Halaqa: Wednesday, February 19, 2014

Topic: Who responds to our prayers (2)

**“… And you threw not, when you threw, but it was God who threw…”**

**Anfal (8): 17**

Although the verse is set within a story in the Quran, don’t limit your understanding of the verse to the story.

* Remember, all verses in the Quran provide universal meaning

Whenever someone performs an action, like throwing, there is a force (power) at play. This power, however, is not within my control at all.

How do I know this?

I know because I have no control over events such as existence, life, change, time, death etc. If I really had control, I ought to be able to stop aging or avert death, for example. While I think I possess power to perform actions, the reality is far from true.

We can only have the intention to do something, but it is not us who creates the action and lets it come to pass.

* We have no ownership over the action except to ask
* My asking is a prayer

I can only want something.

He is the Creator.

We tend to get caught up in the regularity of the order assuming that the order creates but in reality, NOTHING has a single fraction in the act of creation.

* As humans with a conscious will and intellect, we are able to express our desires and needs.
  + These desires and ‘wants’ are in essence prayers.
  + Why?
  + A sense of want necessarily encompasses surrendering. If we choose to surrender to the Creator of everything by being conscious of the fact that **we cannot give existence to what we want to exist**, then, our surrender is worship.

Our physical body, as is observed, is constantly in a state of worship. For a single cell to function, it has to be under the command of the Creator. Its mere existence is an act of submission to the order established in the universe by the Creator.

But as humans, we are more than just a physical body. We have a spirit, human faculties, at the core of which is free will.

Am I ready to choose submission over non-submission? In other words, am I ready to express my desires to the All- Powerful One who creates everything and consciously submit myself to Him?

The Quran presents this verse: **“… And you threw not, when you threw, but it was God who threw…”**

**Anfal (8): 17**

Am I ready to confirm it?

* Remember, the Quran is a guide to my HUMAN QUALITIES. We have to take the guidance and see if it really does correspond to my being.

The verse claims that we do not create. All we do is to ask (request/intend/want). It is the Creator who creates for me.

* Does this make sense?
* Check within yourself if you are able to create anything!

I can only ask. I have **no** part in creating and hold **no** share in Creation.

* We may falsely assume that we have some power of creation
* Ask yourself: Do you have ANY power to give existence to anything which did not exist, apart from using what is already given to me?

My position in this universe is only limited to asking. I have no ability to guarantee anything or to create it.

A more convincing way of understanding our powerlessness can be through observing our existence on the time axis: I existed yesterday. I exist right now. Will I be able to make myself exist tomorrow?

* + I have no power to guarantee my existence for the very next second, let alone tomorrow.
  + Who/what can guarantee your existence tomorrow?
  + We can only make projections and expectations but nothing can guarantee!
  + There is nothing within the universe that can even guarantee its own existence.

It seems to be that we are speaking BUT in reality, we have no power to create it

* We only intend and the Creator creates it for us
  + I desire to speak.
  + My desire necessarily encompasses submission.
  + But am I conscious of who I am submitting to? Who am I asking to create what I want?
    - The All-Powerful One who creates everything as per His will

Referring to death, some people may say that death happens because “natural laws” have to operate

* Natural laws, however, are given existence themselves
* They are not Creators nor can they sustain their own creation
* Don’t ascribe the power of creation to anything apart from God

Think about it: Can water guarantee the existence of a plant in the next moment?

* No.
* It works within the order; it itself is subject to the order
  + Natural laws are as they are because they have been ordered as such
  + They have no independent existence or will

Some may argue: I may not be able to create BUT I can destroy

* Can you really destroy?
* It is not you who creates ‘non-existence’
* You may be the killer BUT you cannot be the creator of the death of the tree.

As humans, we are responsible as far as our practice of our free choice goes.

The act of creation is not within our control.

Just because we ask, it does not mean that it will definitely happen.

