliss for himself and for his community. He is asking for eternity and Paradise. He is making his plea together with all the Divine Sacred Names that display their beauty in the mirrors of all created being. You can see, indeed, that he is seeking intercession from those Names.

3. *Indeed, it is not at all possible that the Master of this world, all of Whose doings are self-evidently inspired by consciousness, knowledge and wisdom, should be unaware and uninformed of the acts of the foremost among all of His creatures. Again, it is not at all possible that the All-Knowing Master should remain indifferent to the deeds and prayers of that foremost among His creatures, and deem them unimportant despite being aware of them. It is further impossible that the Powerful and Merciful Master of the World should not accept his prayers, having not remained indifferent to them. Yes, through the light of the Muhammedan Being the form of the world has changed. The true essence of men and all beings in the cosmos became apparent through that light; it became clear that they are each missives of the Eternally Besought One proclaiming the Divine Names, precious and profound beings with Allah-given functions and destined to manifest eternity. Were it not for that light, beings would be condemned to utter annihilation, they would be valueless, meaningless, useless, confused, the result of blind chance, sunk in the darkness of illusion. It is for this reason that just as men say "amen" to the prayer of the Prophet, so too all other beings, from the face of the earth up to Allah's throne, from the soil to the stars, all take pride in his light, and proclaim their connection with him. The very spirit of the worship of the Prophet is indeed none other than this prayer. Again, all the motions and workings of the cosmos are in their essence prayer. For example, the progress of a seed until it becomes a tree is a form of prayer to the Creator.*





If there were not countless reasons and causes for the existence of the hereafter, a single prayer of that exalted being would be enough for the creation of Paradise, a task as easy for the power of the Merciful Creator as the creation of spring.⁴

Indeed, how could the creation of spring be difficult for the Possessor of Absolute Power Who each spring makes the face of the world into a plain of resurrection, and brings forth there a hundred thousand examples of resurrection? In just the same way that the messengerhood of the Prophet was the reason for the foundation of this realm of trial -the saying “were it not for thee, were it not for thee, I would not have created the spheres”⁵ being an indication of this- so too the worship he performed was the cause for the foundation of the abode of bliss.

Is it at all possible that the flawless perfection of artistry, the peerless beauty of dominicality expressed in the order of the world and the comprehensive mercy that reduce all to bewilderment, should not answer his prayer, and thus tolerate an extreme form of ugliness, cruelty and disorder? Is it possible that it would listen to the most petty and insignificant desires and grant them, but dismiss significant and important desires as worthless, and fail to fulfill them? No, a thousand times no! Such beauty can never accept such ugliness and itself become ugly.

So just as the Prophet opened the gates of this world with his messengerhood, he opens the gates of the hereafter with his worship.

May the blessings of the Compassionate One be upon him, to the extent of all that this world and paradise contain. O Allah, grant blessings and peace to Your servant and Messenger, that Beloved One who is the Master of both Realms, the Pride of all the Worlds, the source of life in both spheres, the means for the attainment of happiness here and in the hereafter, he who flies on two wings, who is the messenger to both men and jinn - to him, and to his Family, and all of his Companions, as well as his brethren from among the prophets and messengers. Amen

4. To display wondrous samples of art, and examples of resurrection on the face of the earth that, compared with the hereafter is like a narrow page, to inscribe and include on that single page, in perfect order, all the different species of creation, that resemble three hundred thousand separate books, is certainly more difficult than building and creating the delicate and symmetrical structure of Paradise in the broad realm of eternity. Indeed, it may be said that to whatever degree Paradise is more elevated than the spring, to that degree the creation of the gardens of spring is more difficult and wondrous than the creation of Paradise.

5. 'Ali al-Qari, *Sharh al-Shifa*, i, *al-Ajluni, Kashf al-Khafa*, ii, 164



What is the reason for worship-to attain Paradise? The Words-Twenty-Fourth Word - Fifth Branch Second Fruit-

O soul! Worship is not the introduction to additional rewards, but the result of previous bounties. Yes, we have received our wage, and are accordingly charged with the duties of service and worship. Because, O soul!, since the All-Glorious Creator, Who clothed you in existence which is pure good, has given you a stomach and appetite, through His Name of Provider, He has placed before you all foods on a table of bounties. Then, since He has given you a life decked out with senses, life too requires sustenance like a stomach; all your senses like eyes and ears are like hands before which He has placed a table of bounties as broad as the earth. Then, because He has given you humanity, which requires many immaterial foods and bounties, He has laid out before that stomach of humanity, in so far as the hand of the mind can reach, an extensive table of bounties as broad as the worlds of both the inner and outer dimensions of things. Then, since He has given you Islam and belief, which require infinite bounties and are nourished through countless fruits of mercy and are supreme humanity, He has opened up before you a table of bounties, pleasure, and happiness which includes the sphere of contingency together with the sphere of His sacred Names and attributes. Then, through giving you love, which is a light of belief, He has bestowed on you an endless table of bounties, happiness, and pleasure. That is to say, with regard to your corporeality you are an insignificant, weak, impotent, lowly, restricted, limited particular, but through His favour, you have as though risen from being an insignificant particular to being a universal, luminous whole. For by giving you life, He has raised you from particularity to a sort of universality; and by giving you humanity, to true universality; and by bestowing Islam on you, to an exalted, luminous universality; and by giving you knowledge and love of Him, He has elevated you to an all-encompassing light.


