

**MAHMOUD MUHAMMAD TAHA**

# **THE MESSAGE OF PRAYER**



**SIXTH EDITION – DECEMBER 1972**

Mahmoud Muhammad Taha

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## **Dedication**

To every man and every woman,  
Wherever men and women are found.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night exalt [Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied. And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [regarding] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring.” (20:130-131)

## Preface to the Fifth Edition

This is the preface to the fifth edition of the book *The Message of Prayer*. Praise be to Allah, the book has received significant interest and continues to be in demand, necessitating its reprinting. Prayer has always been, and will always remain, the greatest endeavor of humanity. Yet, people fail to recognize its true significance because they do not know how to pray.

Allah, Blessed and Exalted, says to His Prophet about prayer: “And enjoin prayer upon your family and be steadfast therein. We ask you not for provision; We provide for you, and the [best] outcome is for piety.” (20:132) Here, piety (*taqwa*) means prayer. Thus, as [mindful] prayer ascends to its zenith, it becomes a means to obtain sustenance, rendering unnecessary the toil which is commonly seen as the [sole] means to achieve this end. But what kind of prayer is this? It is the prayer in which you are to your Lord as He is to you. He is always with you. Ask yourself: Are you always with Him? If not, then pray! For you have not truly prayed. You have not performed the prayer that leads to this state. The formal prayer (*salat*) you have been commanded to establish is meant to bring you to this true prayer.

## **Learn How to Pray.**

This preface opens with two verses about prayer and contentment, which is the fruit of prayer. The term “exalt” (*Sabbih*) in the verse means pray. The term derives from (*sabaha*), which conveys movement, dispersion, and activity in pursuit of sustenance. [In the Qur’an] Allah references this meaning: “Indeed, for you by day is prolonged occupation (*sabhan*).” (73:7)

Thus, prayer is movement, from heedlessness to presence [of mind], from distance to proximity, from ignorance to knowledge. It must be a movement following Allah, not ahead of Him, in contentment with Him, not contesting Him. This is the meaning of His saying, Blessed and Exalted be He: "And glorify [Allah] with praise of your Lord." This is from His saying: "So be patient over what they say and glorify [Allah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during parts of the night, and at the ends of the day, that you may be content" (20:130). Contentment is the tranquility of the self when it experiences calmness and comfort, through the stillness of turbulent thoughts within.

## **Learn How to Pray.**

The Prophet was the greatest to ever pray, the greatest to understand prayer, and the greatest to recognize its value. When troubled, he would turn to prayer, and through it, the [heavy] hardships of the world would become light upon him. He would meet the Beloved, the Almighty, in prayer. He said: “Three things were made beloved to me in your worldly life: women, perfume, and the coolness of my eyes when focused in prayer.”

Reflect again: “and the coolness of my eyes when focused in prayer.” The phrase “*coolness of my eyes*” denotes the tranquility of the self. The Prophet’s inner self would become perturbed, his heart distressed, and his thoughts unsettled. He would then turn to prayer out of necessity. Upon standing in prayer, his insight would be illuminated by his vision of the

Beloved, the Almighty - Allah. His inner self would be purified, his heart unburdened, his thoughts calmed, and he would be content with Allah, finding solace in Him: “and the coolness of my eyes when focused in prayer.”

### **Learn How to Pray.**

Prayer is a methodology. By practicing it, we can look inward, meet ourselves, understand who we are, and achieve peace within. This is because we engage the external world, immersed in the illusions that our senses create, distracted by its outward appearance from its underlying truth. This external world is but a shadow of that [underlying] reality, which Allah has created as a guide to it, and not a substitute for it. Allah said: “We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. So, is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?” (41:53)

The “signs on the horizons” are the means, while the signs within oneself are the ends. The means cannot replace the ends. To stop at the means, being veiled by them, is a manifest loss, and this is the affliction that we face, becoming entangled in its dangers. It is as though we are, in the depth of our heedlessness, a people asleep. Truly, we are a people asleep. Did not the Prophet say: “People are asleep; when they die, they awaken”? Indeed!

We have another means to become awakened, one that is beyond and before death, which is conscious, correct, and enlightened prayer. The Prophet commanded: “Die before you die.” He meant to lift the veil of heedlessness, to perceive the truths behind present appearances, through prayer, rather than through the eventuality of death when all regret will be too late.



**Learn How to Pray.**

This teaching is presented to lift the veils of illusions and falsehoods from your insight and vision. This book, *The Message of Prayer*, was written for this very purpose. May Allah make it beneficial, for He is the Best Patron and the Best Responder.

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

“Say, ‘Indeed, my Lord has guided me to a straight path - a correct religion - the way of Abraham, inclining toward truth. And he was not among those who associated others with Allah. Say, ‘Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first [among you] of the Muslims.’” (6:161-163)

Truthful is Allah, the Almighty.

## Preface to the Fourth Edition

This is the preface to the fourth edition of the book *The Message of Prayer*, released during this blessed month. The first edition of the book was published in a similarly blessed month in 1385 AH, corresponding to January 1966. The second edition followed a year later, in Ramadan of 1386 AH, corresponding to January 1967. The demand for a third edition arose, which was published in Muharram of 1388 AH, corresponding to April 1968.

None of these editions included a dedicated preface due to the pressing demands of other commitments. Now, as we prepare for the fourth edition, we find, by Allah's Grace, both the time and the health to provide a comprehensive preface that revisits some of the book's themes with a renewed perspective.

There is no human endeavor more important, more complete, or more beneficial to both the individual and humanity at large than prayer.

Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, says: "Whoever desires honor, then to Allah belongs all honor. To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it." (35:10)

Good speech (*al-kalim al-tayyib*) is monotheism, it is the declaration "There is no deity but Allah" (*"La ilaha illa Allah"*). As for righteous work, prayer stands first and foremost, and all other virtuous deeds follow. Their validity depends on the validity of one's prayer.

Prayer is the most emphasized obligation in religion. If the two testimonies (*shahadatayn*) are the first words to be uttered in religion, then prayer is the first act to be performed. Prayer combines knowledge with action based on that knowledge, which inherently makes it profoundly impactful in unifying the human entity. The wisdom behind its prescription lies in this immense benefit.

Thus, prayer is not merely an activity for the elderly, the simple-minded, or the uneducated, as some young people today mistakenly perceive. Rather, it is fundamentally an activity for the intelligent. In this preface, we will attempt to clarify this matter, discussing religion, humanity, intellect, and the unity of the human entity, which is the key to achieving the perfection we all seek but often fail to attain.

And Allah is the source of success.

## Religion...

### What is religion?

Religion (*al-deen*) has many meanings. It can signify coercion, obedience, subjugation, and dominance, this is on one level. On another level, it denotes a way of life, conduct, and interaction.

In the first sense, Allah says: "So is it other than the religion of Allah they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?" (3:83)

In the second sense, Allah says: "And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being virtuous and follows the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend." (4:125)

Religion, in these two contexts, can be categorized into two distinct types: general religion (*al-deen al-'aam*) and special religion (*al-deen al-khaas*). These two types differ in degree and can be visualized as concentric circles: general religion represents the encompassing outer circle, while special religion represents the inner circle surrounded by the former.

General Religion pertains to all creation. It is referenced in Allah's words: "The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by praising Him, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving." (17:44)

It represents the Divine Will that subjugates elements and directs all creation toward its destined end. Nothing deviates from this religion, no one disobeys it. In this realm, there is no disobedience; everything exists in submission. Even acts of disobedience, in their very occurrence, fulfill

the Divine Will. Thus, in the scope of this religion, obedience and disobedience hold no significance before Allah.

Special Religion, on the other hand, pertains to humans and jinn. It is the religion of accountable minds tasked with disciplining their desires. It is called the religion of minds because its jurisprudence allows for disobedience, which is defined as contravening the Divine legal rulings through action, speech, or both. The wisdom behind these legal rulings is grounded in the Eternal, Original, Grand Intellect (*al-'aql al-kulli al-qadeem*), and the aim of special religion is to guide the evolving intellect (*al-'aql al-muhdath*) toward alignment with the Will of the Eternal, Original, Grand Intellect. For this reason, intentions (*niyyah*) are central to action in this religion. Intention involves consciously bringing to mind the purpose behind an action within the intellect before commencing it.

While general religion represents Allah's Will, special religion represents His Delight. The special religion is distilled from the general religion, much like river water is purified from seawater by Allah's Grace and the processes of evaporation, wind movement, and the formation of clouds between the sky and the earth. Similarly, Allah sends His messengers to extract His Delight from His Will, just as He uses the sun to extract fresh water from saline water. The purifiers of Divine Delightfulness from Divine Will are the intellects of human beings.

To strengthen these intellects for this task, Allah supports them with angelic intellects, [received] through revelation and Gabriel. This Revelation is a stage meant to bridge the gap between [the advent of] human intellects, by Allah's Grace and the capacity instilled within the human entity to become self-sufficient.

This is why we say that the special religion is the religion of intellects. There is no honor to be gained, neither in this world nor the Hereafter, except through the intellect.

## **The Human Being**

### **What is a human? And who is a human?**

The human being is an animal elevated to the status of dignity through intellect. The human being is still in the process of formation, and this development will never cease. Humans perpetually progress through the stages of perfection in an infinite journey. Animals also evolve, but the extent of their progress is limited to reaching the lowest ranks of humanity. Thus, the difference between animals and humans is one of degree, not of kind.

Monotheism (*tawhid*) requires us to view all creations, especially living beings, as part of a single, continuous chain, with links of varying sizes along its length. From this perspective, there is nothing in all of created existence except the human being. Everything we see and cannot see in this existence represents the human being at different and successive stages of development. This comprehensive view is referenced in Allah's words: "Has there come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?" (76:1)

Here, the term "*Has*" (*Hal*) is used to mean "*Indeed*" (*Qad*). This "period of time" refers to an extended, timeless epoch.

The human being's long journey of creation spans four interconnected stages, with each stage separated by links in the chain that are larger than the preceding ones, representing leaps in the process of evolution. These leaps are the culmination of organic virtues accumulated during the

preceding stage. For simplicity, this journey is divided into four stages; however, each stage contains countless sub-stages that defy enumeration. The stages are discussed briefly as follows:

## **The First Stage of Human Development**

This stage represents the evolution of humanity within inorganic matter, beginning with its emergence in physical form. This emergence occurred in eternity, at the beginning of time. Allah refers to this profound beginning in His words: “Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?” (21:30)

The term *joined entity* (*ratq*) refers to a state of union, the opposite of separation (*fatq*). Concerning this joined state, Allah says in another verse: “Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, ‘Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion.’ They said, ‘We have come willingly.’” (41:11)

Here, *smoke* refers to water in its vapor state. The heavens and the earth were once a single cloud of water vapor, united, and then separated. From this unity emerged multiplicity. Even at that time, the germ of humanity was not absent; it existed as the atoms of water vapor.

From that moment onward, the organic evolution of the human being began, a process driven, guided, directed, compelled, and refined by the Divine Will, which is singular in its authority. This stage of development spanned an inconceivable span of time, culminating in the emergence of organic matter.

## The Second Stage of Human Development

With the emergence of organic matter from inorganic matter, life as we know it began to manifest. However, in reality, all matter - organic and inorganic is alive. The difference lies in the fact that life became apparent in organic matter after being latent within inorganic matter. Life did not come from outside of matter; it emerged from within.

The most basic form of life, which we conventionally call life, is characterized by the living being's awareness of its existence. The signs of this are spontaneous movement, nourishment, and reproduction. This form of life began with the single-celled organism, marking a momentous and significant step, into a new and extraordinary era: the era of life and death. From that moment, the spearhead of life, its vanguard, was set forth. What a remarkable beginning!

Allah refers to this in His words: "And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud." (15:26). Here, *altered black mud* (*ḥama' masnūn*) refers to decomposed, fetid clay, while *clay* (*ṣalṣāl*) denotes dried mud that makes a sound when touched. The mud turned black due to its exposure to the intense heat of the sun. This is because the Earth was once a fragment of the sun that separated, cooled, solidified, and prepared itself for the emergence of life. Life then emerged in the union of water and clay.

This is referenced in Allah's words: "Has there come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned? Indeed, We created man from a mixture of thickened fluid that We may test him, and We made him hearing and seeing." (76:1-2)

In this context, thickened fluid (*nutfah*) during this stage of human development refers to clear water, and *mixture* (*amshāḥ*) is the plural of



*mashīj*, which means a combination of two things. In this case, it refers to water mixed with clay. Thus, the mixture of thickened fluid denotes the combination of water and clay.

This second stage of human development, which began with the single-celled organism at its base, culminates in the highest mammals at its peak. The transition to the third stage is marked by a remarkable and astonishing leap through which humanity, as we know it today, enters the stage of life.

## **The Third Stage of Human Development**

This is the stage we are currently living in, during its final days. It began with the appearance of Adam the Prophet, the first human to be entrusted with responsibility on this Earth. This Adam is not the same as Adam the Vicegerent, who was created nearly perfect in paradise and to whom the angels were commanded to prostrate. Rather, this Adam represents a phase in the evolutionary progression of creation that had declined from the level of Adam the Vicegerent and then strove to ascend back toward it.

Adam the Vicegerent, Adam in his complete form, was created in paradise, in the Heavenly Kingdom (*al-malakūt*). When he succumbed to sin, he was expelled from paradise and descended to Earth. Allah refers to this in His words: “So Exalted is Allah, the True King. And do not hasten with the Qur’an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, ‘My Lord, increase me in knowledge.’ And We had already made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We found not in him steadfastness. And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam,’ and they prostrated, except Iblees (Satan), who refused. So We said, ‘O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Then let him not remove you from paradise so you would suffer. Indeed, it is [promised] for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed. And indeed, you will not be thirsty therein

or be overheated from the sun.' Then Satan whispered to him; he said, 'O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?' And they ate of it, and their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of paradise. And Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]. Allah said, 'Descend from it, all [of you], being enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray nor suffer. And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, his shall be a life of narrowness, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind.'" (20:114–124)

Regarding Adam's expulsion from paradise and descent to Earth after being created in near perfection, Allah says: "We have certainly created man in the best of stature; then We return him to the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted." (95:4–6)

Adam and his wife were among those who believed and performed righteous deeds. After their transgression, they repented and expressed remorse, saying: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23)

This was in contrast to Iblees (Satan), who had led them astray. He neither repented nor showed remorse; instead, he requested reprieve and deferral: "Reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected." (7:14)

When his request was granted: "Indeed, you are of those reprieved," (7:15) he displayed his determination to persist in leading others astray: "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind

them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful.” (7:16–17)

Thus, when they all were returned to the lowest of the low, Iblees remained there, while Allah saved Adam and his wife, guiding them through their faith back toward Him. This is the meaning of Allah’s words: “Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted.” (95:6)

When Adam was returned to the lowest of the low, he was at the starting point of creation, the stage of water vapor. From there, under Allah’s guidance, he began his ascent through the ranks of proximity. When he attained the station of prophethood on Earth, as the first human being entrusted with responsibility, he had begun to approach, in a tangible way, the initial stages of closeness to the great vicegerency he had lost through disobedience. However, he was still far from its full attainment.

With his arrival to this noble station, Adam regained mention in the Heavenly Kingdom after his mention had been lost for a long time. Allah alludes to this in His words: “Has there come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?” (76:1)

## **The First Prophethood - Vicegerency on Earth**

The station that Adam attained during his journey back from wandering, to where he was once again mentioned in the heavenly kingdom, was the station of the first prophethood on Earth. By attaining this station, Adam became the first vicegerent (*khalīfah*) on Earth.

Many predecessors to Adam, the father of humanity, had attempted to reach this noble station but failed, leading to their extinction. The vanguard of the lineage from clay continued their attempts to attain this noble rank,

but failure repeatedly awaited them. This continued until the angels became convinced that these attempts would not succeed. Then Allah decreed the appearance of the successful attempt, and that was Adam, the father of humankind.

When Allah informed the angels that He would appoint a vicegerent from the progeny of clay, they took exception: “And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent.’ They said, ‘Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ Allah said, ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know.’ And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.’ They said, ‘Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise.’ He said, ‘O Adam, inform them of their names.’ And when he had informed them of their names, He said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed.’” (2:30–33)

The angels questioned Allah’s decision to create a vicegerent from the descendants of clay based on their prior knowledge derived from previous experiences with earlier human-like beings. However, when Allah revealed the unique potential of the human form, its ability to evolve, to ascend, and to continuously transition from ignorance to knowledge, the angels submitted and complied.

All these events transpired three times. Adam was created three times: twice in the realm of the heavenly kingdom (*malakūt*) and once in the realm of dominion (*mulk*). This corresponds to the three overarching attributes governing creation: the All-Knowing, the Ultimately-Willing, and the Most Capable.

Through knowledge, Allah enclosed His creation in the heavenly kingdom. Through His Will, He moved from enclosing it all in generality to particularization, approaching execution while still within the heavenly realm, but [moving] nearer to the [earthly] dominion. Finally, through ability, He executed [His Will] in the [earthly] dominion, as it had been executed generally and particularly in the heavenly kingdom.

The heavenly kingdom is the realm of intellect, while the [earthly] dominion is the realm of physical forms. Everything in the heavenly kingdom governs its counterpart in the [earthly] dominion, for the heavenly realm is the realm of subtleties (*laṭāʾif*), while the [earthly] dominion is the realm of densities (*kathāʾif*). Every subtle entity has dominion over every dense entity.

This is the meaning of Allah's words: "So Exalted is He in whose hand is the realm of all things, and to Him you will be returned." (36:83)

Our dense forms return to our subtle forms by subjecting our lower selves, which are dense, to our intellects, which are subtle. The pinnacle of subtleties resides in the Essence (*dhat*) of Allah. Therefore, the ultimate return must be to Him. This return is achieved by aligning our attributes with His, through the insights of intellects, that are disciplined by the etiquette of truth and the etiquette of reality.

## **The Emergence of Intellect**

Intellect (*'aql*) is the discerning faculty within us. It does not differ from the body in kind but rather in degree. Intellect is the subtle extension of the senses, and the senses are the subtle extension of the body. Through the refining of the dense elements of the body, under the compulsion of Divine Will, the subtleties of the senses emerged, followed thereafter by the subtleties of intellect.

The third stage of human development is distinguished by the emergence of intellect. Intellect was not absent in the first and second stages of development, but it was latent, like fire concealed within stone. Its emergence from latency into the realm of perception characterizes this third stage. Regarding the process of the intellect's emergence and the means of its manifestation, Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, says: "Indeed, We created man from a thickened fluid (sperm-drop) mixture that We may test him; and We made him hearing and seeing. Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful." (76:2–3)

The term thickened fluid mixture (*nutfah amshāj*) initially refers to water mixed with clay, marking the point where life emerged as we know it. This event signifies the end of the first stage of human development and the beginning of the second. Even now, at its foundation, life continues to draw from this origin.

In its early stages, life begets life in one way or another during its simplest forms, before evolving and diversifying into specialized functions, organs, and species. In this early period, the distinction between male and female had not yet emerged as separate forms. This phase represents an aspect of the second stage of human development.