- But when we ask, we should bear the awareness that only the Creator of the universe can respond to our wanting, i.e. prayers

It is necessary for us to realize that at every moment we are praying

* To exist, to see, to breathe, to eat, to hear, to write, etc
* EVERYTHING is praying, even the atheists are in prayer
  + As humans we have the free will to confirm the fact that everything is praying or not and consciously return ownership to the Creator.

Even inanimate objects have instincts with which they are in a state of praying

* The Quran says: Everything glorifies God.

In reality, that means, everything is in a state of prayer

* Conscious beings are free to acknowledge it or to deny it

What does it really mean when we ‘ask’ and ‘want’: We ask because we are unable to create. If we could do it ourselves, why bother asking. However, we cannot create a single thing or an event HENCE we ask by attempting to follow the way the things are put in order by their Creator.

Traditionally, prayer means us asking God for something particular.

- In reality, prayer is simple me wanting (with the acknowledgment that God is the Creator).

Ask yourself: Do we have any share in the act of Creation?

* Apart from asking, no.

*In reality, we observe that even when I don’t ask, things happen. At other times, despite my asking, things may not happen, as I want.*

*What then is the role of asking?*

I have been created with the ability to be free in my choice. I am free to follow the order in the creation or not to do so. If I follow the order I am granted the success for my prayers; if I do not follow the order I fail. That is the Choice of the Creator of the order.

My main responsibility as a conscious human being is to be aware of this reality. I have to acknowledge that my Creator gives this free will to me as He has equipped me with the body and other human senses.

*As a human (point to note: One of the essentials of being human is my free will), my prayer is simply me acknowledging and then submitting His Creatorship.*

I have been created with wants.

* I find myself wanting food, wanting happiness, wanting love, etc
* Yet, I cannot create any of it
* The point of my desires is merely to connect me to the Source of Creation
  + Within my desire itself is the response (i.e. connection)

When we desire a particular event we often confuse the result of our desire as being a response.

Example: I want to grow a flower in the garden. I use my free will to put the seed in the soil and let it get moisture.

Result (A): The flower grows and blossoms

Result (B): The flower does not grow.

Both results have been created NOT by me. I had no input into the action of growing the plant. I just obeyed the order, which is set by the Absolute Will of the Creator of the universe.

From any of these results I am learning the order and expected to take lesson from my previous experience so that I will follow the order, as it requires me to do. I am subject to the order; I am NOT the establisher of the order.

Another example: I desire to pass an exam. The order within creation, as I observe, tells me that I have to study in order to pass. So I study and hope that I will pass.

Result (A) : I pass

Result (B): I fail

Both results have been created. My passing or failing is NOT within my control. When I desire for something, I have to be aware that I am in essence submitting to the Creator’s Will. His Will is Absolute and manifests Itself in the order of His creation. I just have to obey His Will by obeying His order.

If I celebrate my passing and say: I studied, so I passed, I have just set myself up for trouble.

I passed because my Creator willed it so. The creation of the result does not depend on me.

If I am depressed at my failing and say: I studied and yet didn’t pass. I am similarly setting myself up for trouble.

In scenario A, I attribute myself as responsible for creating successful results.

In scenario B, I attribute myself as responsible for the unsuccessful results.

Anything that is created can only be from Him.

As humans, our responsibility is merely two-fold:

1. Follow the order (in creation)
2. Submit to the Creator of the order.

In the Quran, when Allah says “Oh my *abd”* itrefers to EVERYTHING

* We are all worshippers
* Whether I consciously accept it or not, is up to me to choose

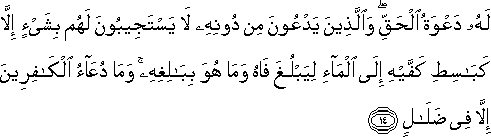
Everything is a state of prayer. When I am conscious of it, I worship God. If I am not conscious of it, I am worshipping ‘accidents’ but my existence is still in a state of worship.