O soul! You have received this wage, and you are charged with the pleasurable, bountiful, easy, and light duty of worship. But you are lazy in this too. If you perform it half-heartedly, it is as though the former wages are insufficient for you and you are overbearingly wanting greater things. Also, you are complaining: "Why was my prayer not accepted?" But your right is not complaint, it is supplication. Through His pure grace and munificence, Almighty Allah bestows Paradise and eternal happiness. So seek refuge in His mercy and munificence constantly. Trust in Him and heed this decree:

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ



Say: "In the bounty of Allah, and His mercy -in that let them rejoice;" that is better than the [wealth] they hoard. Qur'an, 10:58.





If you say: “How can I respond to these countless, universal bounties with my limited and partial thanks?”

The Answer: With a universal intention and boundless belief... For example, a man enters a king’s presence with a gift worth five kurush, and he sees that other gifts worth millions have arrived from acceptable people, and have been lined up there. It occurs to him: “My present is nothing. What shall I do?” Then he says suddenly: “My Lord! I offer you all these valuable gifts in my name. For you are worthy of them. If I had the power, I would have given you gifts equal to them.” Thus, the king, who has need of nothing and accepts his subjects’ gifts as a sign of their loyalty and respect, accepts that wretched man’s universal intention and wish, and the worthiness of his elevated belief as though it was the greatest gift.

In exactly the same way, while performing the five daily prayers an impotent servant of Almighty Allah declares: “Salutations be to Allah!” That is, “I offer You on my own account all the gifts of worship all creatures offer you through their lives. If I had been able, I would have offered You as many salutations as them, for You are worthy of them, and worthy of more besides.” Such an intention and belief comprise extensive universal thanks. The seeds and grains of plants are their intentions. And for example, the melon utters a thousand intentions in its heart in the form of the nuclei of its seeds: “O my Creator! I want to proclaim the embroideries of Your Most Beautiful Names in many places on the earth.” Since Almighty Allah knows how future things will come about, He accepts their intention as actual worship. The rule, “A believer’s intention is better than his actions”⁶ alludes to this mystery. The wisdom in offering glorifications in also infinite numbers is understood from this mystery. For instance:

*Glory and praise be unto You to the number of Your creatures, that may be as pleasing to You as the extent of Your Throne and the ink of Your words, and we glorify You with all the glorifications of Your prophets and saints and angels.*⁷

Just as an officer presents all the duties of his soldiers to the king in his own name, so man, who acts as officer to other creatures, commands the animals and plants, has the capacity to be Allah’s vicegerent over the beings of the earth, and in his own world considers himself to represent everyone, declares:

6. al-Manawi, *al-Fayd al-Qadir*, vi, 291, No: 9295.

7. Muslim, *Dhikr*, 79; Tirmidhi, *Da'wat*, 103; Nasa'i, *Sahw*, 94; *Musnad*, i, 258, 353.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help; Qur'an, 1:5.

He offers the worship and seeking of help of all creation to the All-Glorious True Object of Worship in his own name. He also says:

O Allah! Grant blessings to Muhammad to the number of the particles in existence and all their compounds!

He offers benedictions for the Prophet (PBUH) in the name of everything. Because everything is connected with the Muhammedan Light. Thus, you may understand the wisdom in the countless numbers mentioned in the glorifications and benedictions for the Prophet (PBUH).

Aren't five daily prayers wearisome?


The Words - Twenty-First Word - First Station

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَىٰ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. For such Prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times. Qur'an, 4:103.

One time, a man great in age, physique, and rank said to me: “The prayers are fine, but to perform them every single day five times is excessive. Since they never end, it becomes wearying.”

A long time after the man said these words, I listened to my soul and I heard it say exactly the same things. I looked at it and saw that with the ear of laziness, it was receiving the same lesson from Satan. Then I understood that those words were as though said in the name of all evil-commanding souls, or else they had been prompted. So I said: “Since my soul commands to evil, one who does not reform his own soul cannot reform others. In which case, I shall begin with my own soul.”



I said: O soul! Listen to five ‘Warnings’ in response to those words which you uttered in compounded ignorance, on the couch of idleness, in the slumber of heedlessness.

FIRST WARNING

O my wretched soul! Is your life eternal, I wonder? Have you any incontrovertible document showing that you will live to next year, or even to tomorrow? What causes you boredom is that you fancy you shall live for ever. You complain as though you will remain in this world to enjoy yourself for ever. If you had understood that your life is brief and that it is departing fruitlessly, it surely would not cause you boredom, but excite a real eagerness and agreeable pleasure to spend one hour out of the twenty-four on a fine, agreeable, easy, and merciful act of service which is a means of gaining the true happiness of eternal life.

SECOND WARNING

O my stomach-worshipping soul! Every day you eat bread, drink water, and breathe air; do they cause you boredom? They do not, because since the need is repeated, it is not boredom that they cause, but pleasure. In which case, the five daily prayers should not cause you boredom, for they attract the needs of your companions in the house of my body, the sustenance of my heart, the water of life of my spirit, and the air of my subtle faculties. Yes, it is by knocking through supplication on the door of One All-Compassionate and Munificent that sustenance and strength may be obtained for a heart afflicted with infinite griefs and sorrows and captivated by infinite pleasures and hopes. And it is by turning towards the spring of mercy of an Eternal Beloved through the five daily prayers that the water of life may be imbibed by a spirit connected with most beings, which swiftly depart from this transitory world crying out at separation. And being most needy for air in the sorrowful, crushing, distressing, transient, dark, and suffocating conditions of this world, it is only through the window of the prayers that a conscious inner sense and luminous subtle faculty can breathe, which by its nature desires eternal life and was created for eternity and is a mirror of the Pre-Eternal and Post-Eternal One and is infinitely delicate and subtle.