As life advanced and its functions became specialized, reproduction came to occur through the union of male and female. The term thickened fluid mixture then came to signify the male's seminal fluid (sperm) combined with the female's ovum.

The key lies in the phrase "that We may test him" (*nabtali-hi*), as it alludes to the refining of elements during the period preceding the emergence of organic matter. It also refers to the struggle of living beings with their natural environment, starting from the first appearance of life to this very day. Through this trial and refinement, Allah made humanity "hearing and

seeing”, which is - a reference to the gradual emergence of the senses in living beings, one after the other.

Once the five senses were complete and the living being became a fully formed animal, the second stage of human development concluded, and the third stage began with the emergence of the subtlest of subtleties: intellect (*‘aql*). This is signified in the verse: “Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful.” (76:3)

The phrase “be he grateful or ungrateful” means that Allah guided humanity toward gratitude through ingratitude, or, in other words, toward correctness through error. This is also reflected in Allah’s words: “Did We not make for him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and We guided him to the two elevated paths?” (90:8–10)

“Did We not make for him two eyes” refers to all the senses. “A tongue and two lips” refers to intellect, not merely the tongue as a physical organ that humans share with animals, but rather the capacity for speech, which involves the tongue and the lips to produce the complex and varied sounds required for language. Language is the expression and guide of the intellect.

“We guided him to the two elevated paths”, which references two paths: the path of error and the path of correctness. Allah guided humanity to both, as humans act, make mistakes, and learn from their errors.

When Allah guided humanity to the two paths, He only guided the angels to one path, the path of correctness, and the same applies to the devils, who were only guided to the path of error. This is because Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, created desire without intellect in devils and other creatures below humans. They err but never achieve correctness.

Conversely, He created intellect without desire in angels, so they are always correct and never err.

Allah made humanity an intermediary (*barzakh*) where the two realms, the lower and higher meet. He endowed humans with both desire and intellect and commanded them to govern their desires with their intellect. Humanity, therefore, exists in constant conflict between the impulses of wrong-doing and the calls of goodness, between the suggestions of error and the obligations of correctness. This is the meaning of Allah's words: "And We guided him to the two elevated paths." (90:10)

This intermediary nature, which encompasses both error and correctness, is what makes a human inherently more complete than an angel in an absolute sense. Due to the value of this nature, the Infallible [Prophet] said: "If you did not err and seek forgiveness, Allah would bring a people who err and seek forgiveness, and He would forgive them."

The value of this intermediary nature lies in its freedom. The right to err is the right to be free to act, to make mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes so as to better exercise freedom without constraint except for the limits imposed by one's inability to act correctly. This inability is temporary, as one eventually transitions to greater capability and improved behavior, in a continuous cycle.

Freedom is the essence of life. A life without freedom is merely a body without a spirit. It is enough here to state that freedom is the distinguishing line between the life of an animal and the life of a human being.

In the beginning of life, there was sensation. The lowest level of life is the ability of the living being to feel its existence. Anything below this level of sensation does not qualify as life. This awareness of existence compels the living being to sense heat, cold, and pain. From these sensations came



movement, away from harmful heat, away from harmful cold, away from all pain, and toward every possible pleasure. Inspired by the instinct to escape pain and seek pleasure, the ability to acquire nourishment and enjoy it emerged, as well as the ability to reproduce and take delight in it.

The single-celled organism sensed [its surroundings] with its entire soft body. As life became more complex and advanced, its sensitivity to danger increased, creating the need for specialized functions. The skin had to thicken and harden to act as armor and shield, while certain parts of the body, apart from the skin, began to perform sensory functions. Thus began the development of the senses.

Due to our familiarity with the five senses, we often fall into the spontaneous mistake of assuming that living beings were created with all five senses fully formed. However, this is not the case. The senses developed one after another as life advanced and the functions of the living being's organs became more complex.

Initially, touch occurred throughout the entire body, via the skin. But as the skin took on the protective role, specific parts became devoted to touch. Then, as the sensory function evolved to perceive threats from a distance, it expanded subtly to include hearing, followed by sight, taste, and smell.

This order is not strictly the sequence of appearance or completion, as different living beings may prioritize certain senses based on their needs. For some creatures, one sense becomes stronger at the expense of others, while the remaining senses exist in varying forms.

Today, higher animals, including humans, possess five senses. However, this is not the end of the journey. In humans, the sixth and seventh senses are in the process of development. Beyond the seventh sense, there will be no increase in the number of senses, but rather a continuous

enhancement of their perfection. This process of development is then infinite (*sarmadi*).

## **What is the Sixth Sense?**

The sixth sense is the brain. Its function is comprehensive and integrative perception, which unifies the inputs from the other senses, the hand, ear, eye, tongue, and nose, into touch, hearing, sight, taste, and smell, respectively. When this sense becomes strong, its perception of everything becomes remarkably all-encompassing, as if it simultaneously touches, hears, sees, tastes, and smells.

## **What is the Seventh Sense?**

The seventh sense is the heart, and its function is life itself. This sense is the origin, while all other senses serve as its messengers and forerunners, leading to the fountain of complete life.

Life began amidst fear. Allah says: "Indeed, We created man in hardship." (90:4). Here, *hardship* (*kabad*) refers to toil and difficulty. This hardship, which surrounded life from its inception, planted fear deep within living beings. Without fear, life would not have emerged in the first place, nor would it have advanced and evolved later. However, unless life ultimately overcomes fear, it cannot achieve its full perfection.

Life triumphs over fear when the sixth sense strengthens and perceives matters as they truly are, in the manner described above. At that point, [sentient] life realizes that fear was merely a stage accompanying its nascent ignorance and inadequacy, and that fear has no grounding in the true nature of things.

Once the sixth sense reaches this level of clarity, the seventh sense, the heart, relaxes, becomes reassured, and releases itself from the

constrictions caused by fear. The heart will begin pumping the blood of life powerfully into every particle of the body and every cell of the skin, rejuvenating what fear had previously hardened into a shell or armor to preserve primitive life. As a result, sensation returns to the entire body, making it fully alive, fully refined, and fully beautiful, an embodiment of utmost beauty. The living body, at this stage, is the one referred to in Allah's words: "And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers, swells, and grows every delightful variety." (22:5)

This is the function of the seventh sense, complete life, and complete life has no final perfection. Its perfection is always relative. It evolves in pursuit of absolute life and absolute perfection, which belong to the Absolutely Perfect, Allah. Its evolution is continuous through the progressive refinement of all the senses, each in its domain, and the corresponding advancement of the intellect, strengthening thought and broadening comprehension. The clarity of the intellect and the power of thought determine the purity of the heart, the breadth of life, and its perfection. This progressive development of the senses is what Allah meant by His saying: "and grows every delightful variety." (22:5).

Through our examination of the origin and development of the intellect, we have reached the fourth stage of human development. We have briefly delved into this stage, even though we have not yet completed our discussion of the third stage of human evolution. We will pause this exploration to touch briefly on the fourth stage before returning to continue discussing the third stage, as it is the most significant of the four stages of human development.

## The Fourth Stage of Human Development

This stage represents perfection, a stage that has yet to come. Its beginning is beyond the peak of the third stage, and one can only enter it by leaping from the summit of the previous stage.

We have discussed the four stages of human development. Regarding the first stage, we stated that its beginning lies in eternity (*azal*), where the human emerged in bodily form within inorganic matter, what we conventionally call "lifeless", and its end coincides with the emergence of organic matter onto the stage.

We also discussed the second stage, noting that its beginning marks the emergence of organic matter, what we conventionally call "alive", and its end is marked by the emergence of intellect (*'aql*). From this, it becomes clear that there is a significant resemblance between the first and second stages: both are entirely physical stages, encompassing all levels of physicality, from a particle of water vapor to the most advanced mammals, excluding humans.

The fourth stage is distinguished from the third by the full entry of the sixth and seventh senses onto the stage. This represents a new degree of advancement, rendering human life fundamentally different from anything we have previously known. Thus, we can say that human development encompasses three primary phases: the stage of pure physicality, the stage of conflict between body and intellect, and the stage of harmony between body and intellect.

Life on this planet has evolved, to this point, within the framework of the first two stages. Initially, evolution was purely physical. Then, with the emergence of intellect, by Allah's Grace and as a result of purely physical evolution, life transitioned into its second phase, a combined physical and

intellectual evolution. This is the phase we are living in today, and I hope we are nearing its final days.

A time will soon come when evolution becomes purely intellectual, mirroring the initial phase of purely physical evolution that marked the beginning of life. As the mystics (*sufis*) say: "The end resembles the beginning, but it is not identical to it." Historians also say: "History repeats itself, but not in the same form." The Wisest of speakers says: "As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. That is a promise binding upon Us; indeed, We will do it." (21:104)

And He, Blessed and Exalted, does not repeat it in the same way because one of the secrets of Divinity is that It does not stop, return, or repeat itself. Therefore, what remains is only what we have stated.

These three phases, pure physical evolution, combined physical-intellectual evolution, and pure intellectual evolution, can, in religious terminology, correspond to the three realms: the realm of *Malakut* (the heavenly kingdom), the realm of *Barzakh* (the intermediate stage), and the realm of *Mulk* (the Dominion stage). The *Mulk* is the domain of bodies, the *Malakut* is the domain of intellects, and the *Barzakh* is the intermediary realm, a transitional domain. It is the domain of current human being, which, as previously mentioned, we now inhabit at the twilight of its trajectory.

The realm of *Malakut* governs over the realms of *Mulk* and *Barzakh*, as they are subjugated to its dominion and perpetually in motion, seeking it, for they originated from it. The pinnacle of *Malakut* is with Allah, in the purity of His Essence. About this, He said: "So Exalted is He in whose hand is the realm of all things, and to Him you will be returned" (36:83). This has already been alluded to earlier.

Allah created everything first by His Essence (*dhat*), and then through intermediaries, His names, attributes, and actions. His wisdom decreed that creation manifests into existence through three movements: the movement of knowledge, which encompasses all; the movement of will, which specifies; and the movement of capability, which brings forth into the tangible world.

In the Intermediary Realm (*'Alam al-Barzakh*), He created using three names: the All-Knowing, the Ultimately-Willing, the Most Capable (*al-'Alim, al-Murid, al-Qadir*). In the Realm of the Heavenly Kingdom (*'Alam al-Malakut*), which lies above the Intermediary Realm, He created using three names: Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate (*Allah, al-Rahman, al-Rahim*). In the Realm of Dominion (*'Alam al-Mulk*), which lies below the Intermediary Realm, He created using three names: the Creator, the Evolver, the Fashioner (*al-Khaliq, al-Bari', al-Musawwir*).

The Creator (*al-Khaliq*) is He who encompasses His creation with knowledge. The Evolver (*al-Bari'*) is He who gave His creation its initial form. The Fashioner (*al-Musawwir*) is He who continuously reshapes the initial form into diverse forms, propelling them forward in their stages of evolution, where the latter seeks the perfection of the former. Regarding this, Allah says: "And We created you, then We shaped you, then We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam,' so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He was not of those who prostrated." (7:11)

Here, "We created you" means "We encompassed you with knowledge of your beginnings and your ends." "we fashioned you" refers to "We gave you an initial form," which was as a particle of water vapor. As for "then We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam,'" it signifies "We subjugated the angels to serve humanity," owing to the nobility of human creation over

that of the angels. Allah's use of the conjunction "*then*" is to indicate sequential order and temporal distance.

The angels prostrated, and Iblees also prostrated, but the angels did so willingly (*ṭaw'an*), while Iblees did so unwillingly (*karhan*). Both groups, however, are equally subjugated to serve humanity: the angels from above, and Iblees and his progeny from below. Humanity's oscillation between the two gives rise to correctness and error, both of which serve the purpose of human evolution toward perfection. It is through both correctness and error that the completeness of the human's creation was realized from its inception.

Regarding this supreme design of establishing beginnings and ends and directing the journey between them, Allah says: "[He] who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]." (20:50), meaning God guided evolution in its ascending stages. He guided pure physical evolution through the general religion (*al-deen al-'aam*). He guided the combined physical-intellectual evolution through the special religion (*al-deen al-khaas*), the phase of faith (*'aqeedah*). He guides pure intellectual evolution through the special religion (*al-deen al-khaas*), the phase of [individualized] knowledge (*'ilm*).

To further clarify the guidance of the special religion in its two phases, of combined physical-intellectual evolution and pure intellectual evolution, we will now return to the discussion of the third stage of human development, as promised earlier. We will also revisit the fourth stage when the discussion pertains to pure intellectual evolution.

## **A Return to the Third phase of Human Development**

As mentioned earlier, this stage begins with the emergence of intellect (*'aql*) in humanity. We noted that intellect was not absent in the first and second stages of human development, together referred to as the stages

of pure physical evolution. Intellect was not absent; it was latent within matter, and it emerged into existence through the crucible of events. We have previously discussed the emergence of intellect in some detail, which does not require repetition here. However, it is necessary to address the concept of intellect with a degree of specificity that was not included in our earlier discussion.

When Adam was cast away to the state of remoteness, the lowest of the low (*asfal safilin*), Allah saved him through repentance. Adam began his journey of return, completing the first and second stages of his development and entering the third stage. In this stage, he attained the station of the first prophethood on Earth. Here, he was considered a vicegerent (*khalifah*), and the angels engaged in a dialogue with their Lord concerning him. In the end, they were convinced and prostrated before him. From this station, Adam experienced a setback and was cast away again, but to a lesser degree than his initial expulsion from the Realm of Heavenly Kingdom (*malakut*) to the lowest level of the Realm of Dominion (*mulk*).

The prophethood that Adam attained during his journey of return was not the first prophethood in absolute terms, but it was the first successful prophethood. Adam himself was preceded on Earth by many other Adams. He was not the first Adam in absolute terms, but instead the first successful attempt among the numerous experiments with Adams.

The angels' objection, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood?" (2:30), was not without merit. It was based on their limited experience with certain [previous] models emanating from the lineage of clay, namely some of the earlier Adams. When Allah demonstrated to them that the continuous refinement in the members of



this lineage has no limit and that deficiencies in its constitutions are temporary, they were then convinced, submitted, and prostrated.

The earlier Adams, preceding Adam the father of present humanity, were repeatedly entrusted with vicegerency, and whenever they would fall short, they were punished with various forms of expulsion. The most recurrent being extinction, while select individuals were preserved, possessing advantages over their contemporaries yet insufficient to establish the desired requirements of wisdom. A clear example of this can be found in the story of Noah's people, even though they came at a much later stage.

The forms of expulsion for vicegerents who fell short of fulfilling the requirements of their position gradually softened, purely due to Divine Grace. Expulsion no longer took the form of physical extinction but became a "withdrawal after granting," a fall from the station of nearness, through their knowledge of Allah, to the station of distance through their ignorance of Him.

An example of this is found in Allah's account of one of the later Knowers: "And recite to them the story of the one to whom We gave Our signs, but he detached himself from them; so Satan pursued him, and he became one of the deviants. And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered to the earth and followed his desires. So his example is like that of the dog: if you chase it, it pants, or if you leave it, it still pants. That is the example of the people who denied Our signs. So relate the stories that perhaps they will give thought." (7:175–176)

This is the form of expulsion that preceded Adam's transgression. However, this very form of expulsion was further softened by Divine Grace, becoming a temporary distancing followed by repentance, forgiveness, and eventual nearness after remoteness. This was precisely what happened to Adam. His second expulsion was less severe, unlike the

profound remoteness of his first. It was during this event that the rebuke occurred: “And their Lord called to them, ‘Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy?’ They said, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.’” (7:22–23)

Their words were inspired by Allah, and He would not have inspired them to seek forgiveness unless He intended to forgive them. He did forgive them, and Adam’s transgression here resulted in a short-distance [expulsion], from which he quickly returned to nearness, as if no distance had ever occurred.

What occurred with Moses, Adam’s descendant, similarly demonstrates how quickly forgiveness restores proximity when Allah facilitates repentance after sin: “And he entered the city at a time of inattention by its people and found therein two men fighting: one from his faction and one from his enemy. And the one from his faction called for help against the one from his enemy, so Moses struck him and unintentionally killed him. Moses said, ‘This is from the work of Satan. Indeed, he is a manifest, misleading enemy.’ He said, ‘My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me,’ and He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. He said, ‘My Lord, for the favor You bestowed upon me, I will never be an assistant to criminals.’” (28:15–17)

The punishments for transgressions committed by the chosen ones continued to be mitigated through Divine Grace. By the time of the greatest beloved, Prophet Muhammad, Allah would present forgiveness even before reproach. Allah said to His beloved: “Allah has already forgiven you; why did you give them permission before it became clear to you who were truthful and you knew who were the liars?” (9:43)

## Religion Before Adam

Adam, the bearer of the first complete prophethood on Earth and the father of present humanity, was the first to fully uphold monotheism (*tawheed*) in most aspects of his life. The religion of monotheism was revealed to him by Allah through Gabriel. This, however, was not the first instance of Gabriel's communication with humans; he had previously interacted with the failed experiments of earlier Adams that preceded the successful experiment embodied in Adam, the father of present humanity.

The emergence of Adam as a prophet, a vicegerent, and the father of present humanity does not mark the appearance of human intellect. Instead, it signifies a stage in the journey of human intellect toward maturity. Human intellect had appeared long before Adam's time. This intellect is the Divine Spirit (*ruh ilahi*) that Allah breathed into the human structure, thereby binding it to Him, after it was previously drawn to the Earth by its inherent nature. Regarding the breathing of the Divine Spirit into humanity, Allah says: "And [mention] when your Lord said to the angels, 'I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud. And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down to him in prostration.'" (15:28–29)

One of the most significant phrases in these verses is "when I have proportioned him", which refers to the preparation of the vessel for the infusion of the Divine Spirit. This preparation spanned an incomprehensibly long duration, referred to by Allah as "a period of time". Allah says: "Has there come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?" (76:1)

The preparation for humanity to receive the Divine Spirit encompassed the first stage of development, the second stage, and a significant portion of the third stage. The Divine Spirit was not breathed into Adam the

vicegerent alone; it permeated all progeny of existence as the spirit flows into bodies. However, in humans, the proportion of the spirit was increased. In Adam, the vicegerent, this proportion increased even further, elevating him to the status of prophethood and vicegerency, and he was preserved at those ranks.

The infusion of this spirit into humanity prior to Adam served as preparation for the Divine Breath that bestowed prophethood and vicegerency upon him. When the Divine Spirit was breathed into pre-Adam humanity, it distinguished them from animals and brought upon them the obligation of worship, albeit in simple forms. This marked the beginning of religion.

In this early stage, there were no messengers other than the inherent logic of intellect. Religion at that time was polytheistic and idolatrous, but it represented the starting point of faith, a rudimentary form of Islam. With the advent of the messengers, inaugurated by the appearance of Adam, the father of humanity, the purpose of their mission was not to inform people of the existence of a Creator, for the intellect had already served as a messenger in this regard. Instead, the purpose of the messengers was to teach people how to know their Creator.