Our free will is what we need to set in a state of prayer (submission).

We have to be a worshipper of God not only 5 times a day but all the time.

**“To Him alone is due all true invocation, since those [other beings or powers] whom men invoke instead of Him cannot respond to them in any way – [so that he who invokes them is] but like one who stretches his open hands towards water, [hoping] that it will reach his mouth, while it never reaches him. Hence, the prayer of those who deny the truth amounts to no more than losing oneself in grievous error.”**

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I have to remind myself that I do not give existence to ANYTHING.

I study for an exam and HOPE to pass.

* My hope is a prayer
* Whether I acknowledge it with my consciousness or not, I am still praying
* I am only desiring and wanting from the One who creates
* By wanting, I am acknowledging that I am not creating

**Hence, the prayer of those who deny the truth amounts to no more than losing oneself in grievous error.**

The prayer of the denier results in NOTHING.

* If you ask anything other than the Creator for something, you will NOT get it.
  + This verse is telling us that nothing that happens to us is by anything other than the Creator.
* Apart from the Creator of the universe, nothing can respond to your prayers.

When I put the seed in the soil, if I expect that the soil will respond to my asking the seed to grow, I’m being absolutely ignorant because the seed has no quality to respond to my desire. It is subject to the order in which it has been created. If I think water is responding to my asking, it has no will, no consciousness, no ability to go out of the order it has been subjected to etc.

This verse is to remind me that I should not waste my human feelings by directing them to anything which has no will, no power, no knowledge of itself. Rather I ought to be aware that when I follow the order I am obeying the Will of the One who created the order and am expecting Him to respond to my asking, i.e. praying. If I think that the water, or soil etc will respond to my prayers, I will be “grievous error.” That means my choice absolutely makes no sense.

Example: When you don’t express your desire of wanting to pass, directly to the Creator, you are implying that something else is in control of your results.

* When you pass, you think that YOU are the cause of it
  + TROUBLE: You think you are the creator and that leads you away from the real Creator. Your false attribution may not mean anything to you at this present moment but if you really begin to ponder over it you will realize that you cannot guarantee anything. When something does not go according to your plan, you will end up in despair.

Every moment, event, meeting is transient. Our responsibility is to return that moment to the Absolute Creator so that the moment will be with us for eternity. Otherwise, each passing moment has no worth.

When we submit, it is not about the particular result we are pinned on, but merely acknowledging the Creator.

Unbeliever: A person who denies the fact that the universe has been created by an Absolute Creator.

* When he asks something to come into existence, that is his praying, he is not praying to God because he refuses to acknowledge God
* In doing so, his prayer is in vain because he will get no response from what he has in his mind that the objects in the universe will respond to him. Whether he acknowledges or he does not, the Creator of the order is responding to his demands. If he chooses NOT to acknowledge this reality, he will be depriving his human expectations of the Eternal Creator’s Presence for him. He will be a prisoner in these blind events that he attributes as happening accidentally or by nature.
  + Whoever/whatever is being asked has NO POWER to create
  + Nothing can be the reason of existence apart from the Creator.

Being in error is essentially being in a state of delusion about your reality.

Response: getting what we want.

Language of the Quran needs to be understood on a universal scale. Don’t restrict it.

It does not mean that I won’t be successful in the world BUT my choice of thinking will be in grievous error because it will bring me nothing but hopelessness, dead end, total annihilation, meaningless existence within the wilderness of chaotic happenings. My human desire for eternal happiness will be devastated.

Belief is not what I feel. It is what I confirm.

Water is as is created. It has no independent existence to reach you.

* Whether you get the water or not, is by the Creator’s will. Water acts on the will of its Creator.

My belief must be so secure and full of conviction that even if the whole world rejects the Creator, I still submit.

Apart from the Creator, nothing can create.

* We have to confirm this from various perspectives so that we can be absolutely sure.