THIRD WARNING

O my impatient soul! Is it at all sensible to think today of past hardships of worship, difficulties of the prayers, and troubles of misfortune, and be distressed, and to imagine the future duties of worship, service of the prayers, and sorrows of disaster, and display impatience? In being thus impatient you resemble a foolish commander, who, although the enemy's right flank joined his right flank and became fresh forces for him, sent a significant force to the right flank, and weakened the centre. Then, while there were no enemy soldiers on the left



flank, he sent a large force there, and gave them the order to fire. No forces then remained in the centre, and the enemy understood this and attacked it and routed him.

Yes, you resemble this, for the troubles of yesterday have today been transformed into mercy; the pain has gone while the pleasure remains. The difficulty has been turned into blessings, and the hardship into reward. In which case, you should not feel wearied at it, but make a serious effort to continue with a new eagerness and fresh enthusiasm. As for future days, they have not yet arrived, and to think of them now and feel bored and wearied is a lunacy like thinking today of future hunger and thirst, and starting to shout and cry out. Since the truth is this, if you are reasonable, you will think of only today in connection with worship, and say: "I am spending one hour of it on an agreeable, pleasant, and elevated act of service, the reward for which is high and whose trouble is little." Then your bitter dispiritedness will be transformed into sweet endeavour.


My impatient soul! You are charged with being patient in three respects. One is patience in worship. Another is patience in refraining from sin. And a third is patience in the face of disaster.⁸ If you are intelligent, take as your guide the truth apparent in the comparison in this Third Warning. Say in manly fashion: "O Most Patient One!"; and shoulder the three sorts of patience. If you do not squander on the wrong way the forces of patience Almighty Allah has given you, they should be enough to withstand every difficulty and disaster. So hold out with those forces!

FOURTH WARNING

O my foolish soul! Is this duty of worship without result, and is its recompense little that it causes you weariness? Whereas if someone was to give you a little money, or to intimidate you, he could make you work till evening, and you would work without slacking. So is it that the prescribed prayers are without result, which in this guest-house of the world are sustenance and wealth for your impotent and weak heart, and in your grave, which will be a certain dwelling-place for you, sustenance and light, and at the Resurrection, when you will anyway be judged, a document and patent, and on the Bridge of Sirat, over which you are bound to pass, a light and a mount? Are their recompense little? Someone promises you a present worth a hundred liras, and makes you work for a hundred days. You trust the man who may go back on his word and work without slacking. So if One for Whom the breaking of a promise is impossible, promises you recompense like Paradise and a gift like eternal happiness, and employs you for a very short time in a very agreeable duty, if you do not

8. *Suyuti, al-Durar al-Muntathira*, 46; *Suyuti, al-Fath al-Kabir*, ii, 200.





perform that service, or you act accusingly towards His promise or slight His gift by performing it unwillingly like someone forced to work, or by being bored, or by working in half-hearted fashion, you will deserve a severe reprimand and awesome punishment. Have you not thought of this? Although you serve without flagging in the heaviest work in this world out of fear of imprisonment, does the fear of an eternal incarceration like Hell not fill you with enthusiasm for a truly light and agreeable act of service?

FIFTH WARNING

O my world-worshipping soul! Does your slackness in worship and remissness in the prescribed prayers arise from the multiplicity of your worldly occupations, or because you cannot find time due to the struggle for livelihood? Were you created only for this world that you spend all your time on it? You know that in regard to your abilities you are superior to all the animals, but in regard to procuring the necessities of worldly life you cannot compete with even a sparrow. So why can you not understand that your basic duty is not to labour like an animal, but to strive for a true, perpetual life, like a true human being. In addition, the things you call worldly occupations mostly do not concern you, and are trivial matters which you meddle in officiously. You neglect the essential things and pass your time acquiring inessential information as though you were going to live for a thousand years. For example, you squander your precious time on worthless things like learning what the rings around Saturn are like or how many chickens there are in America. As though you were becoming an expert in astronomy or statistics.

If you say: “What keeps me from the prayers and worship and causes me to be lax is not unnecessary things like that, but essential matters like earning a livelihood,” then my answer is this: if you work for a daily wage of one hundred kurush, and someone comes to you and says: “Come and dig here for ten minutes, and you will find a brilliant and an emerald worth a hundred liras.” If you reply: “No, I won’t come, because ten kurush will be cut from my wage and my subsistence will be less,” of course you understand what a foolish pretext it would be. In just the same way, you work in this orchard for your livelihood. If you abandon the obligatory prayers, all the fruits of your effort will be restricted to only a worldly, unimportant, and unproductive livelihood. But if you spend your rest periods on the prayers, which allow your spirit to relax and heart to take a breather, you will discover two mines which are an important source, both for a productive worldly livelihood, and your livelihood and provisions of the hereafter.

First Mine: Through a sound intention, you will receive a share of the prais-



es and glorifications offered by all the plants and trees, whether flowering or fruit-bearing, that you grow in the garden.⁹

Second Mine: Whatever is eaten of the garden's produce, whether by animals or man, cattle or flies, buyers or thieves, it will become like almsgiving from you.¹⁰ But on condition you work in the name of the True Provider and within the bounds of what He permits, and see yourself as a distribution official giving His property to His creatures.

So see what a great loss is made by one who abandons the prescribed prayers. What significant wealth he loses, and he is deprived of those two results and mines which would otherwise cause him to work eagerly and ensure his morale is strong; he becomes bankrupt. Even, as he grows old, he will grow weary of gardening and lose interest in it, saying, "What is it to me? I am anyway leaving this world, why should I put up with this much difficulty?" He will sink into idleness. But the first man says: "I shall work harder at both worship and licit activities in order to send even more abundant light to my grave and procure more provisions for my life in the hereafter."