During the stage of pure physical evolution, Allah prepared humanity in a unique way. He did not make humans physically powerful enough to dispense with ingenuity in overcoming the challenges posed by their environment. Nor did He make them so weak and frail as to be unable to face reasonable challenges. Instead, He created them with balanced strength, enough to require the use of intellect for problem-solving while also being capable of executing plans devised through their intellect, at least in most situations.

Through this wise balance, intellect emerged, and humans began to rely on their intellect for devising strategies while using their physical strength

and structure to execute them. With this practice, the stage of combined physical-intellectual evolution entered the scene.

Allah created Adam in His image, Most Glorified and Most Exalted is He, and He created the entire cosmos in Adam's image. Allah created Adam for Himself and created the cosmos for Adam. He breathed His spirit into Adam and breathed Adam's spirit into the cosmos.

The breath of Allah's spirit into Adam occurred at the peak, while His breath [through Adam spirit] into the cosmos occurred at the base. This process of breathing is continuous, ascending in a spiral path that coils around itself, completing a full cycle every time it ascends through seven levels. The endpoint of each cycle lies above its starting point in elevation, resulting in a leap toward Allah in the journey of ascent.

This spiraling path converges inward as it ascends, drawing closer to its center with each stage. At the completion of the seventh stage, the cycle begins anew, with its endpoint becoming the starting point for the next cycle. This process continues endlessly (*sarmad*). Thus, the breath [of life] is infinite.

Regarding the infusion of the Divine Spirit into the human being through these seven stages, Allah says: "And We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a thickened fluid (sperm-drop) in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators." (23:12–14)

Similarly, regarding the infusion of the Divine Spirit into the structure of the cosmos through these seven stages, Allah says: "Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then

established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, chasing it rapidly; and the sun, the moon, and the stars, are subjected to His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the Worlds.” (7:54)

When Allah said, “then established Himself above the Throne” (7:54), it refers to the seventh phase of the infusion of the Divine Spirit.

The term *sulalah* refers to what is drawn out from something, extracted gently and with care. It also signifies lineage or offspring, as when one says, “He is of noble *sulalah* (lineage)” or “He is from a noble *sulalah* (lineage).” The process of extracting this *sulalah* from clay extended over an unimaginably vast span of time, as previously indicated.

After this extraction was completed and the vessel was prepared for the infusion of the Divine Spirit, marked by the emergence of higher animals, humans appeared by Allah's Grace. From that time onward, humans reproduced through the union of male and female. Here, the term “a sperm-drop in a firm lodging” refers to the mixing of the man's seminal fluid with the woman's ovum in the womb.

The phrase “then developed him into another creation” signifies the emergence of the upright form of humanity, distinct from animals both outwardly and inwardly. This emergence occurs as a leap, representing the culmination of the successive stages that were realized in the previous six phases, as previously noted. Throughout all these stages, the Divine infusion is ongoing and perpetual, continuing indefinitely through time.

The Torah also speaks of the infusion of the Spirit into the structure of the universe over seven days, saying: “And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their hosts. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work

which He had done. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because in it He rested from all His work which God had created to make." Genesis 2:1-3

Here, the depiction of God needing rest after work reflects an anthropomorphic conception, projecting human attributes onto the Divine. This stage is necessary in the progression of humanity's understanding of God. It is a stage that, when compared to earlier stages, seems complete but reveals its deficiency when contrasted with later, more advanced conceptions of Divine understanding that emerged as human thought developed and ascended.

In response to this anthropomorphic conception in the Torah, the Qur'an states: "And We created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days, and We were not touched by weariness." (50:38)

This Qur'anic expression presents a conception of Allah that is more appropriate and reflective of true understanding than the depiction in the Torah. However, the phrase in the Torah, "and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done", is not without purpose. It parallels the Qur'anic phrase "then established Himself above the Throne" and also "then developed him into another creation" (23:14).

All these expressions, despite their differences, point to the culmination of creation after the sixth phase with the emergence of the vicegerent, the complete human. With the appearance of the complete human, toil and hardship cease, and tranquility is achieved through nearness and peace.

The "days" of Allah are not like our days. They signify phases of His manifestations and revelations to His creation through His creation. This means the manifestation of His command (which is hidden) in His creation

(which is apparent) for His creation, humans, who possess intellect. Allah refers to this in the verse: “Then He established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, chasing it rapidly; and the sun, the moon, and the stars, are subjected by His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, Lord of the worlds.” (7:54)

The Throne symbolizes all creation, including luminous and subtle spirits, representing the Realm of Creation (*‘Alam al-Khalq*). The reference to night and day pertains to Earth (as well as motion and time), as they are related to Earth’s position relative to the sun.

The phrase “then established Himself above the Throne” signifies the dominance of Allah’s volitional authority over creation. This dominance is clarified by the statement “subjected by His command”, which represents the Realm of Command (*‘Alam al-Amr*). The Realm of Command presides over the Realm of Creation. To Allah belongs both the creation and the command.

This dominance is the infusion of the Divine Spirit into the cosmos, occurring over seven levels, referred to as seven days.

Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, subjected the cosmos to serve the infusion of the Divine Spirit into humanity by sowing enmity among living beings and between living beings and other elements. Allah says: “Indeed, among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them.” (64:14)

He also says: “Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy.” (35:6)

Thus, humanity was created amidst hostility: “We have certainly created man into hardship.” (90:4)



From the beginning, humans were tasked with striving for reconciliation, peace, and love to preserve their lives.

The early humans found themselves surrounded by hostilities in the natural environment where Allah created them. Allah fashioned them as balanced beings, neither so strong as to rely solely on their physical might for solving problems nor so weak and frail as to be incapable of meeting challenges. As a result, humans followed the path of “thought and action” to sustain their lives.

Allah guided humans, through their intellect and heart, to categorize the forces around them into friends and foes. Foes were further divided into those within their capacity to confront and those beyond their ability to overcome. Similarly, friends were divided into those who could reciprocate mutual benefit and those whose generosity and kindness far exceeded human capability to repay, due to their immense strength and resources. In this latter case, humans felt gratitude and acknowledged their inability to reciprocate.

This perspective guided humanity’s path in life. For foes encountered within their capacity, such as predatory animals and hostile humans, they engaged in confrontation, struggle, and cunning. They created tools to augment their strength and compensate for the lack of claws and fangs, which were no longer part of their natural constitution. They also used ingenuity, building homes in trees, caves, and mountain peaks. From these efforts emerged experimental science, which culminated, in the twentieth century, in splitting the atom.

For friends with whom mutual benefits could be exchanged, the resulting camaraderie led to living in larger communities than animals typically do, necessarily leading to considerations for the welfare of others. This

approach gave rise to social systems, which eventually led to customs, traditions, and conventions, the precursors to laws and legislation.

For the exceptional friends and formidable foes, humans resorted to appeasement. They sought to win their favor through offerings, displays of submission, and flattery. Toward the friends, they acted out of hope, and toward the enemies, out of fear. From this practice, the rituals of worship began, and thus, religion was born.

Indeed! The matter is not as simple as it may appear here. These are but words compelled by the necessity for brevity and simplification. They are general, tangential, and deficient in capturing the full picture. Yet, our excuse is that we do not presently possess a better means to convey this understanding.

## **The Conscious Mind and the Subconscious Mind**

We previously stated that intellect (*'aq'l*) is the Divine Spirit breathed into the human being. This breathing signifies the deliberate and overpowering dominance over elements and living beings. During the stage of living beings, this dominance manifested as the instigation of hostility, both among living beings themselves and between them and the various elements in their natural environment. However, this generalization has its exceptions, as some forces and elements could be classified as allies. Yet, even these allies were not entirely trustworthy, and fear of their actions and sudden shifts persisted. As such, fear remained the prevailing sentiment among living beings.

In truth, fear (or compulsion) was the force that extracted organic matter from inorganic matter, thereby giving rise to life. Fear also served as the whip that drove living beings into the competitive race of evolution. Life was born in the cradle of fear, enveloped by fear in all its stages. Without

intermittent glimpses of safety, fleeting moments of grace, and frequent bouts of oblivion, fear would have overwhelmed life and torn its essence asunder.

Even now, fear is the primary force driving life toward its ultimate perfection in nearness to Allah. Concerning this, Allah says: “And there is no city but that We will destroy it before the Day of Resurrection or punish it with a severe punishment. That has been inscribed in the Register. And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them. And We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We send not the signs except as a warning. And when We told you, ‘Indeed, your Lord has encompassed the people.’ And We did not make the sight which We showed you except as a trial for the people, as was the accursed tree [mentioned] in the Qur’an. And We threaten them, but it increases them not except in great transgression.” (17:58–60)

Reflect on the statements: “And We send not the signs except as a warning” (17:59) “And We threaten them” (17:60)

Then read: “O mankind, fear your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible thing. On the Day that you see it, every nursing mother will be distracted from that [child] she was nursing, and every pregnant woman will abort her pregnancy, and you will see the people [appearing] intoxicated while they are not intoxicated; but [it is that] the punishment of Allah is severe.” (22:1–2) Or: “Then how can you fear, if you disbelieve, a Day that will make the children white-haired? The heaven will break apart therefrom; ever is His promise fulfilled.” (73:17–18)

The best state for a believer is to perform righteous deeds while their heart remains fearful of meeting their Lord. Allah says: “And they who give what

they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord.” (23:60)

The ideal state of fear is one balanced by hope. Fear must not dominate to the point of despair, nor should it weaken to the point of heedlessness. Allah mentions this balance, saying: “Those whom they call upon seek means of access to their Lord, striving as to which of them would be nearest, and they hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is ever feared.” (17:57) And: “Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord [like one who does not]? Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who do not know?’ Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding.” (39:9)

This balance of hope and fear is a sign of the knowledge of Allah.

The wisdom behind fear and warning, lies in driving people toward Allah when they realize their incapacity to bear the burdens of life. Consider this depiction in the following verses: “And indeed, you invite them to a straight path. But indeed, those who do not believe in the Hereafter are deviating from the path. And if We gave them mercy and removed what was upon them of affliction, they would persist in their transgression, wandering blindly. And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they humbly supplicate. Until when We have opened before them a door of severe punishment, immediately they will be suddenly in despair. And it is He who produced for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful. And it is He who has multiplied you throughout the earth, and to Him you will be gathered. And it is He who gives life and causes death, and His is the alternation of the night and the day. Then will you not reason?” (23:73–80)

These are all depictions of fear, warnings of worldly punishment, and threats of torment in the Hereafter. This is part of Islam and the Qur'an, and it only came later, once human sensitivity had become refined enough to respond to lesser forms of deterrence.

Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, mentioned hearing, vision, and hearts in this context, saying: "And it is He who produced for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful." (23:78)

This indicates that these faculties were created through punishment, fear of punishment, and warnings of it, each corresponding to the levels of life.

Allah says: "Little are you grateful." (23:78) This statement can be understood more fully by recalling His words: "What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Most Appreciative and All Knowing." (4:147)

It is as though He is saying that the purpose of punishment is for Allah to refine the subtleties (*lata'if*) from your densities (*kathif*), enabling you to mirror Him in your attributes and become grateful and knowledgeable, as He is Most Appreciative and All Knowing.

In the previously cited verses, Allah also says: "And it is He who has multiplied you throughout the earth, and to Him you will be gathered." (23:79)

The term *dhara'akum* signifies dispersal and scattering, much like seeds are scattered. The phrase "and to Him you will be gathered" implies that you will be brought together, led, and presented. Our gathering toward Him occurs through aligning our attributes with His, achieved by extracting subtleties from our densities through chastisement, fear, and warnings of punishment.

The crux of the matter lies in His words: “And it is He who gives life and causes death, and His is the alternation of the night and the day. Then will you not reason?” (23:80)

The phrase “He gives life and causes death” points to the dominance over life itself. The “alternation of the night and the day” refers to the dominance over elements. From the dominance over elements emerged life, and from the dominance over life emerged intellect. Hence, Allah says: “Then will you not reason?”

Fear was born from this dominance, and from fear, life was born. Life, driven by fear, has ascended through levels, one above the other, until it reached the stage where human intellect emerged at the summit of the animal kingdom. Life continues to ascend, striving for the perfection of intellect and heart.

Intellect is the Divine Spirit breathed into humanity, with fear serving as the medium of this infusion. The direct cause of this infusion is the struggle among the varied elements that fill the natural environment, with Allah encompassing all of it. This infusion is continuous, infinite (*sarmadi*), and becomes gentler as life’s subtleties emerge from its densities and assert their dominance. A time will come when Allah replaces fear with security, war with peace, and enmity with love: “What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Most Appreciative and All Knowing.” (4:147)

Where, then, is the Divine Spirit infused? Was it infused into the body? Or into the intellect? Neither the body nor the intellect is the location of this infusion. The body is not the site of the infusion but a result of it. The same applies to the intellect; the brain, as the organ of intellect, is not the site of the infusion but its outcome. The infusion precedes both, just as a cause precedes its effect.

Where, then, is the location of the infusion?

The answer is, in the heart. And what is the heart? It is the essence (*dhat*) of the living being. It is the being itself, which lives inherently, whereas the body and the brain derive their life from it.

The heart is the essence of life; it is the source of life given to the body and the brain. It is not their servant but their master. Modern medicine, particularly the study of physiology, has erred in considering the heart merely as a pump for blood. The reality aligns with what religion has always maintained. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Verily, in the body is a morsel of flesh; if it is sound, the entire body is sound; and if it is corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart."

This corruption does not solely refer to physical corruption that results in physical death but extends to moral and spiritual corruption, which leads to spiritual death, through disbelief (*kufr*).

In the Qur'an, the emphasis is consistently placed on the heart, with the intellect, represented by the brain and the body, mentioned only secondarily. Allah says: "Indeed, in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or who listens while being mindful." (50:37)

Here, the reminder is primarily for one who possesses an intelligent heart, "whoever has a heart." The use of the indefinite form (*qalb*) signifies exaltation and importance. If one does not possess this kind of heart, the reminder is for one who has a conscious intellect, "or who listens while being mindful." The phrase "who listens" refers to lending an ear, an indication of the physical organ, and by extension, the body. The phrase "while being mindful" implies attentiveness during listening, referring to the faculties of the brain, the intellect.

Verses emphasizing the centrality of the heart are numerous throughout the Qur'an. While a comprehensive listing is beyond the scope of this discussion, those interested can consult them on their own. Here, we cite three verses that highlight the heart's significance in defining the essence of humanity. Allah says through the words of Abraham: "And do not disgrace me on the Day they are resurrected, the Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart." (26:87–89)

Ultimately, there is no salvation from the disgrace of punishment or the punishment of disgrace except through the purity of the heart.

Would the heart's importance be any clearer if we pointed out that every creature has a heart, while not all have intellects? No known living being, no matter how small or ethereal, lacks a heart. The heart and the body emerge simultaneously; the body is the heart's home, its counterpart, and its partner. This duality is referenced in the verse: "Exalted is He who created all pairs, from what the earth grows, and from themselves, and from that which they do not know." (36:36)

Here, "from themselves" refers to the heart and the body. While the body is the heart's home, the heart is the house of the Lord. As such, the heart is paired with the Divine, an allusion to this is found in [the verse]: "and from that which they do not know."

The senses act as windows of this home, allowing light and fresh air to reach the resident. Through these senses, the resident - symbolizing the heart, also observes the external worlds. The intellect, as the commander of the senses, serves as the heart's watchman and loyal guardian, alerting it to impending dangers and protecting it whenever possible.



The heart is the house of Allah; it is the sacred sanctuary (*haram*) of safety, as Allah says: “So let them deny what We have provided them, and let them enjoy themselves, for they are going to know. Have they not seen that We made [Mecca] a safe sanctuary, while people are being taken away all around them? Then in falsehood do they believe, and in the favor of Allah they disbelieve?” (29:66–67)

The Kaaba in Mecca is the House of Allah in the outward sense of the law (*zahir al-shari’ah*), while the heart within the chest is the House of Allah in reality (*haqiqah*). Allah has made both of His Houses safe from fear. Regarding the Quraysh [the powerful Arabian tribe that guarded the Kaaba], Allah says: “For the accustomed security of the Quraysh, their accustomed security in [guarding] the caravans of winter and summer, let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger, and made them safe from fear.” (106:1–4)

The heart, at its core, is a sanctuary free from fear; fear only touches its periphery. This is the meaning of His words: “We made [Mecca] a safe sanctuary, while people are being taken away all around them.” (29:67)

As we previously established, Allah infused the Divine Spirit into humanity through the medium of fear, and the locus of this infusion is the heart. Despite being the site of this infusion, the heart remains a sanctuary immune to fear. To protect this sanctuary, Allah created the body as its shield, developing it alongside the heart to act as its armor against fear. The intellect followed, aiding in the ultimate triumph over fear.

When fear is overcome, by Allah’s Grace and through the intellect, the infusion of the Divine Spirit into the human heart, will occur through gentleness, security, peace, and love. As long as the infusion originates from external elements, fear prevails, driven by external forces. But the

time will come when the infusion originates from within, and on that day, fear will be vanquished forever.

Allah addresses these two stages of infusion in His words: "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?" (41:53)

The phrase "Our signs on the horizons" refers to the infusion of external elements into the body by the overpowering Will (*qahr iradi*). The phrase "and within themselves" refers to the infusion of elements through fear into the body and brain, or intellect. The conclusion, "until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth," signifies the attainment of certainty in monotheism (*tawheed*). At this point, fear will be replaced by security and peace, as indicated in: "But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"

The heart is an organ in which the *fu'ad* functions. The *fu'ad* (unified being) represents the capacity for unitary perception (*idrak watari*). The body and brain are organs in which the intellect functions, representing the capacity for binary perception (*idrak shafi*).

In the stage of binary perception, infusion originates externally, and fear is present. In the stage of unitary perception, infusion originates internally: "But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"

This is the station of essence-to-essence infusion, the infusion of the Divine Essence into the human heart. Here, fear has no place.

In unitary perception, multiplicity ceases, leaving only unity. The perceiver, the act of perception, and the object perceived all become one. Hence, the heart and the *fu'ad* are one and the same.

What is the subconscious mind? It is the heart, representing unitary [or singular] perception.

What is the conscious mind? It is the intellect, representing binary perception.

## **The Conscious Mind and Its Emergence**

The conscious mind emerged in two stages: the stage of the Law of the Jungle and the stage of the Law of Justice.

The first stage, governed by the Law of the Jungle, has already been touched upon in the discussion of fear, and there is no need to elaborate further here, especially as this introduction has grown lengthy and is not intended to delve into exhaustive detail.

The second stage, governed by the Law of Justice, marks the beginning of human intellect, human society, religion, and custom, the latter being the foundation of all laws.

We previously stated that Allah, Most Glorified and Most Exalted, created human lineage as a balance. Humans were neither so strong that they could solve their problems solely through physical strength nor so weak and frail as to be unable to face their adversaries. Through this Divine wisdom, Allah guided humanity along the path of “thought and action” together, thinking and executing. As a result, the course of human development began to diverge outwardly from the evolution of other animals and insects. In its earliest stages, humanity discovered religion and society, two of the most beneficial developments ever known. We

have discussed the emergence of society in our book *The Second Message of Islam*, which interested readers may consult for further insights.