In Short: O my soul! Know that yesterday has left you, and as for tomorrow, you have nothing to prove that it will be yours. In which case, know that your true life is the present day. So throw at least one of its hours into a mosque or prayer-mat, a coffer for the hereafter like a reserve fund, set up for the true future. Know too that for you and for everyone each new day is the door to a new world. If you do not perform the prayers, your world that day will depart dark and wretched, and will testify against you in the World of Similitudes. For everyone, every day, has a private world out of this world, and its nature is dependent on the person's heart and actions. Like a splendid palace reflected in a mirror takes on the colour of the mirror; if it is black, it appears black; if it is red, it appears red. Also it takes on the qualities of the mirror; if the mirror is smooth, it shows the palace to be beautiful, and if it is not, it shows it to be ugly. As it shows the most delicate things to be coarse, so you alter the shape of your own world with your heart, mind, actions, and wishes. You may make it testify either for you or against you. If you perform the five daily prayers, and through them you are turned towards that world's Glorious Maker, all of a sudden your world, which looks to you, is lit up. Quite simply as though the prayers are an electric lamp and your intention to perform them touches the switch, they disperse the world's darkness and show the changes and movements within the confused wretchedness of worldly chaos to be a wise and purposeful order and a meaningful writing of Divine power. They scatter one light of the light-filled verse,

9. *This First Station was a lesson for someone in a garden, so it was explained in this way.*

10. Bukhari, iii, 135; Muslim, ii, 1189; Ibn Hibban, v, 152; Musnad, iii, 184, 191.





Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. Qur'an, 24:35.

over your heart, and your world on that day is illuminated through the light's reflection. It will cause it to testify in your favour through its luminosity.

Beware, do not say: "What are my prayers in comparison with the reality of the prayers?"; because the seed of a date-palm life a full-grown tree describes its own tree, the difference is only in summary form and details. Similarly the prayers of ordinary people like you or me, even if they are not aware of it, have a share of that light like the prayers of a great saint. There is a mystery in this truth, even if the conscious mind does not perceive it... but the unfolding and illumination differs according to the degrees of those performing them. However many stages and degrees there are from the seed of a date-palm to the mature tree, the degrees of the prayers and their stages are even more numerous. But the essence of that luminous truth is present in all the degrees.

O Allah! Grant blessings and peace to the one who said: "The five daily prayers are the pillar of religion,"¹¹ and to all his Family and Companions.

How does worship and prayer transform a person? The Words-Twenty-Third Word - First Chapter-Fourth Point

Belief makes man into man, indeed, it makes man into a king. Since this is so, man's basic duty is belief and supplication. Unbelief makes man into an extremely impotent beast.

Out of thousands of proofs of this matter, the difference in the way animals and men come into the world is a clear indication and decisive proof.

Yes, these differences show that humanity becomes humanity through belief. For when animals come into the world, they come complete in all points in accordance with their abilities as though having been perfected in another world; that is, they are sent. They learn all the conditions of their lives, their relationships with the universe, and the laws of life in either two hours or two days or two months, and become proficient in them. Animals like sparrows and bees acquire in twenty days the power to survive and proficiency in their actions that man only acquires in twenty years; that is, they are inspired with them. This

11. Tirmidhi, Iman, 8; Ibn Maja, Fitan, 12; Musnad, v, 231, 237; al-Mustadrak, ii, 76.



means that the animals' fundamental duty is not to be perfected through learning and progress by acquiring knowledge, nor to seek help and offer supplications through displaying their impotence, but in accordance with their abilities to work and act. Their duty is active worship.

As for man, he needs to learn everything when he comes into the world; he is ignorant, and cannot even learn completely the conditions of life in twenty years. Indeed, he needs to go on learning till the end of his life. Also he is sent to the world in a most weak and impotent form, and can only rise to his feet in one or two years. Only in fifteen years can he distinguish between harm and benefit, and with the help of mankind's experience attract things advantageous to him and avoid others that are harmful. This means that man's innate duty is to be perfected through learning and to proclaim his worship of Allah and servitude to Him through supplication. That is to say, it is to know the answers of the questions: "Through whose compassion is my life so wisely administered in this way? Through whose generosity am I so kindly raised? Through whose graciousness am I so delicately nurtured and ministered to?" It is to beseech and supplicate the Provider of Needs through the tongue of impotence and poverty; it is to seek from Him. It is to fly to the high station of worship and servitude to Allah on the wings of impotence and poverty.

This means that man came to this world to be perfected by means of knowledge and supplication. In regard to his nature and abilities everything is tied to knowledge. And the foundation, source, light, and spirit of all true knowledge is knowledge of Allah, and its essence and basis is belief in Allah.

Furthermore, since man is subject to endless tribulations and afflicted with innumerable enemies despite his boundless impotence, and suffers from endless needs and has innumerable desires despite his boundless poverty, after belief, his fundamental innate duty is supplication. As for supplication, it is the basis of worship of Allah and servitude to Him. In order to secure a desire or wish he cannot obtain, a child will either cry or ask for it, that is, he will supplicate through the tongue of his impotence either actively or verbally, and will be successful in securing it. In the same way, man is like a delicate, petted child in the world of living creatures. He has to either weep at the Court of the Most Merciful and Compassionate One through his weakness and impotence, or supplicate through his poverty and need, so that the things he wants may be made subject to him, or he may offer thanks for their being made so. Otherwise he would resemble a silly child who creates a fuss over a fly, but displays ingratitude for the bounties by saying: "With my own strength I subjugate things it is not possible to subjugate and things a thousand times more powerful, and I make them obey me through my own ideas and measures". And just as this is contrary to man's innate nature, so he makes himself deserving of severe punishment.