In this stage, fear dominated the scene entirely; life was reduced to predator and prey, and even the predator was itself prey to a larger predator. This period deeply ingrained fear into the human psyche, compelling humans to seek security within their own kind. They formed groups with other vulnerable creatures, typically those who were also prey to clawed and sharp-toothed predators. Thus, society began to take shape, and animals became domesticated.

Living in groups required humans to willingly, or forcibly, sacrifice significant portions of their freedom. It is impossible to live in any human community without adhering to specific boundaries that limit actions harmful to others. These boundaries eventually gave rise to laws.

Most likely, the first such boundaries revolved around regulating sexual instincts, since such sexual jealousy is a trait shared by humans and animals alike. It is rare to find an animal or bird that does not guard its mate. This admirable trait ushered humanity into a new era of dignity.

It is believed that the second boundary pertained to protecting private property and ensuring its security.

With the safeguarding of spouses and private property, human society became viable.

However, this transition was far from easy. For early humans, it was one of the greatest challenges to impose self-restraint and control over impulses. It was equally challenging for society to enforce penalties on

those who violated behavioral norms and customs upheld across generations.

The concept of gods and religion emerged at the dawn of this stage. Along with the notion of religion came the belief in an afterlife, depicted in various forms, where security or fear depended on actions in this life: adherence to customs (*'urf*) was linked to doing good, while violations of customs were associated with evil deeds.

The gods were attributed with qualities that made them formidable, powerful, and all-seeing. They were divided into those who befriended, assisted, and protected those who did good, providing sustenance and safety, and those who dominated evildoers, abandoning them to the terrifying realms of darkness.

Severe punishments, including widespread execution, were imposed for even minor breaches of accepted norms. The individual held little importance in the early stages of society; instead, the focus was entirely on the community. This prioritization was profoundly wise for two reasons. First, society was nascent and fragile, requiring rigorous adherence to its foundational principles for stability. Second, the individual, still influenced by animalistic tendencies, was coarse and unrefined, necessitating strict and forceful measures to curb impulsive behaviors.

Thus, the earliest customs, though not consciously devised by the patriarchs of families, who formed the nucleus of early governance, were prudent and balanced, simultaneously safeguarding the interests of both the individual and the community. This reflects the wisdom of the Supreme Planner, who guided life from the depths of its humiliation and degradation to the heights of its dignity and honor.

Even at this stage, the individual lived amid fear. However, a significant development occurred; they could now live with a measure of security, relative to that daunting period, by demonstrating loyalty to the community and avoiding violations of its customs. Not only did this provide security, but it also offered the privilege of befriending the gods, the benevolent spirits whose wings seemed to hover protectively above, as well as forming bonds with the virtuous men and women of the community.

Thus, motivated by both fear and hope, humans began to develop the intelligence to distinguish between what was appropriate and inappropriate. They also cultivated the willpower to discipline innate desires, directing them along the path of duty. This involved foregoing immediate gratification in favor of future satisfaction, whether in the company of the gods in this life or the next, or through the approval, recognition, and praise of the community.

Through the tension between immediate pleasures and the observance of communal duties, intellect emerged to discern, and willpower arose to act. This marked the beginning of human intellect, as it introduced the concept of value into human life. With it came the consideration of the future, the exploration of imagination, and the journey into the unknown.

At this level of human intellect, special religion began to take shape, gradually refining itself from general religion, just as the sun's heat distills fresh river water from the saltwater of the sea.

As previously mentioned, the Divine Spirit breathed into the human structure is the intellect (*'aql*). We also stated that Allah infused it into humanity through the medium of fear, which arose from the instigation of enmity among living beings and between living beings and the elements within the natural environment where Allah had placed life.

Now, we assert that the emergence of human intellect in humanity marked a fundamental shift in the method of infusing the Divine Spirit. The path opened for humans, by Allah's Grace and through the gift of knowledge, to escape the torment of fear if they adhered to the duties prescribed by wisdom. This required resisting their desires.

Humans were not left in confusion about their duties. Allah undertook to guide them by sending messengers of light, angels, to supplement the intuitions of the intellects, which were born in darkness, with the means to properly perceive and understand. Allah says: "And We would not punish until We sent a messenger." (17:15)

The first messengers were the elements that, through fear, brought forth the body from the heart. These same messengers, through fear, brought forth the senses from the body, and then, through fear again, brought forth the intellect from the senses. The second messengers are the messengers of intellect to each individual human. The third messengers are the messengers of wise, intelligent, and experienced, minds to those who are naïve and unrefined. The fourth messengers are the pure angels who connect with qualified humans, guiding them and others toward the path of wisdom and righteousness, which leads to liberation from fear and the ignorance that necessitates fear. Allah says: "Those who have believed and not mixed their belief with injustice, those will have security, and they are [rightly] guided." (6:82)

The fifth messengers are the honored human messengers sent to other accountable humans, bringing them the clear signs of heaven through the faithful pathways of revelation. The sixth messengers are the messengers of intellects disciplined by the etiquette of truth (*adab al-haqq*) and reality (*adab al-haqiqah*) to the hearts that have expanded to encompass all of existence, for they are the home of the Absolute.

Finally, the seventh messengers are the messengers of these hearts, to and from themselves, without any intermediary, for nothing exists in the universe but them.

The stage of the Law of Justice continues to prevail, gradually overtaking the Law of the Jungle by sheer Grace. Today, both share influence, but the rule of the Law of Justice will eventually prevail when humans overcome fear, achieve unity within themselves, and transcend division.

Through fear and hope, humans began to control their impulses and desires, disciplining their appetites with their intellects to avoid actions that would provoke the wrath of the gods or the community and invite punishment, whether immediate or delayed.

From this control arose repression [of urges], leading to a division within the personality. Today, much of the repression we suffer stems from the collective legacy of humanity's long history, while some originates from personal experiences shaped by one's natural and social environment during their short lifetime.

Repression was imposed in the past and continues to be imposed by society's and individuals' perception of their duty, whether through custom or religious law. Even now, after humanity has traversed such a long history, this perception remains uninformed, flawed, and extremely unwise. What, then, can one imagine about the nature of this repression when it first began amongst the earliest humans?

Repression is a significant stage in our journey toward perfection. It is not inherently evil; the harm arises from remaining complacent in repression and failing to strive for liberation from it. Since repression is a result of fear, freedom from repression is only achieved by overcoming fear. Overcoming



fear marks the transition into the second and final stage of our journey to perfection.

Fear is conquered through acquiring knowledge, by understanding things as they truly are, hidden behind the veils of the unseen (*ghayb*). If the unseen were revealed to us, fear would be vanquished. Allah says about the jinn of Solomon: “And when We decreed for him death, nothing indicated to them his death except a creature of the earth eating his staff. But when he fell, it became clear to the jinn that if they had known the unseen, they would not have remained in humiliating torment.” (34:14)

And Allah says, through the words of His beloved Prophet: “Say, ‘I hold not for myself benefit or harm, except what Allah has willed. And if I knew the unseen, I could have acquired much good, and no harm would have touched me. I am not but a warner and a bringer of good tidings to a people who believe.’” (7:188)

The unseen (*ghayb*) is Allah. He means this when He says: “Say, ‘None in the heavens and earth knows the unseen except Allah, and they do not perceive when they will be resurrected.’” (27:65)

The phrase “and they do not perceive” points to the deficiency in our lives due to the lack of knowledge, a deficiency that subjects us to fear. Fear has caused parts of us to become numb, serving as a shield for other parts, thereby dulling our perception. We await the resurrection, through knowledge, of those parts that fear has rendered dormant.

This resurrection is certain, but its timing remains unknown to us. The use of the interrogative “when” points to the time of this awakening. The phrase “they will be resurrected” indicates that ignorance has left us spiritually dead, awaiting revival through knowledge.

We have said that the knowledge which brings life is the understanding of things as they are in reality. And reality itself is Allah. Reality and the unseen are synonymous with absolute knowledge, which resides within us in a latent state, only manifesting in time and space. What we realize of the Absolute in time and space is relative knowledge, the truth (*al-haqq*). Truth is the aspect of things as they face reality (*al-haqiqah*).

We cannot realize any part of the Absolute unless we adopt what is known as “the etiquette of time” (*adab al-waqt*), by being present in the current moment of time. The present moment is the essence of time, a middle point between two opposites, both of which are illusions and, in the scope of Ultimate Truth, falsehoods. These opposites are justified only by the wisdom behind the creation of pairs. Allah says: “And of all things We created two pairs; so that you might remember. So flee to Allah. Indeed, I am to you from Him a clear warner.” (51:49–50)

The wisdom in the creation of pairs lies in the phrase “so that you might remember,” meaning perhaps you will learn, because our intellect only comprehends things through their opposites. This is what we referred to earlier when we described intellect as the faculty of binary perception (*idrak shaf'i*). Then Allah commands: “So flee to Allah.” Flee from both opposites to the One who has no opposite.

Let us return to the concept of time. We have stated that the present moment is its essence, a middle point between two illusions. These two illusions are the past and the future. From the perspective of Ultimate Truth, neither the past nor the future is time; they are only regarded as time from the perspective of [human] wisdom. The only entity that is truly time, in the ultimate sense, is the present moment.

This present moment is so infinitesimally small that it nearly escapes the realm of time. When it does transcend time, it merges with the Absolute,

becoming indistinguishable from it. This is a topic that requires extensive explanation, which neither time nor space allows us to cover here. Perhaps we shall return to it on another occasion.

What matters to us here is the phrase “the etiquette of time” (*Adab al-Waqt*) that we mentioned earlier. The etiquette of time refers to being fully present in the current moment, for it contains the essence of Allah. It is neither in the past nor in the future. The present moment represents the heart, while the past and the future represent the brain, each of the latter representing one half, each represents a wing of the bird, the bird of time. The emergence of the body first, followed by the intellect, both originating from the heart, owes its existence to Allah, as well as to the interplay of the past and future.

Fear has pulled us away from living fully in the present moment, tethering us to the future. At the same time, it has anchored us to the past. Thus, our lives have become a "pendulum swing" between the past and the future, and we do not linger in the present moment except as a brief transition. While passing through the present, we absorb only as much of life as we can bear. Were we not bound to the past and the future, we would not remain in the present momentarily, as we transition, and our incomplete lives would burn out. This is because the present moment, as it reaches its end, contains absolute life, and we, as yet, have not prepared ourselves from within to receive from the Absolute, except in very small measure, a measure that gradually increases through Divine Grace, over time.

The past and future act as veils that separate us from the present moment. We live in the present only to the extent that our incomplete lives allow, a state that advances toward completion incrementally, but only by “a measure decreed.”

Our Sufi friends say, “The veil is a mercy,” and they specifically mean this in the present context. For when the Grand Truth unveils itself to unprepared vessels, the result is “obliteration” (*saḥq*), where reason is overwhelmed. And with the loss of reason, the potential for further growth ceases.

The two veils mentioned earlier, the past and the future, are referenced in the following verse: “It is the same [to Him] concerning you whether one conceals [their] speech or publicizes it and whether one is hidden by night or conspicuous [among others] by day. For each one has successive [angels] before and behind who protect them by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron.” (13:10–11)

The phrase “whether one conceals [their] speech” refers to inorganic matter, while “or publicizes it” refers to organic matter, encompassing all levels of life. “For each one has successive [angels]” refers to veils (*ḥujub*), which “protect them by the decree of Allah” from the overwhelming unitary manifestation (*tajalli witrī*), so that they are not annihilated by its majesty.

The verse “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves” implies, among other things, that the unitary manifestation does not occur unless the recipient has prepared themselves to bear such a momentous event.

Even in matters less than the unitary manifestation, Allah did not reveal His speech to His beloved Prophet until the Prophet’s heart had been prepared through prolonged devotion in solitude. Allah emphasized this preparation by saying: “O you who wraps himself [in garments], arise [to pray] the night, except for a little, half of it, or subtract from it a little, or add

to it, and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation. Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word." (73:1–5)

When Moses requested the lifting of these veils without adequately preparing himself for the unitary manifestation, Allah, in His infinite mercy, denied his request. Allah says: "And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, 'My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You.' [Allah] said, 'You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.' But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, 'Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers.' [Allah] said, 'O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]. So take what I have given you and be among the grateful.'" (7:143–144)

This was not a prohibition against Moses seeking further closeness to Allah but a directive to pursue it through adherence to Divine law (*shari'a*), thereby preparing himself for greater proximity. Such preparation acts as a plea through action, a form of supplication made by one's state of being. Supplication in this manner is never denied or delayed. Allah says: "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." (40:60)

In this instance, Allah spared Moses by using the mountain as a substitute, providing him with a lesson. Through this lesson, Moses experienced a form of manifestation. The mountain served as an intermediary, preventing the full and overwhelming unitary manifestation (*tajalli watari*).

## **The Unity of the Human Being**

Hearts are sanctuaries free from fear because they are the home of Allah. We have previously mentioned this, and it is worth emphasizing that this

applies to all hearts, even those of inorganic matter, which we conventionally describe as "dead."

Regarding the innate purity of hearts in their original creation, the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "Every child is born upon the *fitrah* (natural disposition). It is his parents who make him Jewish, Christian, or Zoroastrian."

Similarly, Allah says about the Jews: "And they said, 'Our hearts are wrapped.' Rather, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so little is it that they believe." (2:88)

He also says: "So for their breaking of the covenant, and their disbelief in the signs of Allah, and their killing of the prophets without right, and their saying, 'Our hearts are wrapped', instead, Allah has set a seal upon them for their disbelief, so they believe not, except for a few." (4:155)

Even the disbeliever is not completely devoid of faith, for within their heart, within their subconscious mind, lies the truth. However, this truth is veiled from the conscious mind by thick barriers. These veils are what Allah, Blessed and Exalted, referred to when He said: "No! Instead, what they used to earn has rusted upon their hearts. No! Indeed, they will be veiled from their Lord that Day." (83:14–15)

The "rust" here refers to corruption, impurity, and bad conduct. All of this stems from repression (*kabt*) that began with the emergence of human society and continues to this day. It is rooted in illusions, superstitions, and falsehoods that have accompanied our understanding of Allah, the realities of things, and what is required of us toward ourselves, towards Allah, and towards the community. This phase, which we have referred to as "the struggle between body and intellect," will, by Allah's Grace and

Guidance, eventually give way to the phase of harmony between body and intellect.

Since hearts, in their innermost essence, have been made sanctuaries of peace by Allah, the zone of repression does not occur within them. Instead, it resides in the *kharṭūm*, "confluence" or "isthmus" located at the meeting point of the two seas: the conscious and subconscious minds. Allah refers to this in His words: "He set forth the two seas that meet together. Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses." (55:19–20)

This *kharṭūm* is the locus of the "human within the human", the abode of the complete human within the evolving human, which is an ongoing project of perfection.

Just as the process of formation and development follows a spiral path, so too does repression. It is a spiral that revolves around a center.

The *Complete Human* emerges from the [Qur'anic] union of Moses, representing intellect (*ʿaql*), with Khidr, representing the heart (*qalb*), on the condition that Moses demonstrates patience and steadfastness in the journey. However, as recounted in the Qur'an, Moses, the prophet of the law (*shari'a*), could not endure the companionship of Khidr, the sage of ultimate truth (*haqiqa*): "And when Moses said to his servant, 'I will not cease [traveling] until I reach the junction of the two seas or continue for a long period.' But when they reached the junction between them, they forgot their fish, and it took its course into the sea, slipping away. So when they had passed beyond it, [Moses] said to his servant, 'Bring us our morning meal. We have certainly suffered in this, our journey, [much] fatigue.' He said, 'Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I forgot the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan, that I should mention it. And it took its course into the sea amazingly.' [Moses] said, 'That is what we were

seeking.’ So they returned, following their footprints. And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom We had given mercy from Us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge. Moses said to him, ‘May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgment?’ He said, ‘Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience. And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?’” (18:60–68)

Moses could not endure, for he was a prophet of the law and deeply committed to its principles. Had he worked through his *shari’a* until he attained a truth akin to Khidr’s, he might have been able to persevere.

The task before us, in this era, is to cultivate our intellects through worship so they harmonize with our hearts without causing disruption or haste. In doing so, we can live illuminated and illuminating lives, balanced between the horizons of our intellect and our hearts, with our *shari’a* (laws) as the moonlight, and our *haqiqa* (reality) as the sunlight, preserving the distinction between them without discord: “It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.” (36:40)

Within each of us lies a zone of repression (*kabt*), a terrifying prison darker than the infamous Bastille. This prison is devoid of light, air, and even external sound. Imprisoned within it are the innocent, the oppressed, and the free-spirited, confined without trial. The prison’s gates are guarded by cruel and severe wardens who subjugate the prisoners, forcing them into submission, robbing them of freedom, and, in some cases, immobilizing them. Yet, all these prisoners remain alive, yearning for liberation.

They face two paths: to rise against their captors and storm the gates, spilling out in a human torrent, or to receive justice, fairness, and profound understanding from us. Efforts toward understanding have manifested in



lifestyles and ideologies like the "hippie" movement and the absurdist philosophy of "the theatre of the absurd" in Europe and America. These are expressions of confusion, anxiety, and ignorance of the root problem. Nevertheless, they hold the virtue of acknowledging this tragedy that most choose to ignore. For this reason, we do not view these youth movements, such as the hippies, as symptoms of illness but rather as signs of vitality. This belief strengthens our conviction that we are living in the final days of the *organic-intellectual evolutionary phase*.

To address this tragedy, one must delve deeply into its origins, which trace back to the dawn of human intellect. Fear and ignorance dominated the judges and jailers of these oppressed. Freedom can only be restored to the oppressed when those who judge and guard them liberate themselves from fear and ignorance. Such liberation comes only through knowledge of things as they truly are.

The first truth revealed by this knowledge is that humans were created to be free. The fact that humans were created weak should not obscure this reality. Weakness is a phase; during it, humanity has sold its freedom. The time has now come to reclaim this freedom, through collective action and individual effort.

The first contribution that collective action can offer is organizing society under the rule of justice rather than the law of the jungle. This would allow us to combat fear, thereby avoiding the unnecessary increase of "prisoners" (repression). The rule of justice dictates that there is no distinction between the strong and the weak, but rather between the rightful and the wrongful. The rightful receives their due even if they are powerless, while the wrongful [one] is held accountable by the authority of justice, even if they are a [powerful] tyrant.

To combat fear, the rule of justice also affirms that all people are equal participants in the blessings of the earth and in assuming power, which is the essence of socialism and democracy, both of which are upheld by social justice.

The second truth revealed by the reality of things is that existence is entirely good. There is no inherent evil in its essence; evil exists only in its appearances. The root of evil lies in our ignorance of this truth. Therefore, there is no [ultimate] justification for fear.

We cannot fully realize this great truth unless we receive knowledge directly from Allah without intermediaries. This direct reception is only possible when we encounter Allah. Such an encounter is unattainable unless we live in alignment with the principle of *Adab Al-Waqt* (the etiquette of time), which is to live in the present moment without being preoccupied with the past or the future. This is why prayer was prescribed. This is the essence of prayer. These concepts are elaborated upon in detail in this book, which we reintroduce with this extensive and comprehensive preface.

Practicing *The Etiquette of Time* leads to the essence of Allah. By Allah's Grace, it unifies the human self by resolving the psychological knots that have fragmented our personalities and caused abnormalities at all levels and in all forms. Moreover, practicing *The Etiquette of Time* inaugurates the new era, the fourth stage of human evolution, characterized by pure intellectual development, as discussed earlier and promised to be further elaborated.

However, in this context, we cannot delve deeply into its details. Instead, suffice us to say what has already been presented regarding it in this preface.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this preface has expanded extensively, and my constant effort throughout its composition has been to rein in its breadth. However, the subject matter is inherently vast. We shall dedicate an independent work to it entitled *Islam: A Psychology*, with Allah's guidance and reliance upon Him.

In any case, Allah, Blessed and Exalted, has enabled us to achieve our intended purpose for this preface. I sincerely hope that Allah benefits people through it, prompting them to approach the reading of *The Message of Prayer* with an expectation of immediate and tangible benefit from their prayer. For a deferred reward that does not begin with a present benefit today should not be anticipated.

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

"This day I have perfected for you your religion,  
and completed My favor upon you,  
and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5:3)

We praise You, O Allah, without limit, and we seek Your Guidance and Assistance.

## Glad Tidings

Islam is returning soon, by Allah's Grace and Support. It will return because the bounty of Qur'an remains untouched, its outer seals are all that the predecessors have unlocked. It will return because humanity has become ready for it, both in its needs and capacity. It will return as light without fire, for its fire, by Allah's Grace and through contemporary human readiness, has become like the fire of Ibrahim (Abraham), cool and peaceful.

The age we live in today is an age of water, having left behind the age of fire. It is a watery age because it is the age of science, the material science that dominates today, and the Divine science, the knowledge of Allah, which will crown and guide the material science of tomorrow. In the age of science, freedom is preserved, bloodshed is prevented, and the true scales of justice are established.

The great poet Al-Busiri, master of [Prophet's] praise, said:

*"Two things eliminate falsehood -  
A bestowed light or spilled blood."*

We have left behind the era of spilled blood, just as we have left behind the fiery age, and now we stand at the threshold of the dawning light.

Indeed, this light has already risen over the highest peaks of humanity's vanguard and will soon flood the earth from all directions.

On that day, the tongues of both human character and speech will proclaim the words of the Most Generous and Exalted: *"Praise be to Allah, who has fulfilled His promise to us and made us inherit the earth so we may dwell in Paradise wherever we wish. What an excellent reward for the workers!"* (39:74)

## **Introduction to the Study**

Peace is the ultimate necessity for humanity today. It is a matter of life or death. The advancements in modern transportation, continuously shrinking the barriers of time and space, have rendered this planet too small for a divided, armed, and warring humanity.

Despite humanity's extensive experience with warfare, which has shown that wars do not resolve conflicts, the advent of modern weapons of mass destruction has introduced a new reality: war is no longer just ineffective; it is a calamity for both the defeated and the victor. It has become clear that if a modern scientific war breaks out, there will be no winner or loser, only the annihilation of contemporary civilization and a setback in the progress for which humanity has paid dearly with its sweat, tears, and blood.

Humanity now stands at a crossroads with little time to linger in hesitation or indulge in efforts devoid of wisdom and insight. It must choose one of two paths: either ascend towards the peaks of civilization and peace or descend into the abyss of barbarism and warfare. Modern wars, signify only ruin and destruction. For this reason, we stated earlier that the need for peace today is a matter of life or death.

## **The New Civilization**

Yet peace cannot be achieved without a new civilization, or, rather, a new spirit infused into the structure of the present Western modernized, mechanized society, redirecting it and instilling it with new values. The current world - modernized, mechanized, and Western - is characterized by grand external appearances, large-scale production, and sprawling cities. It is a technological collective where individuals are subjugated to

the system that governs it. The new civilized society that will enable peace must prioritize refined internal values, creating a civilization in which the individual utilizes the collective as a means to achieve inner freedom while enabling others to attain the same freedom.

Our present era may be described as the age of the atom or the exploration of outer space, but perhaps most aptly, it is the age of the-man-in-the-street, the age of the ordinary unremarkable individual. This is the one upon whom the blazing sun of modern life has shone, compelling them to rise, with staff in hand, to wander the pathways in search of life, freedom, and self. These are the things mankind has been distracted from throughout the long ages of its recorded and unrecorded history. This history is now being reviewed and rewritten in light of new values.

These new values are what will redirect the current Western mechanized and modernized societies towards a new path, laying the foundation for this new civilization.

## **Western Civilization: Two Faces**

The current Western mechanized and modernized society is like a coin with two faces, one bright and radiant, the other ugly and dark. The bright face reflects its prowess in scientific discoveries, as it harnesses material forces to enrich human life and employ machinery to assist humanity. The ugly face, however, reveals its failure to wisely pursue peace. This failure has led it to focus on warfare, spending exponentially more on tools of destruction than on the infrastructure of peace and development.

In truth, the inability to reconcile these two needs, the need of the individual and the need of the community, has remained a flaw in social thought throughout all eras of human intellectual history.

The ugly face of modern Western mechanized and modernized society is its social philosophy, which falls short of reconciling the needs of the individual with those of the community. The individual's need for absolute individual freedom and the community's need for comprehensive social justice. Indeed, the inability to reconcile these two needs, the need of the individual and the need of the community, has remained a flaw in social thought throughout the history of human philosophy.

Even today, achieving this reconciliation remains the summit against which the glaring deficiencies of philosophical doctrines and intellectual frameworks are measured. It can be said that the unique virtue of Islam becomes most apparent, and utterly unmatched, when compared to other ideologies in addressing this lofty challenge.

## **The Merit of Monotheism**

Through the principle of monotheism (*Tawhid*), Islam has resolved the apparent contradiction, at first glance, between the individual's need for absolute individual freedom and the community's need for comprehensive social justice. It has successfully aligned these two needs into a harmonious system, where the individual's pursuit of absolute freedom extends seamlessly into the collective's pursuit of justice. Put differently, Islam has made the organization of the community a means to achieve individual freedom.

This remarkable harmonization is possible because Islamic legislation operates on two levels: the level of the collective and the level of the individual. Legislation at the collective level is known as the jurisprudence of transactions (*mu'amalat*), while legislation at the individual level is known as the jurisprudence of worship (*'ibadat*). The defining feature of transactional jurisprudence is that it governs relationships between



people. The defining feature of worship jurisprudence is that it governs the relationship between the individual and the Creator.

However, this does not mean that these two forms of legislation are isolated from one another. Rather, they are two complementary aspects of a unified system of law, with one unable to exist without the other. Transactional jurisprudence, in a sense, represents worship at a coarser level, while the jurisprudence of worship represents transactions at a refined level. This is because the emphasis on individualism is more pronounced in acts of worship than in transactions.

## Individuality as the Core Principle

Individuality lies at the heart of everything; it is the essence of accountability and honor in Islamic teachings. Islam emphasizes this principle, as the scales of justice on the Day of Judgment are set up for individuals, not groups. Allah says: *“No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another”* (6:164), *“Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it”* (99:7-8), and again *“And We inherit him in what he says, and he will come to Us alone”* (19:80). Further, Allah states: *“There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant. He has enumerated them and counted them a [precise] counting. And all of them are coming to Him on the Day of Resurrection alone”* (19:93-95). Finally, He reminds: *“And you have come to Us alone, just as We created you the first time”* (6:94).

Thus, in Islam, the individual is the primary focus of legislation, while the community serves as a secondary aspect, functioning to enhance individual development. The individual can only achieve completeness through their experiences within the community. Solitary worship serves

as a school for theoretical preparation, but its practical application only occurs through interactions within the community and dealing with its members.

Worship holds no value unless it manifests in how one treats others, as this treatment itself is an act of worship. The Infallible [Prophet] said: *“Religion is proper interaction.”* Islamic legislation, [properly understood], whether in the form of penalties or retributive justice, is designed to complement acts of worship in cultivating individuals who benefit themselves first and the community second.

To illustrate this, consider the [Islamic Law] regarding the punishment for theft, one of the four fundamental punishments (*hudud*). If a thief steals less than the prescribed amount, they are not to be amputated. Similarly, If they steal the prescribed amount but it is not from a secure place, the punishment is not applied. If they steal the prescribed amount from a secure place, the matter is examined: if they are starving to the point of desperation, they are not to be amputated; if they are not hungry, it is asked whether they are sick. If they are sick, they are not to be amputated, but rather treated. Only If the punishment is not removed by any mitigating circumstances, and all the elements of theft are firmly established, is the hand to be amputated.

The wisdom behind the amputation relates to the connection between the mind and the hand. A person who is ignorant tends to attempt to solve their problems with their hands. If overwhelmed by an argument, they may resort to violence. But what Allah seeks from His creation are their hearts and minds. *“It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah, but it is piety from you that reaches Him”* (22:37).

The relationship between the hand and the mind reveals the wisdom of the Wisest Legislator, who deemed that when the hand is disabled by

amputation, the mind becomes active. It awakens and devises methods of interaction that are closer to peaceful resolutions than to confrontational ones. Thus, through this amputation, which was unavoidable, a benefit for the individual is achieved by stimulating their mind, and a benefit for the community is secured by protecting its rights from being violated. This is what we meant earlier when we said that the laws of Islam, whether in punishments or retribution, are designed to cooperate with the laws of worship in nurturing the individual in a way that benefits them first, and the community second.

The peace we seek, as mentioned in the prelude to this discussion, can only prevail on earth when each individual finds peace within themselves. Armed and unarmed conflicts between groups are but reflections of the inner turmoil within individuals. Turmoil that stems from the division between their outward actions and hidden thoughts. True peace within the self is achieved when the individual attains harmony between their thought, speech, and action.

Such harmony is realized when a person thinks as they wish, speaks as they think, and acts as they speak, ensuring that their actions bring only good and benefit to others. Once this state is achieved, the individual transcends societal laws, as their self-discipline and virtuous conduct elevate them. For such individuals, the Qur'anic principle applies: *"No blame shall be upon those who do good"* (9:91).

When the individual attains this level of moral and personal completeness, they become the true human being, the free individual. Such individuals can only emerge within a complete society, one built on three foundational pillars: political justice, known as democracy; economic justice, known as socialism; and social justice, which requires the eradication of traditional class structures that have shaped the history of class struggle. A struggle

that sharpened with the Industrial Revolution over the past two centuries. Social justice, to a great extent, is the natural outcome of equality in governance and wealth, democracy and socialism. And it is also a direct result of comprehensive individual education.

In this complete society, relationships among individuals are founded on constitutional law at the base and a generous public opinion at the apex. This public opinion accommodates diverse personalities, for its goal is to nurture individuals who distinguish themselves from the masses through originality and individuality.

In Islamic thought, constitutional law reconciles the individual's need for absolute individual freedom with the community's need for comprehensive social justice. It does not sacrifice the individual for the community nor the community for the individual. Instead, it achieves a balanced and fair distribution, serving both individual and communal interests simultaneously and seamlessly. A prime example of this harmony is the Islamic penalty for theft, as discussed earlier.

The individual who achieves peace within themselves is the Muslim about whom the infallible one said: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe." And here "Muslims" is understood in the broader sense, meaning all people. A Muslim is one from whom all creatures are safe, whether from their tongue, their hand, or the thoughts of their hidden conscience. The infallible also said: "Islam is a restraint against killing." Which means that the Muslim is not violent, neither in action nor in any intention of harm that might arise in the mind. For this reason, the infallible also said: "Bad character is an unforgivable sin, and ill thoughts is a sin that spreads." And he said: "It is forbidden for a Muslim to harm another Muslim, his blood, his wealth, his honor, or to harbor ill thoughts of him."

And when you understand the depth of this hadith, you will know that the Muslim in the phrase "another Muslim" refers to the broader meaning, which includes all of God's creation, whether trees, stones, even dust. This is indicated by Allah's saying: "So is it other than the religion of Allah that they desire, while to Him has submitted whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?" (3:83). You will also understand that the Muslim in the phrase "for a Muslim" refers to the specific meaning intended in Allah's saying: "Except one who comes to Allah with a sound heart" (26:89), a heart free from division between an outward behavior that contradicts an inward disposition, or rather, a heart free from the subtle forms of social hypocrisy, which are the afflictions of the most learned of individuals. The sound heart is the heart at "peace".

There is a hadith that says: "Everything has a heart, and the heart of the Qur'an is Yasin, and Yasin has a heart." The knowers have understood that the heart of Yasin is the verse: "Peace, a word from a Merciful Lord" (36:58). Thus, peace in Islam is the essence of the essence, and the foundation of all foundations. The phrase "*As-Salamu Alaikum*" (Peace be upon you) is the Muslim's greeting in all encounters throughout the day. This beautiful, radiant phrase, with its sweet tone and harmonious sound, deserves to be practically applied in daily life, using its true means and methods, so that peace may prevail on earth, love may fill the hearts of people, and joy and happiness may brighten their faces.

## **Absolute Individual Freedom**

In Islam, the fundamental principle is freedom. Every person, by virtue of being human, is free until they misuse their freedom, at that point it is curtailed in accordance with constitutional laws, as we have previously discussed.

Freedom is a right that is paired with a corresponding duty, the duty of proper conduct in exercising that freedom. Freedom has no limits except where the individual fails to fulfill the duty it demands, thereby becoming constrained by their incapacity to adhere to its responsibilities. Essentially, individual freedom in Islam is absolute, as long as it is exercised in a righteous manner. Its obligation, as stated, is the proper use of one's freedom, and only those who refine their worship and follow the advice of the infallible one when he said: "Adorn yourselves with the attributes of Allah; indeed, my Lord is on a straight path." Those who embody the attributes of Allah ascend from the limited to the Absolute, achieving such uprightness of conduct and purity of intention that all their actions result in goodness and benevolence toward all living beings and things, to the extent that laws will then have no dominion over them.

From the verses previously mentioned, it is evident that the individual is the focus of accountability in Islam. We have said that accountability signifies servitude, and here we affirm that the messengers were sent, and the scriptures were revealed, solely to assist the individual in bearing the burdens of this accountability. Consider the verse: "Ta-Ha. We have not revealed the Qur'an to you to cause you distress." (20:1-2) Or, "Alif, Lam, Meem. This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah" (2:1-2).

We also assert that the individual, whether male or female, is the ultimate purpose, while everything else, the cosmos or the Qur'an, is a means to that end: "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is Witness over all things?" (41:53).

If the Qur'an is a means for the individual, and it undoubtedly is, then legislation is likewise a means, even to an even greater extent. Prayer,

above all, is the legislation most conducive to the development of the individual who attains absolute individual freedom.

## **Prayer as a Means**

The means is always of the same nature as the end; it is an extension of it, differing in degree but not in kind. Proper means must align with proper ends, as no sound reasoning can endorse seeking righteous ends through corrupt means.

The prescribed prayer, performed in its familiar movements and at its designated times, is a means to reach the state where the individual attains a complete and encompassing connection with their Lord. The Qur'an in this regard leaves no room for ambiguity; its statements are decisive and clear. Consider His words: "And establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do" (29:45).

Reflect also on: "And establish prayer for My remembrance" (20:14). Here, as in the previous verse, the remembrance of Allah signifies presence with Him without heedlessness, and its means is prayer.

Furthermore, He states: "So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me. O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient" (2:152-153).

In this context, patience refers to fasting, and the assistance sought through fasting and prayer is in overcoming the natural tendency to be heedless of Allah. This underscores that prayer is a means to remember Allah without lapses in consciousness.

To His Prophet, Allah commands: “So be patient over what they say and exalt with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night and at the ends of the day, that you may be satisfied. And do not extend your eyes toward what We have given to some categories of them to enjoy, the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring” (20:130-131). Here, "exalt" signifies prayer. The verse outlines the five daily prayer times: before the rising of the sun (Fajr), before its setting (Dhuhr and Asr), the ends of the day, and during the periods of the night (Maghrib and Isha). It also includes remembrance and glorification of Allah.

The phrase “that you may be satisfied” clearly establishes prayer as a means to attain contentment. Satisfaction in Allah as Lord stems from complete knowledge of Him, and complete knowledge results from uninterrupted and mindful remembrance. Being content with Allah as one’s Lord entails abandoning wishes. Hasan ibn Ali is known to have said: “Whoever trusts in Allah’s choice for them will not wish to be in any state other than the one they are in.”

Thus, the verse advises: “And do not extend your eyes toward what We have given to some categories of them to enjoy, the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring” (20:131). This means: Do not wish for what others possess; be content with what Allah has apportioned for you, trusting in His wisdom. Seek assistance in cultivating this state of satisfaction through prayer.



## Contentment with Allah as Servitude

We have established that prayer is a means, as demonstrated by the preceding verses. It has become clear that it is a means to remember Allah, and we have defined the remembrance of Allah as being present with Him without any lapse of awareness. The fruit of such uninterrupted remembrance is complete knowledge of Allah. The fruit of complete knowledge is contentment with Allah, while the consequence of heedlessness of Allah is dissatisfaction with Him. The most subtle manifestation of dissatisfaction with Allah is wishing for things, which the Qur'anic verse prohibited the Prophet from doing.

Contentment with Allah represents striving in the station of servitude. A servant continues to struggle against the inclinations of their nature that drive them toward dissatisfaction with Allah and lack of contentment in every subtle aspect of conduct. This striving persists until Allah is pleased with them, at which point they transition from the state of the contented self (*al-nafs al-rādiyyah*) to the state of the pleasing self (*al-nafs al-mardīyyah*), which is a self to which Allah grants only what it desires.

In truth, the self cannot be entirely content with Allah while receiving from Him what it dislikes. Therefore, Allah describes the condition of those who are pleasing to Him as follows: “They will have whatever they wish therein, and with Us is more” (50:35).

Since a human being does not wish for what they dislike and does not desire that they will be unfulfilled, Allah ensures the realization of their desires. This is indicated by the phrase “They will have whatever they wish therein.” Moreover, because they have become pleasing to Allah through their enduring contentment with Him, Allah continually grants them new knowledge of Himself. Through this, their wishes are renewed, ascending

to ever loftier demands that are fulfilled immediately upon their emergence, whether in thought or speech. This is alluded to in the phrase “and with Us is more.”

If the servant excels in employing prayer as a means, it aids them in entering the station of contentment with Allah. By excelling in conduct through further mastery of prayer, they progress into the degrees of servitude.

The station of servitude has a beginning, which is the station of the contented self, but it has no end, as it is infinite like Lordship itself. Servitude (‘*ubūdiyyah*) is the original obligation, while worship (‘*ibādah*) is the subsidiary obligation. More precisely, worship is the means, and servitude is the goal of worship.

This is what is conveyed by the verse: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (51:56).

Its meaning is: “I did not create the jinn and mankind except for them to become My servants through the means of worship.” Or, in other words, “I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me as I commanded them through the tongues of My messengers, so that through such worship they might become My servants, as I commanded them through the tongue of My Essence,” as expressed in His majestic statement: “There is none in the heavens and earth but that they come to the Most Merciful as a servant. He has enumerated them and counted them precisely. And all of them will come to Him on the Day of Resurrection, alone” (19:93–95).