Why are our prayers sometimes accepted and sometimes not?

The Words-Twenty-Third Word - First Chapter-Fifth Point

Belief necessitates supplication as a certain means of securing needs, and both human nature has an intense desire for it, and Almighty Allah decrees,

قُلْ مَا يَعْْبَأُ بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا



Say, "What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?" Qur'an, 25:77

which has the meaning of: What importance would you have if you did not offer supplications? He also commands:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ
دَاخِرِينَ



Call upon Me and I will answer you. Qur'an, 40:60.

If you say: We frequently offer supplications, but they are not accepted. But the verse is general, it states that every supplication is answered.

The Answer: To answer is one thing, to accept is something quite different. Every supplication is answered, but its being accepted and exactly what was sought being given is dependent on Almighty Allah's wisdom.

For example, if a sick child calls the doctor, saying: "Doctor! Doctor!", and he replies: "Here I am, what do you want?", and the child says: "Give me that medicine!", the doctor will either give him exactly what he asks for or something better and more beneficial for him. Or knowing that medicine is harmful for his illness, he will give him nothing.

Thus, since Almighty Allah is all-present and all-seeing, He responds to the supplications of His servants. Through His presence and response, He transforms the desolation of loneliness and solitude into familiarity. But He does this, not in accordance with man's capricious and importunate demands, but in accordance with the requirements of dominical wisdom; He gives either what is sought or what is better than it, or He gives nothing at all.

Also, supplication is a form of worship and recognition of man's servitude



to Allah. The fruits of this pertain to the hereafter. The aims pertaining to this world are the times of a particular sort of supplication and worship. For example, the prayers and supplications for rain are a form of worship. Drought is the time for such worship. Worship and supplications of this sort are not in order to bring rain. If they are performed with that intention alone they are not worthy of acceptance, for they are not sincere worship. Sunset is the time of the evening prayers. And eclipses of the sun and moon are the times of two particular prayers known as salat al-kusuf and salat al-khusuf. That is to say, with the veiling of the two luminous signs of the night and day, Allah's tremendousness is proclaimed, so Almighty Allah calls his servants to a sort of worship at those times. The prayers are not so that the sun and moon will be revealed (whose appearance and how long the eclipses will continue have anyway been reckoned by astronomers).

In just the same way, drought is the time for the prayers for rain, and the visitation of calamities and infliction of harmful things the times of certain supplications when man realizes his impotence and through his supplication and entreaty seeks refuge at the Court of One Possessing Absolute Power. Even if the calamities are not lifted despite many supplications, it may not be said that they were not accepted. It should rather be said that the time for the supplication is not yet over. If through His graciousness and munificence Almighty Allah removes the calamity, light upon light, then the time for that supplication is over and done with. That is to say, supplication has the meaning of worship and man's acknowledging his servitude to Allah.

As for worship and servitude to Allah, it should be purely and sincerely for Allah's sake. Man should only proclaim his impotence and seek refuge with Him through supplication, he should not interfere in His dominicality. He should leave the taking of measures to Him and rely on His wisdom. He should not accuse His Mercy.

Indeed, what is in reality established by the Qur'an's clear verses is that just as all beings offer their own particular glorification and worship, so what rises to the Divine Court from all the universe is supplication. This is either through the tongue of innate ability like the supplication of plants and animals, through they seek forms from the Absolute Bestower and to display and manifest His Names. Or it is through the tongue of innate need. These are the supplications for all their essential needs -beyond their power to obtain- offered by animate beings. Through this tongue, the animate beings seek certain things from the Absolutely Generous One for the continuance of their lives, like a sort of sustenance. Or it is supplication through the tongue of exigency, through which all beings with spirits who find themselves in some plight or predicament make supplication



and seek urgent refuge with an unknown protector; indeed, they turn to the All-Compassionate Sustainer. If there is nothing to prevent it, these three sorts of supplication are always accepted.

The fourth sort of supplication is the most well-known; it is our supplication. This too is of two sorts: one is active and by disposition, and the other, verbal and with the heart. For example, having recourse to causes is an active prayer. To gather together causes is not in order to create the effect, but through the tongue of disposition to take up an acceptable position in order to seek the effect from Almighty Allah. To plough a field is to knock at the door of the treasury of mercy. Since this sort of active supplication is directed towards the name and title of the Absolutely Generous One, it is accepted in the great majority of cases.

The second sort is to offer supplication with the tongue and the heart. It is to seek certain wishes which the hand cannot reach. The most important aspect, the most beautiful aim, the sweetest fruit of this is this: "The one who offers the supplications knows that there is Someone Who hears the wishes of his heart, Whose hand can reach all things, Who can bring about each of his desires, Who takes pity on his impotence, and answers his poverty."

O impotent, needy man! Do not neglect a means like supplication, which is the key to the treasury of mercy and to an inexhaustible strength. Cling to it! Rise to the highest peaks of humanity! Include in your supplications those of all the universe, like a king!

إِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ



Say, From You alone do we seek help Qur'an, 1:5

like a servant and deputy representing all the universe! Be on the Most Excellent Pattern of creation!

Why do Muslims pray at 5 specific times of the day?