## Servitude is Freedom

Contentment with Allah as Lord is an entryway to servitude, as previously discussed. When one is content with Allah, they prioritize Him over themselves, relinquishing their desires in favor of their Master's will. As some of our [Sufi] friends have said, *"The servant exists for their Master and is lost to themselves."* They also said, *"True servitude is being in the hands of Allah like a corpse in the hands of the washer, turned as He wills without objection."*

A servant does not harbor objection to Allah's will. If such a thought arises, they quickly address it through vigilance (*murāqabah*) or self-accountability (*muḥāsabah*). The self only achieves this state when it attains the truth of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*), attaining peace and reassurance, confident that Allah is more knowledgeable of their best interests than they are, more capable of bringing about benefit, more merciful toward them, and more deserving of their loyalty in every regard. This state does not come to the self except through Allah's Grace, persistent contemplation, prolonged practice, disciplined struggle, and perfected worship through emulating the Prophet with excellence. It is further achieved through practical conduct, characterized by good treatment of others and striving for their benefit.

When "*lā ilāha illā Allāh*" (there is no god but Allah) is perfected with sincerity and singular devotion, it ascends to Allah as pure speech. Supporting this are good deeds, which elevate it: "To Him ascends the good word, and the righteous deed exalts it" (35:10).

The "good word" is *lā ilāha illā Allāh*, and the "righteous deed" is prayer, which embodies righteous dealings, both with Allah by remaining mindful

of Him, and with creation by refraining from harming them, bearing their harm patiently, and being sincere in benefiting them at all times.

“Surely, pure religion is for Allah only” (39:3), meaning religion purified from the whims of the self, which Allah does not otherwise accept.

Since the inclinations of the self are abundant, toward wealth, status, and power, those who renounce such desires minimize their needs, restricting them to the essentials. By doing so, they safeguard the sincerity of their devotion to Allah. They recognize that dependence is a form of bondage and that the more their needs increase, the more they become enslaved to those needs. Thus, they cannot achieve purity for Allah, nor can their religion be pure for Him until they are freed from their traditional masters, habits, illusions, and falsehoods, which make men and women slaves to desires and ambitions.

We have learned that life confronts us with good and evil. Evil manifests in suffering: fear, hunger, illness, and death. Good manifests in pleasure: safety, satiety, health, and life. Fear of pain has driven us to amass pleasure and its means, seeking to place a wide distance and strong barrier between ourselves and what harms us. From this arose the pursuit of wealth and the eagerness to hoard it, as well as the love of life and attachment to power.

However, the long human experience has demonstrated that evil cannot be avoided nor its effects mitigated by accumulating wealth or seeking material security. Death, the pinnacle of all evils, has eluded even the craftiest measures and the most fortified efforts to prevent it.

"Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you should be within lofty towers" (4:78). In Islam, Iblees (Satan) embodies evil, and his progeny spread fear in people's hearts, turning them away from the

straight path. Allah says, "Satan threatens you with poverty and commands you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing" (2:268). Satan's promise of poverty means he instills fear of the consequences of giving, while his command to immorality signifies incitement to stinginess, greed, and hoarding.

The Qur'an narrates Iblees's role in tempting Allah's servants: "He said, 'My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all except among them Your chosen servants.' [Allah] said, 'This is a path [of return] to Me [that is] straight. Indeed, [of] My servants, no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators'" (15:39–42).

When Iblees declared, "I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth," he meant that he would endear the worldly life to them and make them loathe death. This love for life and aversion to death become the roots of all other sins and transgressions. However, he conceded, "except among them Your chosen servants," knowing that his deceptions would not work on those who are truly devoted to Allah. Allah affirmed this by saying, "This is a path [of return] to Me [that is] straight", a truth Allah has made binding upon Himself: "Indeed, of My servants, no authority will you have over them."

Thus, these chosen servants are free from Satan's influence, liberated from his deceit, and immune to his whispers. This freedom from Satan's schemes signifies liberation from the origin of all evils: fear.

"Indeed, those of you who turned back on the day the two armies met, it was Satan who caused them to slip because of some of what they had earned" (3:155). Satan leads people into error by exploiting their fears,

pushing them toward disgrace through the shadow of fear. Fear is the root of all evil, and *Iblees* (Satan) is its embodiment.

Islam has made the eradication of fear its central mission. The statement, "The pinnacle of wisdom is the fear of Allah," underscores that the beginning of knowledge lies in consolidating all fears into the fear of Allah alone. As Allah says: "Say, 'Nothing will befall us except what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector.' And upon Allah let the believers rely" (9:51).

The statement "There is no deity but Allah" (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*), which is the foundation of Islam, entails unifying one's fear by directing it solely toward Allah after it had been dispersed toward various sources. This unification of fear carries profound educational value, aligning the self through reliance on the one true source of power and security.

The servant combats their fear of life's hardships by striving for contentment with Allah's Will, as previously mentioned, firmly believing that Allah knows what is best for them. Tribulations, when sent by Allah, are in truth a friend disguised as an enemy, this disguise exists only because of the limitations of human knowledge. Allah says: "Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you, and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you do not know" (2:216).

When one masters the struggle to achieve contentment, convinced that the severity of the trials Allah sends is like the bitterness of a cure that heals ailments, Allah's care elevates them. Through the divine outpouring of knowledge and understanding, they are moved to realms where no affliction is conceivable, where they reside within the fortress of contentment, encountering nothing that they dislike. This was alluded to earlier in this message.

The adept knower ('*arif*), proficient in divine understanding and treading the path of servitude, fears nothing at all. They do not fear Allah, for to them, Allah is a source of love, reassurance, and the breadth of intimate connection. There may remain a faint shadow of fear when the knower casts their gaze toward the Absolute, but this fear arises from knowledge, unlike the fear born of ignorance discussed earlier. The fear that stems from knowledge represents the highest pinnacle of the knowers' awareness. It is there that they find eternal bliss, absolute goodness, and unending increase, as the knower experiences the realization of Allah's words: "Every day He is bringing about a [new] matter" (55:29).

These matters of Allah signify the renewal of existence at every moment, as the knower advances in evolution, gaining ever more perfect intellectual and emotional life. In so doing, they spread goodness among people, just as a fragrant flower releases its sweet aroma.

Servitude is freedom because it is freedom from fear. The means to servitude is worship, and at the apex of worship is prayer.

## What Is Prayer?

To delve into this question requires a sound understanding of the Qur'an. To facilitate this understanding, four principles must be established:

First, Islam represents both a beginning and an end. At its beginning, Islam is below the rank of faith (*Iman*). It entails the utterance of *la ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadun Rasul Allah* (There is no deity but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) along with acts of worship and conduct as prescribed. The Qur'anic verse regarding Islam in its beginning is: "The Bedouins say, 'We have believed.' Say, 'You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead],

'We have accepted Islam,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts." (49:14).

At its end, Islam surpasses the rank of faith and signifies conscious, willing, and satisfied submission to Allah's will. This is reflected in the verse: "And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being virtuous and follows the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend." (4:125).

The essence of this verse lies in the phrase "*while being virtuous*" (*wahua muhsin*), emphasizing that all creation submits to Allah. However, a true Muslim submits consciously, willingly, and without objection. This conscious submission is likened to being in the hands of Allah as a corpse is in the hands of its washer, entirely devoid of objection or resistance, as previously mentioned.

Second, the first Muslim community of the prophetic era was referred to as "believers" (*al-Mu'minun*), especially when contrasted with Jewish or Christian communities. This distinction is evident in numerous Qur'anic verses, such as: "Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and Christians and Sabeans, those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness, will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve." (2:62).

It is noteworthy that this community was called "Muslims" in a general sense, derived from Islam at the beginning stage. The Qur'an exhorted the believers to attain the rank of true submission (the meaning of *Islam*), as in: "O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims." (3:102).



However, realizing their limitations, the Qur'an adjusted its directive, saying: "So fear Allah as much as you are able and listen and obey and spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for yourselves. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his self, it is them who will be successful." (64:16).

Third, a truly Muslim society has not yet materialized but will emerge in the near future, God willing, with the establishment of the new civilization described in this discourse. Within this society, all individuals will attain the level of Islam as a culmination of spiritual development. Historically, this ultimate submission has only been achieved by prophets, and even among them, some fell short, as indicated in the verse: "Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged according to it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Allah's Scripture, and they were witnesses thereto." (5:44).

Further elaboration on this subject will be reserved for a forthcoming book entitled *The Golden Era of Islam Lies Ahead*. It suffices here to state that the Qur'an will be better understood when it is recognized that its address to "those who have believed", pertains to a specific stage in the evolution of the contemporary community toward the future Islamic society. For instance, when the Qur'an declares: "O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims" (3:102), it calls for individuals to progress from the stage of faith to that of true submission, emphasizing continuous development toward perfection and renewal, rejecting stagnation at any particular level.

Fourth, the entire Qur'an operates on the principle of duality (*mathani*). Each verse, word, and even letter contains dual meanings: a deeper meaning with Allah and a proximate meaning descending from Allah to His

servant. This principle is indicated in the verse: "Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah. That is the Guidance of Allah by which He guides whom He wills. And one whom Allah leaves astray, for him there is no guide." (39:23).

This concept of *mathani* reflects dual meanings: a distant one pertaining to servitude (*'ubudiyyah*) and a proximate one referring to worship (*'ibadah*).

Building on these four foundational principles, we shall further explore the nature of prayer and its implications in the continuation of this treatise.

## Prayer has two meanings

Prayer carries both a distant meaning and a proximate one. It emerged on two distinct levels of the Prophet's witnessing of his Lord, which the Qur'an narrates as follows: "He was taught by One mighty in power, possessing great strength, and he rose to [his] true form. While he was in the highest part of the horizon, then he approached and descended and was at a distance of two bow lengths or nearer. And he revealed to His servant what he revealed. The heart did not lie [about] what it saw. So will you dispute with him over what he saw? And he certainly saw him in another descent at the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary, near it is the Garden of Refuge, when there covered the Lote Tree that which covered [it]. The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed. He certainly saw [some] of the greatest signs of his Lord." (53:5–18).

The first scene pertains to witnessing through the Divine Names, whereas the second pertains to witnessing the Divine Essence. Allah, the Exalted,

says: "Every day He is bringing about a [new] matter," (55:29) and His matter is the unveiling of His Essence to His servants. This unveiling involves descending from the profound realm of the Divine Essence to the levels accessible to His servants, enabling them to ascend through these acts of descent toward the presence of the Divine Essence. Allah describes these descents, saying: "And it is a Qur'an which We have separated that you might recite it to the people over a prolonged period. And We have sent it down progressively." (17:106).

The Qur'an represents remembrance (*Dhikr*) in the station of union (*al-Jama'*), while the *Furqan* (the Criterion) represents remembrance at the station of differentiation (*al-Farq*). The station of differentiation refers to the descent into the realm of attributes and actions, as indicated by: "And We have sent it down progressively." (17:106).

This means it descends repeatedly, through stages, to provide the paths for the knowers to ascend through the stages, one after another, until they stand at the threshold of the Divine Essence.

"And with the truth We have sent it down, and with the truth it has descended. And We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner." (17:105).

The phrase "With the truth We have sent it down" refers to the *Dhikr* at the station of union, which is the Qur'an. "And with the truth it has descended" refers to the *Furqan* at the station of differentiation.

The *Dhikr* is at the station of the "union of union" (*Jama' al-Jama'*). It is the station of Divine Name in proximity to the Divine Essence. The Qur'an is the station of union (*Jama'*), representing the Station of Divine Name in proximity to the Divine Attributes. The *Furqan* is the station of

differentiation (*Farq*), which represents multiplicity, starting with duality. This is the Station of Attribute and Action.

At its highest level, the Station of Action is pure monotheism (*Tawhid*), and at its lowest, it borders on polytheism (*shirk*), as multiplicity emerges from the Creator's actions. For those distracted by creation from the Creator, this represents *shirk*. However, for those who perceive the actions of creation as emanating from the Creator, this is *Tawhid*. Indeed, true *Tawhid* resides in recognizing the "Unity of Action", seeing the Creator's Actions behind the actions of His creation.

Revelation descends to the lowest levels of multiplicity, particularly in its aspect of majesty (*Jalal*), manifesting as warnings. Its purpose is to unite people towards Allah, drawing them from the distractions of multiplicity, as conveyed in: "And We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner." (17:105).

The entirety of *Tawhid* is practiced at the station of the "Unity of Action" (*Wahdat al-Fa'il*), for it is the realm of hidden polytheism (*shirk*). No servant can ever be entirely free of hidden polytheism, for it becomes subtler than a hair and sharper than a sword, persisting indefinitely. It is the veil separating Absolute Unity, belonging to the Lord, and relative unity, allocated to the servant.

The station of Action corresponds to God's Oneness (*Wahidiyyah*), which is an attribute of the Deity: "And your god is one God. There is no Deity except Him, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate" (2:163).

In truth, people have not denied Allah; rather, they have denied the *Deity*. The Deity represents Allah's descent to the rank of Action on a smaller scale, where resemblance [to presumed human action] can arise, and

ambiguity prevails. These are the levels of hidden polytheism (*shirk*), which intensifies as it retreats into greater subtlety.

The Qur'an addresses this understanding: "If you asked them who created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon, they would surely say, 'Allah.' Then how are they deluded? Allah extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts it for them. Indeed, Allah is of all things Knowing" (29:61–62).

This verse implies that people attribute the grand, visible actions, those in which they cannot claim participation, such as the creation of the heavens and the earth, to Allah. However, for smaller actions, in which they appear to play a part, they attribute the outcome to themselves. If you asked them, "Who created the heavens and the earth?" they would reply, "Allah." Yet, if you asked, "Who provides for you?" their response, in practice if not in words, would attribute it to their own effort and toil.

Polytheism (*Shirk*) primarily resides in matters of sustenance (*rizq*). The knowers have said that man flees from his appointed term (*ajal*) and pursues his provision (*rizq*). Yet, in truth, both his term and his provision pursue him relentlessly. He cannot escape his appointed time, nor can he evade his provision. If a servant truly attains certainty in their Lord, they will realize that whatever morsel has been decreed for them will surely reach them, regardless of their actions to avoid or pursue it.

The second verse emphasizes that the Creator of the heavens and the earth is the same as the One who provides sustenance to His servants. The Creator is singularly responsible for both grand and minor acts: "Or have they attributed to Allah partners who created like His creation so that the creation [of each] seemed similar to them? Say, 'Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing'" (13:16).

The rank of "Unity of Action" (*Wahdat al-Fa'il*) represents the first rank of Divine manifestation as it relates to the servant. It is also the first rank of ascension toward Allah, "the Possessor of Ascension."

The rank that follows it, is "Unity of Attribute" (*Wahdat al-Sifah*): This corresponds to the rank of Singularity (*Ahadiyyah*), which is an attribute of Allah: "Say, He is Allah, The Only One" (112:1).

The third one is the rank of The Name (*Martibat al-Ism*): This is represented by the Divine Name "Allah". Beyond this rank lies only the pure Essence (*Dhat*).

The meaning of *Al-Wahid* (the One) is the singular one, the one that cannot be divided, marking this level of uniqueness or singularity.

The meaning of *Al-Ahad* (the Unique One) is He who is unlike any that have come, nor will any come who are like Him. Or, He is the One of whom "There is nothing like unto Him" (42:11). This represents the intermediate level of uniqueness.

The meaning of "Allah" is that He is exalted and transcendent beyond having any defined meaning. However, from the perspective of creation, He is the object of all attributes. From the perspective of the Divine Essence, [the term] "Allah" is merely an indication of the absolutely Pure Essence, which transcends being named or described.

The significance of "Allah" as the object of attributes lies in Him being the definitive mark of the first manifestation from the Absoluteness of the Essence. It represents the highest level of individuation. These three levels, along with numerous other levels below them, constitute a descending progression from the perspective of the Divine Essence, while

they serve as an ascension for the servant. The ascent occurs as the servant traverses these stages, one by one.

The ascent is the traversal of these stages, and we have mentioned that the Prophet, during his Ascension (Mi'raj), witnessed his Lord on two levels. The first witnessing was the level of the Divine Names (as-Mā'ī), while the second was of the Divine Essence (dhātī). The witnessing of the Divine Names is what we detailed in the three stages. The witnessing of the Divine Names pertains to the manifestations of the Essence in creation. The Prophet witnessed the Divine manifestations in Gabriel (*Jibril*). The Qur'an tells us in the verses of *Surah "An-Najm"*, which we mentioned earlier: "His knowledge is powerful, the one of tremendous might" referring to Gabriel. Gabriel is described as having strength, and the meaning of "*Faṣṭawā*" refers to him being in the form that Allah created him in, which is the highest manifestation of Gabriel as a reflector of the Divine Names. This is further indicated by the verse: "And he is in the highest part of the horizon", which relates to the Essence of Allah. Then, the verse continues: "Then he drew near and descended", signifying the descent of the manifestation of the Divine Names from the level of Essence to the level of Attributes, and then to the level of Actions, where he settled "And was at the distance of two bows' length or nearer".

This trinity alludes to the intellect, but the space here does not allow for a detailed exploration. Finally, the verse "So he revealed to His servant what He revealed" indicates that Gabriel conveyed the divine revelation to the servant of Allah, Muhammad.

This explanation pertains to the witnessing of the Divine Names (*al-Asmā'*). As for the witnessing of the Essence (*al-Dhāt*), it has been concealed within the expressions of the Qur'an, for it is beyond description and can only be indicated through subtle allusions. A phrase, which is

precise, concise, and of great value for those on the spiritual path, was used to refer to this witnessing of the Essence symbolically. This is the verse: "The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed".

Since the *Sidrat al-Muntahā* (Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary) marks the end of dualistic (*Shaf'i*) or paired witnessing and the beginning of singular, or unitary (*Watri*), or monistic witnessing, the Qur'an informs us of this moment, saying: "When the Lote Tree was covered with what covered it." from the point of the witnessing of the Essence, the Prophet reached the station of "The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed." Here, "sight" (*al-Baṣa r*) and "insight" (*al-Baṣīrah*) are one, for this is the station of Unity. It implies focus of intellect, with no distraction toward the past ("did not swerve") or the future ("nor did it exceed").

Thus, the Prophet, overwhelmed by the witnessing of the Divine Essence, became absorbed in all of its dimensions, to the point that he became a spatial unity within a temporal unity. Through this complete, encompassing unity (*Tawhid*), he transcended time and space, and became liberated from both, witnessing God (*Allāh*), an Essence that cannot be contained by space or time. This is a witnessing of the Essence, where expression has no place. Here, prayer in its distant meaning was established. It was ordained in the tongue of his state of being (*hal*), as the tongue of speech (*maqal*) was muted. Gabriel was not present; rather, his presence was only during the establishment of prayer in its proximate meaning.

Prayer, in its proximate meaning, refers to the prescribed ritual prayer with its familiar movements. This form of prayer was ordained at the station of "two bow lengths or nearer", the station of witnessing the Divine Names. The witnessing of the Divine Names serves as a means to the witnessing of the Divine Essence. For the ascending servant, the journey begins with witnessing the Unity of Action (*wahdat al-fi'l*), progresses to witnessing the



Unity of Attribute (*wahdat al-ṣifah*), and ascends further to witnessing the Unity of Name (*wahdat al-ism*). Beyond this lies the witnessing of the Divine Essence (*al-Dhāt*), which is not a station but rather an ephemeral glance and an all-encompassing absorption. At this point, the natural human instinct calls out, "O people of Yathrib, there is no abiding here, so return."

The servant then descends back through the stages of ascent. During this descent, they witness the station of the Unity of Name, followed by the Unity of Attribute, and then the Unity of Action. Thus, the servant experiences each station twice, once during ascent and once during descent, but in differing manifestations, as repetition is impossible in those exalted stations. For, as the Qur'an states, "Every day He is in a [new] matter" (55:29).

All the witnessing during the descent surpasses what was witnessed during the ascent. This is why the prayer was ordained as fifty at the station of "two bow lengths or nearer" during the Ascension but was reduced to five during the descent from the Ascension. The wisdom behind this reduction lies in the Prophet's enhanced knowledge of Allah following his witnessing of the Divine Essence. The knowledgeable servant is always granted leniency, as indicated by the principle: "What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is Most Appreciative, All-Knowing" (4:147).

In the station of witnessing the Divine Essence, prayer in its ultimate meaning was ordained. This is the connection with Allah without any intermediary, at the station of "The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed" (53:17). Here, the servant's created self dissolves, leaving only their eternal essence in direct connection with the Eternal, without any mediator

or intermediary. At this station, means and ends vanish, leaving only the Oneness: "And no ships of expression have any share here."

Gabriel was not present at this station because he has no such essence, no self, capable of enduring the radiance of the Divine Essence. This distinction ultimately makes all human beings, in their potential, more complete than even the elect among the angels. The perfection of angels relative to humans is one of degree, while the perfection of humans is one of inherent nature. This is reflected in the Prophet's saying: "If you did not err and seek forgiveness, Allah would bring forth a people who would err and seek forgiveness, and He would forgive them."

Gabriel's absence was also due to another reason: his presence would make the Prophet part of a pair (dual), whereas pairing is unsuitable for witnessing Singularity (the Divine Unity). At the station of witnessing the Divine Names, prayer in its proximate meaning, the prescribed ritual prayer, was ordained. Gabriel served as the intermediary for this, bringing to the Prophet in Mecca the details of its form, timings, and ablution, teaching him how to pray.

This does not mean that the Prophet was not engaged in prayer before the Ascension. On the contrary, he had been in a state of prayer even before his prophetic mission, during his devotions in the cave of Hira. However, the form of his earlier prayer was perfected after the Ascension, resulting in the prayer we know today. This prayer was established as a means of ascension, for the Prophet primarily, and for his nation secondarily. It serves as an ascent to the Praised Station, which the Prophet attained in the witnessing described as, "The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed" (53:17).

Regarding this Praised Station, Allah says about His Prophet: "And during the night, pray with it as an additional act of worship for you; it is expected that your Lord will raise you to a Praised Station" (17:79).

## The Prayer of Imitation

"Pray as you see me praying!" With these words, the Prophet instructed his followers to perform the prayer as he did, fulfilling the message of his Lord. Prayer is the Prophet's ascension by virtue of his unique status, and it is the ascension of the nation through emulation and imitation. The phrase "as you see me praying" carries both a distant and a proximate meaning.

Its distant meaning involves observing, with the eye of insight (*al-basira*), the state of the Prophet's sincerity in his devotion when he stands for prayer. When he says "Allahu Akbar" to commence his prayer, nothing in his heart is greater than Allah, for he has liberated himself from worldly attachments by minimizing his needs and embracing asceticism, as previously mentioned in the context of servitude.

Its proximate meaning is to observe, with the physical eye (*al-basar*), the outward movements of the Prophet during his prayer and to master them as well. Without seeing both the state of his heart and the movements of his body, one does not truly see him. If we merely mimic the physical movements without emulating the sincerity of his heart's orientation, we fail to fulfill his instruction: "Pray as you see me praying."

The flaw in our current prayer practice is our neglect of this dual vision. We have become proficient in the physical movements of prayer, but our hearts are distracted. When we stand in our mosques with our bodies, our hearts are often in the marketplace, on the street, or in public spaces.

When we say "Allahu Akbar" in our opening invocation, a voice from the Divine truth declares: "You are lying! You are not truthful in this." For, in our hearts, wealth, status, or power is greater than Allah. Thus, our prayer does not truly qualify as prayer, and the words of Allah apply to us: "So woe to those who pray, those who are heedless of their prayer, those who want to show off and withhold the vessel (*al-mā'ūn*)" (107:4-7).

He calls them "those who pray" because their actions resemble those of a worshipper. However, He states they are heedless of their prayer, meaning they are oblivious to its essence, which is the connection between them and Allah through the presence of their hearts. He then adds "those who want to show off", indicating their preoccupation with outward appearances while neglecting the inward essence, and "withhold the vessel (*al-mā'ūn*)," symbolizing their withholding of their hearts from Allah. They fill their hearts with idols of love for wealth, status, and power, leaving no room for Allah.

The Infallible also said: "Perhaps a person prays but does not establish the prayer!" Such a person may appear to pray outwardly, but they do not fulfill the prayer's true essence, which is the presence of the heart during it. Thus, the essence of your prayer lies in your presence with your Lord during it, whether this presence lasts for a long or short time. Anything else, even if it involves standing in prayer for the entire night, does not constitute true prayer.

The Qur'an tells us: "Say, If you should love Allah, then follow me, so Allah will love you" (3:31). Can anyone assume they might attain Allah's love merely by imitating the Prophet in outward actions of movement and stillness, while neglecting inward adherence?

Similarly, the Qur'an commands: "And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from" (59:7). The

understanding here is the same: the Messenger has brought us guidance both in its distant and proximate meanings. In the distant meaning, he has conveyed to us things through the tongue of his state of being, and in the proximate meaning, through the tongue of his speech. What the Prophet gave us through the tongue of his state of being is his *Sunnah*, and what he gave us through the tongue of his speech is his *Shari'ah*.

The Prophet's tongue of speech is truthful, and so is the tongue of his state of being, but the tongue of his state of being is more truthful than the tongue of his speech, for truth transcends expression. The Prophet said: "My words are Shari'ah, my actions are the path, and my state of being is reality." His state of being is his *Sunnah*.

## The Prayer of Originality

If we understand this, it becomes clear that when the Infallible said, "Pray as you have seen me pray," it is as if he said through explicit language, "Imitate me in my prayer with precision and excellence, so that your imitation of me leads you to become as original as I am." Or it is as if he said, "Imitate me with precision, excellence, and complete awareness until your imitation of me evolves into following me in my originality."

However, originality does not involve imitation; it involves emulation: "Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example" (33:21). The term "example" here signifies guide by virtue of the perfection of his state of being.

The Prophet commanded us through his tongue of *Shari'ah*, the tongue of speech, to imitate, and through his tongue of *Haqiqah*, the tongue of his state of being, to attain originality. Originality is only realized after

perfecting imitation, for originality is the ultimate goal of imitating the Prophet, thus imitation is not an end in itself.

The Ultimate *Mi'raj* (Heavenly Ascension) in which the Prophet rose to exalted ranks through Allah's Grace and Gabriel's assistance remained the focus of his life. This goal was achieved through his lesser *Mi'raj* - prayer. Allah made the prayer the delight of his eyes, as it allowed for continuous communion with Allah. With every *raq'a* of prayer, he traversed a new phase of proximity to the Praised Station: the station where "The sight did not swerve, nor did it exceed" (53:17).

This station must remain the aspiration of every worshiper in this nation, as it signifies complete knowledge, perfect witnessing, and the witnessing of the Divine Essence, which surpasses the witnessing of the Divine Names, as we previously explained. This station represents the realization of individuality and the ultimate enjoyment of absolute individual freedom, frequently mentioned in this treatise.

We discussed the verses from Surah *An-Najm* that describe the Lote Tree of the Ultimate Boundary (*Sidrat al-Muntaha*), where Gabriel stopped accompanying the Infallible, allowing the Prophet to proceed alone into the presence of the witnessing of the Essence. This witnessing of the Essence cannot occur [simply] through mediation, and [even] Gabriel had no station there.

Similarly, the Prophet, who serves as our Gabriel, guides us to each of our respective *Sidrat al-Muntaha* and then stops, just as Gabriel did, yet for a different reason which is to fulfill his mission of delivering the message and facilitating communion with the Divine. At that point, each worshiper, who has perfected their imitation, encounters Allah without intermediary.

Each perfected worshiper from the future Islamic community will receive their individual *Shari'ah* directly from Allah, gaining their unique witnessing, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage. They will embody originality while emulating the Prophet in his originality.

This is made possible by Allah's Grace and through the Prophet's perfect mediation with his Lord. This applies to those who have mastered imitation. The reference for this originality is found in Allah's statement: "To each of you, We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation, but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ" (5:48).

The context clearly refers to communities, but it also addresses individuals. Regarding individuality, it is more focused on individuals than communities: "To each of you, We prescribed a law and a method". For each individual, "a law" means *Shari'ah* (the outward law), and "a method" means *Sunnah* (the way). "*A law and a method*" signifies *Shari'ah* and *Haqiqah* (reality). The *Shari'ah* of the knower is a part of their reality. Their reality is individual, and their *Shari'ah* is also individual. This individual *Shari'ah* far surpasses the general *Shari'ah* in magnitude.

"Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation" means that He could have made everyone alike in form and disposition. Here, *nation* refers to the individual. Allah says: "Indeed, Abraham was a nation, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining toward truth, and he was not of those who associate others with Allah. He was grateful for His favors. Allah chose him and guided him to a straight path" (16:120-121). Here, *nation* means a leader to be emulated.

"But [He intended] to test you in what He has given you" refers to Allah testing each individual with the blessings deposited in their hearts and minds. What have they done with these blessings? Have they nurtured and liberated them (purified them), or neglected and suppressed them (buried them)?

"So race to [all that is] good" refers to seeking knowledge. "To Allah is your return all together" is a clear indication of individuality, as people return to Allah as individuals: "And you have certainly come to Us individually as We created you the first time" (6:94).

As previously mentioned regarding individuality, we add here Allah's statement: "And every person, We have imposed upon them their bird tied around their neck. And We will produce for them on the Day of Resurrection a book which they will encounter spread open. Read your book. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as an accountant" (17:13-14).

Bird (*Tair*) refers to the heart. "*A book which they will encounter spread open*" also refers to the heart. "Read your book" means reading what the intellect has inscribed on the pages of the heart, whether ignorance or knowledge. "Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as an accountant" demonstrates the prominence of individuality.

"And He will inform you about that over which you used to differ" (5:48) means that Allah will help individuals realize their unique identities through which differences, or rather distinctions, arise among them.

The matter regarding imitation (*taqlid*) and originality (*asalah*) can be summarized as follows: God Almighty leads the way for all of us, yet His footsteps are subtle and imperceptible, visible only with intense illumination, a light that none possessed except Gabriel. Gabriel stepped precisely and meticulously in the footsteps of God. Gabriel's own footsteps



are also subtle, visible only with a strong light, which none possessed except Muhammad. Muhammad followed Gabriel's footsteps with exact precision, striving diligently to make Gabriel's tracks clearer by pressing his own footsteps onto them. As a result, the tracks became discernible to all of us, albeit with varying [degrees of] clarity.

The least clear of these traces is still clear enough for even the least illuminated among this nation to follow. However, some merely walked behind the Prophet without concern for the placement of their steps, these are the ordinary imitators. Others were diligent, striving to step precisely where the Prophet stepped, ensuring their steps neither exceeded nor fell short of his, where possible. These are the imitators who seek perfected imitation.

Through this meticulous following, the Muhammadan light reflected upon the imitators, each according to their effort. Their vision gradually strengthened until they could see Gabriel's footsteps, which were initially hidden from them. Continuing in their diligence, they eventually perceived God's footsteps, those that were hidden even from Muhammad but were revealed to him by Gabriel's precise following. Muhammad then followed Gabriel until he became independent in both vision and adherence.

When an imitator perfects their emulation of the Prophet and begins to perceive God's footsteps, they become independent in both vision and following. Ultimately, thanks to their refined imitation of the Prophet, they end up imitating God directly, without the intermediary of the Prophet.

Exalted is God above physical footsteps as we understand them. Rather, His "footsteps" refer to the hidden, subtle, and profound wisdom embodied within His will. This wisdom is so concealed and refined that, in our ignorance and heedlessness, we often act as though we are leading Him and expect Him to follow us. This occurs when we prioritize our will over

His and grow resentful of His will. “Glory be to Him, and Exalted is He above what they associate with Him” (6:100).

Imitating God, therefore, means aligning ourselves with the paths of His will, in complete submission and surrender. This is the essence of servitude (*‘ubudiyyah*), which we have discussed extensively. Servitude is the original purpose of creation: “I have not created jinn and humankind except to worship Me” (51:56).

This discussion reminds me of verses from the wise mentor and leader of a Sufi order, Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd, in which he says:

*Purify yourself with the water of the unseen if you are one with insight;  
Otherwise, seek purification from the earth and from stone.  
Appoint as your imam the One you once placed behind you,  
And pray the dawn prayer at the first hour of the age.  
This is the prayer of those who know their Lord.  
If you are among them, let the land soak the sea.*

In this message, we are not delving into a detailed explanation of these verses. However, what concerns us here are the lines:

*“Appoint as your imam the One you once placed behind you,  
And pray the dawn prayer at the first hour of the age.”*

“Appoint as your imam” refers to appointing God as your leader. “*The One you once placed behind you*” alludes to the state of ignorance, where one places oneself ahead of God, metaphorically “turning their back on Him” by choosing their own will over His and resenting His decree.

“Pray the dawn prayer” symbolizes the dawn of the spirit, before the creation of physical bodies. “*at the first hour of the age*” refers to the early

era of creation in the corporeal world, what is known as the realm of *al-dharr* (the particles), referenced in the verse: “And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them testify of themselves, ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Yes, we have testified.’ lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘Indeed, we were unaware of this,’ or [lest] you say, ‘It was only that our fathers associated [others in worship] before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?’ And thus do We explain the signs, that perhaps they will return” (7:172-174).

The phrase “Am I not your Lord? They said, ‘Yes!’” signifies the acknowledgment of servitude (*‘ubudiyyah*) by all creation before their physical existence. The verse “Thus do We explain the signs, that perhaps they will return” highlights the heedlessness that has overtaken humanity, distracting them from their servitude to their Lord and leading them to place themselves ahead of Him, as referenced in the verses of Imam al-Junayd.

The expression “Thus do We explain the signs, that perhaps they will return” is akin to the verse: “And We have certainly made the Qur’an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?” (54:17). The intended meaning is that God has made the verses of the Qur’an straightforward to remind those who have forgotten the covenant they made in the primordial realm (*‘alam al-dharr*), when they affirmed their servitude to their Lord by saying, “Yes, we testify” in response to the Divine question: “Am I not your Lord?”

Here, “pray” (*ṣalli*) implies “follow.” The term *ṣalli* in Arabic refers to the one who follows the leader (*al-mujalli*). The *mujalli* is the foremost, while the *muṣalli* is the one who follows closely behind. This is captured in the words of the poet:

*“Indeed, we, the sons of Nahshal,  
Claim no father save him, nor does he disown us.  
Should a race for honor occur on any day,  
You will find among us both leaders and followers (al-musallina).”*

From all of this, it becomes evident that imitating the Prophet strengthens our intellects, enabling us to emulate God. The Prophet emphasized this when he said: “Adopt the character of God, for my Lord is upon a straight path.” Following God means aligning ourselves behind Him and not placing ourselves ahead of Him, Exalted is He beyond the ignorance of those who do so.

Walking behind God signifies servitude (*‘ubudiyyah*), which is the highest station a human being can achieve. We have discussed servitude extensively, sufficiently addressing its importance in this context.

## **Prayer: The Difference Between the Believer and the Muslim**

What is the implication of the verse: “Indeed, the prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times” (4:103)? Let me tell you. This verse refers to the prescribed ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*) as an obligation tied to specific times [a day], mandated upon the believers (*al-mu’minīn*), who represent the first nation of Islam (*Ummah al-Ba’th al-Awwal*). However, this is the nation we live in today, during its final days. This nation was instructed to ascend from the level of belief (*īmān*) to the level of submission (*islām*), as indicated by the verse: “O you who have believed, be pious towards Allah as He requires of you, and do not die except as Muslims” (3:102).

Failing to achieve this, the command was adjusted to suit their capacity: “So be pious towards Allah as much as you are able, and listen and obey and spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for yourselves” (64:16). Yet, the directive for evolution, progress, and elevation from the “Nation of Believers” to the “Nation of Muslims” (*Ummah al-Muslimīn*) remains in place.

The need today is for the emergence of a Muslim nation from the current nations, which have spent nearly fourteen centuries engaging in rich human experiences within the realms of material and intellectual life. Despite their distance from religion in all its forms, these nations represent a new form of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*), one far superior to the ignorance of the first nation of Islam. This new ignorance is what we referred to earlier in this message as the “modern, mechanized, Western civilization”, that we all live under, describing it as a coin with two faces: one bright, and the other ugly.

We have noted that this modernized world now fervently seeks peace, and must inevitably adopt Islam to fulfill its need for peace. The conversion of modern Western nations to Islam is inevitable. Their journey into Islam will begin at its foundational level, progress to the rank of belief (*īmān*), as embodied by the first nation of Islam, and then ascend through worship practices and interactions, culminating in prayer, until these individuals elevate themselves to the rank of *islām*, which has only been realized by a select few individuals since Adam's time, with even some prophets falling short of achieving it. Every Muslim must traverse the stages of the believer, progressing through deeper faith and knowledge, until reaching the stage of certainty (*iqān*), which has three levels: The Knowledge of Certainty ('Ilm al-Yaqīn), The Essence of Certainty ('Ayn al-Yaqīn), and The Truth of Certainty (Haqq al-Yaqīn).

The Quran states: “No Indeed; did you know with the knowledge of certainty, you shall surely see Hell? Again, you shall be questioned that day concerning true bliss”. (102:5-8). Regarding the Truth of Certainty, the Quran says in Surat al-Wāqī‘ah (The Inevitable): “Indeed, this is the Truth of Certainty. So exalt the name of your Lord, the Most Great” (56:95-96).

This is a reference to “it is surely a noble Qur’an in a hidden book” (56:77-78). Thus, Truth of Certainty is identified as the Qur’an itself.

The rank of *Islam* cannot be attained before reaching the stage of *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* (the Truth of Certainty), as previously mentioned. With every increase in knowledge, certainty also grows, allowing the self to find tranquility and the heart to find peace. This leads to contentment (*riḍā*) and ultimately to *Islam*. Faith (*īmān*) continues to shine its light ahead of the seeker in their ascension through the stages of *Islam*. Every rank attained and realized today was once a matter of faith yesterday, and it does not become a domain of certainty until faith is elevated to encompass a new area that was previously beyond consideration.