The Words - Ninth Word

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ
وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ





In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

*So glorify Allah when you reach evening and when you rise in the morning;
for all praise is His in the heavens and on earth, and towards the end of the day
and when you have reached noon.*

Qur'an, 30:17-18.

Brother! You ask me concerning the wisdom in the specified times of the five daily prayers. I shall point out only one of the many instances of wisdom.

Yes, like each of the times of prayer marks the start of an important revolution, so also is each a mirror to Divine disposal of power and to the universal Divine bounties within that disposal. Thus, more glorification and extolling of the All-Powerful One of Glory and more praise and thanks for all the innumerable bounties accumulated between each of the times which is the meaning of the prescribed prayers have been ordered at those times. In order to understand a little this subtle and profound meaning, you should listen together with my own soul to the following five 'Points'.


FIRST POINT

The meaning of the prayers is the offering of glorification, praise, and thanks to Almighty Allah. That is to say, uttering "Subhan Allah!" (Glory be to Allah) by word and action before Allah's glory and sublimity, it is to hallow and worship Him. And declaring "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Most Great) through word and act before His sheer perfection, it is to exalt and magnify Him. And saying "Alhamdu lillah" (All praise be to Allah) with the heart, tongue, and body, it is to offer thanks before His utter beauty. That is to say, glorification, exaltation, and praise are like the seeds of the prayers. That is why these three things are present in every part of the prayers, in all the actions and words. It is also why these blessed words are each repeated thirty-three times after the prayers, in order to strengthen and reiterate the prayers' meaning. The meaning of the prayers is confirmed through these concise summaries.

SECOND POINT

The meaning of worship is this, that the servant sees his own faults, impotence, and poverty, and in the Divine Court prostrates in love and wonderment before dominical perfection, Divine mercy, and the power of the Eternally Besought One. That is to say, just as the sovereignty of dominicality demands worship and obedience, so also does the holiness of dominicality require that the servant sees his faults through seeking forgiveness, and through his glorifications and declaring "Subhan Allah!" (Glory be to Allah) proclaims that his Sustainer is pure and free of all defects, and exalted above and far from the false





ideas of the people of misguidance, and hallowed and exempt from all the faults in the universe.

Also, the perfect power of dominicality requires that through understanding his own weakness and the impotence of other creatures, the servant proclaims “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is Most Great) in admiration and wonder before the majesty of the works of the Eternally Besought One’s power, and bowing in deep humility seeks refuge in Him and places his trust in Him.

Also, the infinite treasury of dominicality’s mercy requires that the servant makes known his own need and the needs and poverty of all creatures through the tongue of entreaty and supplication, and proclaims his Sustainer’s bounties and gifts through thanks and laudation and uttering “Alhamdu lillah” (All praise be to Allah). That is to say, the words and actions of the prayers comprise these-meanings, and that is why have been laid down from the side of Divinity.

THIRD POINT

Just as man is a miniature example of the great world and Sura al-Fatiha a shining sample of the Qur’an of Mighty Stature, so are the prescribed prayers a luminous index comprehensive of all varieties of worship, and a sacred map pointing to all colours of worship of all classes of creatures.

FOURTH POINT

The second-hand, minute-hand, hour-hand, and day-hand of a clock which tells the weeks look to one another, are examples of one another, and follow one another. Similarly, the alternations of day and night, which are like the seconds of this world -a vast clock of Almighty Allah- and the years which tell its minutes, and the stages of man’s life-span which tell the hours, and the epochs of the world’s life-span which tell the days look to one another, are examples of one another, resemble one another, and recall one another. For example:

The time of *Fajr*, the early morning: This time until sunrise resembles and calls to mind the early spring, the moment of conception in the mother’s womb, and the first of the six days of the creation of the heavens and earth; it recalls the Divine acts present in them.

The time of *Zuhr*, just past midday: This resembles and points to midsummer, and the prime of youth, and the period of man’s creation in the lifetime of the world, and calls to mind the manifestations of mercy and the abundant bounties they contain.

The time of *‘Asr*, afternoon: This is like autumn, and old age, and the time of the Final Prophet (PBUH), known as the Era of Bliss, and recalls the Divine acts



and favours of the All-Merciful One present in them.

The time of *Maghrib*, sunset recalls the departure of many creatures at the end of autumn, and man's death, and the destruction of the world at the commencement of the Doomsday, and it puts in mind the manifestations of Divine glory and sublimity, and rouses man from his slumbers of heedlessness.

The time of '*Isha*, nightfall calls to mind the world of darkness veiling all the objects of the daytime world with a black shroud, and winter hiding the face of the dead earth with its white shroud, and the remaining works of dead man dying and passing beneath the veil of oblivion, and this world, the arena of examination, being closed down for ever, and it proclaims the awesome and mighty disposals of the All-Glorious and Compelling Subduer.

As for the nighttime, through putting in mind both the winter, and the grave, and the Intermediate Realm, it reminds man how needy is the human spirit for the Most Merciful One's mercy. And the *tahajjud* prayer informs him what a necessary light it is for the night of the grave and darkness of the Intermediate Realm; it warns him of this, and through recalling the infinite bounties of the True Bestower, proclaims how deserving He is of praise and thanks.


And the second morning calls to mind the Morning of the Resurrection. However reasonable, necessary and certain the morning of this night is, the Morning of the Resurrection and the spring of the Intermediate Realm are certain to the same degree.

That is, just as each of these five times marks the start of an important revolution and recalls other great revolutions, so through the awesome daily disposals of the Eternally Besought One's power, each calls to mind the miracles of Divine power and gifts of Divine mercy of both every year, and every age, and every epoch. That is to say, the prescribed prayers, which are an innate duty and the basis of worship and an incontestable debt, are most appropriate and fitting for these times.