Thus, faith (*īmān*) is the precursor to certainty (*īqān*), or, metaphorically, it is the blind man’s cane with which he feels the ground for his next step until he moves forward with clear vision. Ritual prayer (*ṣalāh*) is the practice that elevates both faith and certainty through the various ranks. This is affirmed by the Qur’anic verse: “To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it” (35:10).

The verse “Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times” takes on a particular significance for the Muslim who is still traversing the stage of faith, the stage of the first nation. For such a person, the prescribed prayer is a mandated act to be performed at specific times.

However, if they excel in performing their prayer by mastering their imitation of the Infallible, and ascend through the stages of certainty (*īqān*), from *ʿIlm al-Yaqīn* (the Knowledge of Certainty) to *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn* (the Essence of Certainty), and finally to *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* (the Truth of Certainty), their heart will find tranquility, their self will become serene, and they will fully submit (*aslama*). At this point, they will discover the deeper meaning of the word *muwqūt* ("decreed") in the verse "Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times."

For them, *muwqūt* signifies that the prescribed prayer has a time limit, it applies only until the seeker ascends to the rank of originality (*aṣālah*), where they are addressed with independence from imitation and become ready to receive their individual prayer directly from their Lord, following the example of the Prophet.

At this stage, prayer does not cease to be obligatory for them, but the imitation (*taqlīd*) is lifted. By God's grace and through the perfection of the Prophet's transmission, the greatest veil, the prophetic veil, is removed, leaving them in direct communion with their Lord.

Islam, in its essence, is not a religion in the conventional sense of religions; rather, it has a stage of belief (*ʿaqīda*), which is a transition to the scientific stage of Islam. The stage of law (*sharʿa*) is a transition to the [higher] level of truth (*ḥaqīqa*), where individuals rise from the collective laws to the individual laws, which represent a part of the truth that each individual possesses. The collective law is preserved and upheld for the benefit of conduct, education, and the organization of the human community, which evolves every day, and strives through experiences to ascend to these higher levels.

And those who ascend to the ranks of individual laws are the true Muslims, the truly free, as previously mentioned in this discussion. These are the

[select] individuals who have achieved absolute individual freedom, restoring unity to their thoughts, speech, and actions. They think as they wish, speak as they think, and do what they say, ensuring that the outcomes of their actions are always beneficial and compassionate towards others.

Such individuals can live above the collective laws of the community because they bind themselves to their personalized Divine law (*sharī'ah fardiyyah*), which surpasses the communal laws in refinement, excellence, benevolence, and transcendence.

"Islam is the religion of innate nature (*fiṭrah*)," meaning it is a science of the self (*ilm al-nafs*). It will guide humanity, regardless of color, language, or ethnicity, towards its long-sought goal. Islam will guide every individual to their true self because, as we said, it is a "science of the self". At this scientific level, Islam will triumph in the age of science over traditional religions, fulfilling God's promise: "It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religions, even though the polytheists dislike it" (61:9).

"With guidance" refers to guiding souls, as He says: "Whoever is guided is only guided for his self" (17:15). "And the religion of truth" means the religion of knowledge.

We shall not elaborate further here, as this subject is reserved for a dedicated book titled *The Golden Age of Islam is Ahead of Us*.



## How is the prayer of imitation elevated to the prayer of originality?

First and foremost, prayer is the noblest act of worship for a servant, and everything related to it must be approached with utmost seriousness. Presence of heart, called (*ḥuḍūr*) in prayer must be complete to the best of one's ability, and one's efforts must constantly be directed towards extending this presence. Indeed, such presence begins even before entering the prayer itself. For this reason, ritual purity (*ṭahāra*), whether major or minor, using water or earth, has been prescribed to prepare the heart for entering prayer with attentiveness.

Impurity (*najāsa*), at its core, is not the physical impurity of the limbs due to external acts but rather the impurity of the heart through heedlessness of God. Physical impurity is merely a symbol of this inner state.

The Messiah (Jesus, peace be upon him) said: "It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person." By "what goes into the mouth," he refers to physical impurities such as the remnants of food or drink. By "what comes out of the mouth," he refers to speaking about what does not concern one or what one does not truly know: "When you utter it with your tongues and say with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge, thinking it is insignificant while it is, in the sight of Allah, tremendous" (24:15).

The Infallible also said: "Indeed, there is a piece of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the entire body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart."

The legislator (*al-shāriʿ*) prescribed minor purification (*wuḍūʿ*) using water, or earth as a substitute in cases where water is unavailable or cannot be

used, for states of impurity such as defecation, urination, passing wind, [following] sleep, or forgetfulness. Major purification (*ghusl*) with water, or with earth in its absence or in cases of incapacity, was prescribed for states such as intercourse, nocturnal emission, unconsciousness, or conversion to Islam.

And all of this can be traced back to heedlessness (*ghafla*). The cause of impurity (*najāsa*) often relates to indulging in bodily pleasures: either the pleasures of the stomach, which result in the expulsion of waste, or the pleasures of the private parts, through intercourse, nocturnal emissions, or lesser acts. Heedlessness always accompanies the pursuit of pleasure.

Bathing (*ghusl*) was mandated for a polytheist upon entering Islam because they were previously in a state of great heedlessness of God during their polytheism. Similarly, the states of unconsciousness, sleep, or forgetfulness are clear instances of a lapse in awareness.

Thus, impurity is fundamentally the impurity of the heart caused by heedlessness of God. Physical impurity is only a sign of this inner condition. When physical purification (*ṭahāra*) of the sensory limbs is prescribed using material water, it serves as an outer layer, whose essence is the inner purification of the hidden faculties, heart and intellect, with the metaphorical water of knowledge. God says: “He sends down water from the sky, and valleys flow according to their measure” (13:17). The material water and physical valleys are well-known, but from the inner perspective, the water is the Qur’an, and the valleys are the hearts. “Valleys flow according to their measure” means that each heart takes from the Qur’an its capacity of illumination.

If you wish to be fully present in prayer, you must first be present during ablution (*wuḍūʿ*). You should regard its sanctity as equivalent to that of

prayer itself, as it is a part of prayer. Ablution becomes invalid for the same reasons that invalidate prayer.

The intention (*niyya*) in ablution must be continuous as you wash each part of the body. It is insufficient to simply state at the beginning of ablution, whether with mindfulness or absent-mindedly, "I intend to perform ablution," only to then drift into idle talk or heedlessness, allowing your limbs to move mechanically in the act of ablution, driven by habit alone.

If you truly wish to perform ablution properly, your inner purification must align with your outward cleansing, flowing seamlessly with each limb. As you wash any part of your body, reflect on what this limb has introduced to your heart, whether light or darkness, because the gateways of the heart to the external world, through which light or darkness enters, are these very limbs upon which the water of ablution is poured.

When washing your hands, reflect on what deeds they have committed before you sat down for ablution. Did they harm an innocent? Did they seize rights that were not yours, whether from people's property or their dignity? Did they refrain from aiding an oppressed person or from extending help to someone in need? If you recall any such wrongful actions, feel remorse, resolve to repent, and seek God's forgiveness. If you remember a good deed, do not attribute it to yourself but to God's grace and guidance. Be grateful to Him and let your joy be in God, [and] not in your actions.

When washing your mouth, think of your teeth and what they have chewed, was it permissible or prohibited? Reflect on your tongue, the interpreter of the heart. Did it engage in matters that did not concern it? Did it backbite, remain silent in the face of truth, fail to defend the oppressed, or neglect the recitation of the Qur'an? If you recall any of

these faults, feel regret, commit to repentance, and seek God's forgiveness.

Similarly, reflect on your ears. Have they indulged in listening to gossip or vain talk while shunning the Qur'an and words of truth? Consider your eyes, have they looked upon what is forbidden, or cast a glance at someone's honor, or failed to gaze upon the Qur'an? Think about your nose, a symbol of dignity and pride, have you raised it arrogantly above others, or have you humbled it in devotion and worship of God?

When you wash your head, consider what it holds. Does it contain beneficial knowledge that you act upon, or trivialities that harm rather than benefit you? Lastly, when washing your feet, ask yourself if they have walked to mosques, places of knowledge, or gatherings of remembrance. Have they carried you to help neighbors or fulfill others' needs? Or, have they led you to forbidden or blameworthy acts?

Each time you recall a deed displeasing to God, increase your repentance, strengthen your resolve to reform, and seek His forgiveness. When recalling a pleasing deed, do not exalt in it, linger over it excessively, or claim it as your own. Instead, thank God for granting you the ability to perform it purely through His Grace, without any merit on your part.

No one should think that the process I described takes a long time. It occurs naturally within the usual time for ablution (*wuḍū'*), which should remain continuous and uninterrupted. You are not required to recall every minor detail of your actions, particularly in the beginning stages of this practice. If, during ablution, your focus is drawn to a significant transgression committed by one of your limbs, and this contemplation occupies your entire time during the ablution, leaving you immersed in its enormity, repenting, and seeking forgiveness, then this suffices. The

essential aim is to turn your attention inward, softening and tendering your heart.

Reciting the Qur'an during ablution, with your heart aligned with your tongue, will help in achieving the desired state. Over time, with consistent practice of this self-accountability, your transgressions will diminish, your reflections will become more concentrated, and your awareness of your deeds will pass swiftly, allowing your heart to soften and become more responsive due to frequent mindfulness.

When you complete your ablution in this manner, your heart will have been purified with the light of knowledge and softened by the fire of repentance. Your limbs will also have been cleansed with water. By the time you stand for prayer, you will be closer to achieving a fitting state of presence and focus.

When you begin your prayer, remember that it involves two sacred moments: the *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām* (the state of consecration as you commence the prayer) and the *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām* (the state of peace as you conclude it). Each of these moments has its own etiquette, which is essential for the prayer to be valid and meaningful.

As for the sacred state of *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām*, it begins with the utterance of the *Takbīrat al-Iḥrām* (the opening declaration, "Allāhu Akbar") as you start the prayer and ends when you conclude it with the salutation of peace (*Salām*). The essence of this sacred state lies in maintaining a profound presence with God. Naturally, moments of distraction and inattentiveness (*ghaflah*) will occur, especially at the early stages of spiritual practice. The etiquette of presence is rectified by feeling regret after the prayer, seeking God's forgiveness, and refusing to be satisfied with your performance of the prayer, regardless of the degree of attentiveness you achieved. Always

focus on the aspects of the prayer that fell short and reflect on the majesty of the One before whom you stood.

For the Knowers who are deeply aware of God's grandeur, they leave the prayer feeling as if they are burdened with the remorse of someone who has committed a great offense in public view. During the recitation of the post-prayer praises, repeating *Subḥān Allāh*, *Al-ḥamdu li-Allāh*, and *Allāhu Akbar* thirty-three times each, maintain the following reflections:

- With *Subḥān Allāh* (Glory be to God), declare His transcendence, acknowledging that your prayer was far from meeting the level He truly deserves from you.
- With *Al-ḥamdu li-Allāh* (Praise be to God), recognize His Grace and Kindness in allowing you to remain in His presence, despite your lack of etiquette and attentiveness, as distractions overtook your heart while standing before Him. Reflect on how, if you were standing before a mere municipal official for a worldly need, your attentiveness would be absolute. Yet, here you stand before the King of kings, inattentive to His words as you recite them absentmindedly with your tongue while your heart wanders elsewhere.
- With *Allāhu Akbar* (God is greater), affirm that God is far greater than anything you could express in all the declarations of greatness throughout your prayer. Indeed, He transcends your entire prayer and its worth.

Through such feelings of humility, inadequacy, and remorse, your etiquette (*adab*) during the sacred state of *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām* becomes complete, paving and easing your path toward true servitude.

Nevertheless, let not this awareness of shortcoming lead you to despair. Instead, let it inspire constant efforts to amend your shortcomings and place your hope in God's Grace, not your deeds. Keep your focus on His bounty, not on your efforts. As the Infallible said: "None of you will enter Paradise by his deeds alone." The Companions asked, "Not even you, O Messenger of God?" He replied, "Not even I, unless God envelops me in His Mercy."

As for *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām* (the state of peace), it begins with the declaration of *Salām* as you exit the state of *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām* and ends with the *Takbīrat al-Iḥrām* as you enter the next prayer. It is essentially the prayer between two formal prayers, it is the *ṣalāt al-wuṣṭā* (the middle prayer) mentioned in the Qur'an: "Guard strictly the prayers, especially the middle prayer, and stand before God with devout obedience" (2:238).

This means safeguarding the five obligatory prayers by performing them on time and with all their prescribed pillars, while *the middle prayer* also refers to how you treat people between these obligatory prayers, treating them as if you are dealing with God through them. "And stand before God with devout obedience" signifies being in constant remembrance of God, without forgetting Him, at any time, whether in ease or hardship, in your movements or rest, during your giving or taking, and in all your interactions with others, whether in matters of livelihood or matters specific to devotion.

The etiquette of this state of being is encapsulated by the concept of peace, summarized by the Infallible in his statement: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe."

The term *Muslims* in this context encompasses all of God's creation, whether living beings or inanimate objects, as everything is created with wisdom, and our dealings with them must consider the wisdom of the Creator [in their creation]. The Qur'an says: "Say, 'My Lord has

commanded justice, and that you maintain yourselves entirely in every *Masjid*" (7:29).

Justice (*qist*) means observing fairness and wisdom in all interactions, and "maintain yourselves entirely in every *masjid*" signifies turning to God with awareness, not with heedlessness. "Every *masjid*" refers not only to the physical structures designated for obligatory worship (i.e. mosques), but to every place on earth, in the marketplace, on the street, in the workplace, and wherever you may be. The earth has been made a *masjid* for the Muslim.

More profoundly, the *masjids* are the human selves, particularly the hearts of believers, as God says: "Neither My heavens nor My earth can contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant does." (*hadith qudsi* - sacred narrative from the Prophet Muhammad). Thus, *masjids* are the houses of God, human hearts, in both the general and specific senses. Those who understand the comprehensive nature of the Qur'an will realize that "maintain yourselves entirely in every *masjid*" calls for treating all beings and things with care and reverence, just as one does when standing in the sanctuary of formal prayer.

The minimum level of etiquette in *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām* is spreading peace among people by frequently greeting them with *Salām 'Alaikum* (peace be upon you). This should not be done out of habit but with a heartfelt intention of fostering peace and goodwill. Beyond spreading peace, there are higher levels of etiquette: refraining from harming others, bearing with their harm when inflicted upon you, and ultimately delivering good to them through sincere intentions in your heart and kind words from your tongue.

God says: "And tell My servants to say what is best. Surely, Satan sows discord among them. Satan is certainly a sworn enemy to humanity" (17:53). And He says: "And speak to people kindly" (2:83).



Then, through righteous deeds and sincere efforts in addressing the needs of others, the foundational principle is: "None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself," or, "Treat people the way you want them to treat you," or more profoundly, treat people the way you would want God to treat you on the Day of your [abject] poverty and need, for if you do so, you shall be treated likewise.

This state, *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām* (the state of peace), requires the same level of presence-of-mind as *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām* (the state of consecrated sanctity), particularly during your interactions with people. You must always seek the countenance of God and remain vigilant about your state [of being]. This vigilance is called *murāqabah* (watchfulness), and through *murāqabah*, you embody the state of *taqwā* (piety). *Taqwā* is defined as acting, or refraining from action, with the sole intention of seeking God's pleasure: "And whoever seeks piety towards Allah, He will grant him a criterion" (8:29). "Alif. Lām. Mīm. This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance for the pious" (2:1-2). "And be pious towards Allah, and Allah will teach you" (2:282).

Naturally, lapses in vigilance occur, and at times, some of the faculties, particularly the tongue, may stray, leading to errors and breaches of the etiquette required for *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām*. The way to rectify lapses in *murāqabah* is through *muḥāsabah* (self-accountability), which we previously discussed in the context of ablution at the end of *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām*, as preparation for entering the next *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām*. Through *muḥāsabah*, one addresses what was missed during *murāqabah*, as the wise ones have said.

To mend breaches in etiquette in both *Ḥaḍrat al-Iḥrām* and *Ḥaḍrat al-Salām*, fasting becomes necessary, alongside reducing sleep and minimizing speech. Less food and less sleep help diminish idle thoughts,

unnecessary distractions, and frivolous talk, which in turn curtail idle actions. This process makes the heart free and focused, enabling it to turn completely towards Allah with full attention.

There is a simple, light, and effortless practice that holds immense benefit, and it was a tradition of the Infallible. This practice involves consciously favoring the right side over the left. For example, when entering the mosque, he would lead with his right foot; upon exiting, he would lead with his left. Similarly, when entering the restroom, he would lead with his left foot; upon exiting, he would lead with his right. When lying down to sleep, he would rest on his right side, facing the Qibla. When putting on his shoes after standing up, he would lead with his right foot if the shoes were softer than the surface he was standing on or with his left foot if the surface was softer than the shoes.

Such seemingly simple acts are profoundly effective in combating the influence of habit, which often dictates our actions. Frequently, we act out of routine without thought or awareness, merely following what habit demands. By consciously opposing habitual tendencies, we engage the mind, encouraging it to replace mindless routines. The golden rule to remember here is: "The affliction of every act of worship is when it becomes mere habit."

The awakening of thought and mindfulness is the ultimate purpose of worship. Hence, the Exalted states: "And We have sent down to you the Reminder, so that you may explain to the people what was sent to them, and so they may reflect" (16:44). The verse clarifies: "We have sent down to you the Reminder," meaning the Qur'an. "So that you may explain to the people what was sent to them," meaning to elaborate their law. "And so they may reflect," implying that worship serves to sharpen the faculty

of thought, allowing the *dhikr* (remembrance of God) to guide it to higher realms.

Moreover, favoring the right side over the left signifies granting each [phenomenon] its rightful consideration, and placing things in their proper positions. This practice embodies wisdom, which is the essence of God's attributes. The Prophet said: "Adopt the character traits of God, for my Lord is upon a straight path."

Thus, by adhering to this simple practice in the imitation of the Prophet, we begin the process of adopting the traits of God. With God's Grace and Guidance, this practice can lead us along the pathways of wisdom, enabling us to ascend to the heights of Divine Knowledge. This journey demands an open mind and a commitment to justice, fairness, and uprightness in how we interact with all beings and things.

## Conclusion

Finally, this is *The Message of Prayer*. It briefly discusses prayer at its lowest levels, where it is the act of worshiping Allah, and at its highest levels, where it becomes a life with Allah. Every act in the worship of Allah is meant to transform into a life with Allah; if it falls short of this, it is invalid.

Some may think that this statement is excessive, and that we are not obligated to [pursue] it, as we are accustomed to hearing from them [the religious scholars]. Let such individuals ponder God's words: "And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord before the punishment comes upon you suddenly while you do not perceive" (7:185). And the best that was revealed to us by our Lord is Islam, which is the final stage [of religion], through which our peace with ourselves is completed, and our peace with our brothers [and sisters] in this life is achieved.

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