FIFTH POINT

By nature man is extremely weak, yet everything touches him, and saddens and grieves him. Also he is utterly lacking in power, yet the calamities and enemies that afflict him are extremely numerous. Also he is extremely wanting, yet his needs are indeed many. Also he is lazy and incapable, yet life's responsibilities are most burdensome. Also his humanity has connected him to the rest of the universe, yet the decline and disappearance of the things he loves and with which he is familiar continually pains him. Also his reason shows him exalted aims and lasting fruits, yet his hand is short, his life brief, his power slight, and





his patience little.

It can be clearly understood from this how essential it is for a spirit in this state at the time of *Fajr* in the early morning to have recourse to and present a petition to the Court of an All-Powerful One of Glory, an All-Compassionate All-Beauteous One through prayer and supplication, to seek success and help from Him, and what a necessary point of support it is so that he can face the things that will happen to him in the coming day and bear the duties that will be loaded on him.

The time of *Zuhr* just past midday is the time of the day's zenith and the start of its decline, the time when daily labours approach their achievement, the time of a short rest from the pressures of work, when the spirit needs a pause from the heedlessness and insensibility caused by toil, and a time Divine bounties are manifested. Anyone may understand then how fine and agreeable, how necessary and appropriate it is for the human spirit to perform the midday prayer, which means to be released from the pressure, shake off the heedlessness, and leave behind those meaningless, transient things, and clasping one's hands at the Court of the True Bestower of Bounties, the Eternally Self-Subsistent One, to offer praise and thanks for all His gifts, and seek help from Him, and through bowing to display one's impotence before His glory and tremendousness, and to prostrate and proclaim one's wonder, love, and humility. One who does not understand this is not a true human being.

As for the time of *Asr* in the afternoon, it calls to mind the melancholy season of autumn and the mournful state of old age and the sombre period at the end of time. It is also when the matters of the day reach their conclusion, and the time the Divine bounties which have been received that day like health, well-being, and beneficial duties have accumulated to form a great total, and the time that proclaims through the mighty sun hinting by starting to sink that man is a guest-official and that everything is transient and inconstant. Now, the human spirit desires eternity and was created for it; it worships benevolence, and is pained by separation. Thus, anyone who is truly a human being may understand what an exalted duty, what an appropriate service, what a fitting way to repay a debt of human nature, indeed, what an agreeable pleasure it is to perform the afternoon prayer. For by offering supplications at the Eternal Court of the Everlasting Pre-Eternal One, the Eternally Self-Subsistent One, it has the meaning of taking refuge in the grace of unending, infinite mercy, and by offering thanks and praise in the face of innumerable bounties, of humbly bowing before the mightiness of His dominicality, and by prostrating in utter humility before the everlastingness of His Godhead, of finding true consolation of heart and ease of spirit, and being girded ready for worship



in the presence of His grandeur.

The time of *Maghrib* at sunset recalls the disappearance amid sad farewells of the delicate, lovely creatures of the worlds of summer and autumn at the start of winter. It calls to mind the time when through his death, man will leave all those he loves in sorrowful departure and enter the grave. It brings to mind when at the death of this world amid the convulsions of its death-agonies, all its inhabitants will migrate to other worlds and the lamp of this place of examination will be extinguished. It is a time which gives stern warning to those who worship transient, ephemeral beloveds.

Thus, at such a time, for the *Maghrib* prayer, man's spirit, which by its nature is a mirror desirous for an Eternal Beauty, turns its face towards the throne of mightiness of the Eternal Undying One, the Enduring Everlasting One, Who performs these mighty works and turns and transforms these huge worlds, and declaring *Allah is Most Great* over these transient beings, withdraws from them. Man clasps his hands in service of his Lord and rises in the presence of the Enduring Eternal One, and through saying: *All praise be to Allah*, he praises and extols His faultless perfection, His peerless beauty, His infinite mercy. Through declaring:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ



You alone do we worship and from You alone we seek help, Qur'an, 1:5.

he proclaims his worship for and seeks help from His unassisted dominicality, His unpartnered Godhead, His unshared sovereignty. Then he bows, and through declaring together with all the universe his weakness and impotence, his poverty and baseness before the infinite majesty, the limitless power, and utter mightiness of the Enduring Eternal One, he says: *All glory to My Mighty Sustainer*, and glorifies his Sublime Sustainer. And prostrating before the undying Beauty of His Essence, His unchanging sacred attributes, His constant everlasting perfection, through abandoning all things other than Him, man proclaims his love and worship in wonder and self-abasement. He finds an All-Compassionate Eternal One. And through saying, *All glory to my Exalted Sustainer*, he declares his Most High Sustainer to be free of decline and exalted above any fault.

Then, he testifies to Allah's unity and the prophethood of Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him). He sits, and on his own account offers as a gift to the Undying All-Beauteous One, the Enduring All-Glorious One the blessed salutations and benedictions of all creatures. And through greeting Allah's Most



Noble Messenger, he renews his allegiance to him and proclaims his obedience to his commands. In order to renew and illuminate his faith, he observes the wise order in this palace of the universe and testifies to the unity of the All-Glorious Maker. And he testifies to the Messengership of Muhammad the Arabian (Peace and blessings be upon him), who is the herald of the sovereignty of Allah's dominicality, the proclaimer of those things pleasing to Him, and the interpreter of the signs and verses of the book of the universe. To perform the *Maghrib* prayer is this. So how can someone be considered a human being who does not understand what a fine and pure duty is the prayer at sunset, what an exalted and pleasurable act of service, what an agreeable and pleasing act of worship, what a serious matter, and what an unending conversation and permanent happiness it is in this transient guest-house?

At the time of 'Isha at nightfall, the last traces of the day remaining on the horizon disappear, and the world of night enfolds the universe. As the All-Powerful and Glorious One, *The Changer of Night and Day*, turns the white page of day into the black page of night through the mighty disposals of His dominicality, it recalls the Divine activities of that All-Wise One of Perfection, *The Subduer of the Sun and the Moon*, turning the green-adorned page of summer into the frigid white page of winter. And with the remaining works of the departed being erased from this world with the passing of time, it recalls the Divine acts of *The Creator and Life and Death* in their passage to another, quite different world. It is a time that calls to mind the disposals of *The Creator of the Heavens and the Earth's* awesomeness and the manifestations of His beauty in the utter destruction of this narrow, fleeting, and lowly world, the terrible death-agonies of its decease, and in the unfolding of the broad, eternal, and majestic world of the hereafter. And the universe's Owner, its True Disposer, its True Beloved and Object of Worship can only be the One Who with ease turns night into day, winter into spring, and this world into the hereafter like the pages of a book; Who writes and erases them, and changes them.

Thus, at nightfall, man's spirit, which is infinitely impotent and weak, and infinitely poor and needy, and plunged into the infinite darkness of the future, and tossed around amid innumerable events, performs the 'Isha prayer, which has this meaning: like Abraham man says:

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ



I do not love those that set, Qur'an, 6:76.



and through the prayers seeks refuge at the Court of an Undying Object of Worship, an Eternal Beloved One, and in this transient world and fleeting life and dark world and black future he supplicates an Enduring, Everlasting One, and for a moment of unending conversation, a few seconds of immortal life, he asks to receive the favours of the All-Merciful and Compassionate One's mercy and the light of His guidance, which will strew light on his world and illuminate his future and bind up the wounds resulting from the departure and decline of all creatures and friends.

Temporarily man forgets the hidden world, which has forgotten him, and pours out his woes at the Court of Mercy with his weeping, and whatever happens, before sleeping -which resembles death- he performs his last duty of worship. And in order to close favourably the daily record of his actions, he rises to pray; that is to say, he rises to enter the presence of an Eternal Beloved and Worshipped One in place of all the mortal ones he loves, of an All-Powerful and Generous One in place of all the impotent creatures from which he begs, of an All-Compassionate Protector so as to be saved from the evil of the harmful beings before which he trembles.

He starts with the Sura al-Fatiha, that is, instead of praising and being obliged to defective, wanting creatures, for which they are not suited, he extols and offers praise to *The Sustainer of All the Worlds*, Who is Absolutely Perfect and Utterly Self-Sufficient and Most Compassionate and All-Generous. Then he progresses to the address: *You alone do we worship*. That is, despite his smallness, insignificance, and aloneness, through man's connection with *The Owner of the Day of Judgement*, Who is the Sovereign of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, he attains to a rank whereat he is an indulged guest in the universe and an important official. Through declaring: *You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help*, he presents to Him in the name of all creatures the worship and calls for assistance of the mighty congregation and huge community of the universe. Then through saying: *Guide us to the Straight Path*, he asks to be guided to the Straight Path, which leads to eternal happiness and is the luminous way.

And now, he thinks of the mightiness of the All-Glorious One, of Whom, like the sleeping plants and animals, the hidden suns and sober stars are all soldiers subjugated to His command, and lamps and servants in this guest-house of the world, and uttering "Allahu Akbar" Allah is Most Great, he bows down. Then he thinks of the great prostration of all



creatures. That is, when, at the command of:

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ



“Be!,” and it is, Qur’an, 2:117

all the varieties of creatures each year and each century -even the earth, and the universe- each like a well-ordered army or an obedient soldier, is discharged from its duty, that is, when each is sent to the World of the Unseen, through the prostration of its decease and death with complete orderliness, it declares: “*Allahu Akbar*” (*Allah is Most Great*), and bows down in prostration. Like they are raised to life, some in part and some the same, in the spring at an awakening and life-giving trumpet-blast from the command of “Be!” and it is, and they rise up and are girded ready to serve their Lord, insignificant man too, following them, declares: “*Allahu Akbar*” (*Allah is Most Great*) in the presence of the All-Merciful One of Perfection, the All-Compassionate One of Beauty in wonderstruck love and eternity-tinged humility and dignified self-effacement, and bows down in prostration; that is to say, he makes a sort of Ascension. For sure you will have understood now how agreeable and fine and pleasant and elevated, how high and pleasurable, how reasonable and appropriate a duty, service, and act of worship, and what a serious matter it is to perform the ‘*Isha*’ prayer.

Thus, since each of these five times points to a mighty revolution, is a sign indicating the tremendous dominical activity, and a token of the universal Divine bounties, it is perfect wisdom that being a debt and an obligation, the prescribed prayers should be specified at those times.

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ



Glory be unto You! We have no knowledge save that which You have taught us; indeed You are All-Knowing, All-Wise. Qur’an, 2:32

O Allah! Grant blessings and peace to the one whom You sent as a teacher to Your servants to instruct them in knowledge of You and worship of You, and to make known the treasures of Your Names, and to translate the signs of the book of the universe and as a mirror to its worship of the beauty of Your dominicality, and to all his Family and Companions, and have mercy on us and on all believing men and women. Amen. Through Your Mercy, O Most Merciful of the Merciful!