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| **Date** | Saturday, March 5, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Prophet Job’s supplication |
| **Part** | 1 |

**THE SECONF FLASH: “When he called upon his Lord saying: *“Verily harm has afflicted me, and You are the most Merciful of the Merciful” (21:83)***

**The supplication of Job (Upon whom be peace), the champion of patience, is both well-tested and effective. Drawing on the verse, we should say in our supplication, “O my Lord and Sustainer! Indeed harm has afflicted me and, You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful.”**

**The gist of the well-known story of Job (Upon whom be peace) is as follows:**

**While afflicted with numerous wounds and sores for a long time, he recalled the great recompense to be had for his sickness, and endured it with utmost patience. But later, when the worms generated by his wounds penetrated to his heart and his tongue, the seat of the remembrance and knowledge of God, he feared that his duty of worship would suffer, and so he said in supplication not for the sake of his own comfort, but for the sake of worship of God:**

**“O Lord! Harm has afflicted me, my remembrance of You with my tongue and my worship of You with my heart will suffer.” God Almighty then accepted this pure sincere, disinterested and devout supplication in the most miraculous fashion. He granted to Job perfect good health and made manifest in him all kinds of compassion. This Flash contains five points:**

**FIRST POINT**

**Corresponding to the outer wounds and sickness of Job (Upon whom be peace), we have inner sicknesses of the spirit and heart. If our inner being were to be turned outward, and our outer being turned inward, we would appear more wounded and diseased than Job. For each sin that we commit and each doubt that enters our mind, inflicts wounds on our heart and our spirit.**

The definition of the Quran relays a mutual communication between my being and the One that creates me. He speaks, I respond. The story of Job is narrated in most monotheistic scriptures. **One should not read Prophetic narrations to take lessons from it because the message then remains external to me. I need to take whatever is stated and apply it to my own self.** That is the surest way to benefit from the speech of the Creator. The Creator is not speaking to entertain me with stories but rather to guide me in my current condition and situation. Just as we studied Jonah’s narration where we related his every phase to myself (defined my fish, my storm…), similarly I need to read Job’s narration and all other narrations as speaking to me right now. Quran is a book through which our Creator speaks directly to us. Therefore, when I read the stories narrated, I have to understand the stories with respect to my own reality. The speech of God cannot be external to me, everything stated must have something to do with my being.

* Purpose of the stories is clearly stated in the Qur’an:
* **فَاقْصُصِ الْقَصَصَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ**
* “Tell [them], then, this story, so that they might take thought.” Araf (7): 176
* With respect to the previously studied story of Jonah, we have to ask:

1. *What is ‘my fish’?*
2. *What is ‘my storm’?*
3. *What are my ‘waves’?*
4. *What is my ‘helplessness’?*

The primary purpose of the Quran in narrating the stories is not to extract practical rules to be applied to societal norms. The stories must deliver light to my CURRENT situation.

* Do not relegate the stories to historical events by serving as a lesson for a future time (in case something similar happens in the future…)
* In doing so, we are contradicting the very purpose of the revelation and making it irrelevant to our lives now.

Reading the Quran is akin to communicating with our Creator.

* When reading a verse/story in the text, I should reflect on how it relates to my situation.
* My Lord is speaking to me right now. I need to position my situation within the conditions of the text.
* THINK: *If you were left all alone, can you help yourself? Can anything in the universe help me with my needs? Can the universe provide me with Eternal happiness?*
* **As a human being, I want eternal happiness.**
* ***Can the whole humanity provide me with Eternal Happiness?***
* Even if we got the whole world in our hands, we will still find ourselves in a state of insecurity.
* We have to find ourselves in the ‘helpless’ position that is narrated through the story of the Prophet Job and accordingly read the relevant verses in the Quran.
* I have to find myself in the helpless situation as Job.

Typical but false ways of relating the stories of the Prophet which makes the narration as an external event:

* You are ill. Someone tells you: “The Prophet Job suffered so much and he was patient, so you have to be patient. If you are patient, you will be rewarded, just like how the Prophet was rewarded.”
* If I experience an illness in the future, the lesson from Prophet Job will prepare me to overcome it.

Instead, reflect on the following: **‘Verily, harm has afflicted me.’**

* ASK: *Has any harm afflicted me?*
* Do not merely think of afflictions in terms of a terminal illness or being financially bankrupt. These definitions of harm are merely worldly terms that are defined by society.
* *We usually do not see harm afflicting on us unless we see a calamity.*
* **The guidance of the Quran is telling me that harm has already afflicted me. That is my reality right now. My responsibility is to become conscious of it!**

I have to be aware that harm has afflicted me RIGHT NOW. I need to renew myself with how I understand harm without losing myself in the terminology or as an external event. **We are told that our tongue and heart have been afflicted.**

* **ASK:** *Is my tongue or heart really afflicted with harm?*
* My heart= representative of my human senses.

My task is to work on myself. ***That is to try and find Who do I belong to?*** The first step is to be cognizant of Mercy around me and feel it. THIS IS NOT AN EASY TASK! I need to work on feeling Mercy by questioning the purpose of existence of myself and the universe around me. Since I would not find anything in the universe to be the source of mercy, I may then attribute it to a Conscious Being, bestower of Mercy. ‘**Harm has afflicted me in every stage of my life but I know You are the most Merciful of the merciful and can guide me**. **The affliction of the harm was because of my ignorance of Your Mercy in the creation of that particular event, which I saw as harmful for me .’** Acknowledge Its Mercy in any situation you are in. Only after realizing the Merciful One, we will not see disaster within the purpose of our existence in this world.

* **If you are able to acknowledge Its Mercy, you will find yourself saved from your own harm.**
* **Having realized that my Creator is the most merciful, my illness/pain/disaster will no longer be a problem for me.**

Even if I have the ‘physical’ illness, I find myself at peace **knowing whom I belong to**. Most of the time we are more concerned with “physical” illnesses and ignore the existential questions. These existential questions can help in clearing up the “doubts” about the reality of our source of existence. Instead of solely focusing on the physical aspect of our lives, we need to reflect inward so that we will be connected with the state of our soul. All of our ‘physical’ experiences are meant to assist us to fulfill the purpose of our existence so that we may get to know who is creating these events and for what purpose. **Example: If you have a headache, you are experiencing physical pain but you are not created to solely experience the physical pain but to evaluate the pain in terms of the purpose of your existence.** Everything is deliberately created for you to get to know the purpose of your existence. They are the means for us to fulfill the purpose of our existence in this form of universe: **To get to know who we are and who our existence belongs to**. To sum up:

1. Health, illness, wealth, poverty, youth, aging, etc are ALL given so that we may discover Who we truly belong to.
2. Do not merely get lost in the physical manifestation of experiences. They do not lead to anything.
3. Just being healthy for the sake of being healthy is NOT the purpose of my life.
4. In every situation and life stage, get to know the Creator of that particular situation. In doing so, you will know with certainty who you belong to and feel secure in your existence.

It is imperative that we follow this methodology otherwise we will lose ourselves with defining words with their dictionary meaning prevalent at the time of revelations. In other words, the definition of the verse is the outcome of the culture within that historical time and not the Quranic definition which is meant for all times. Quran is to be read within its purpose detached from any historical context. That is getting ready to listen to my Creator to see what It is saying to me RIGHT NOW.

We find the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) so compassionate and merciful in his relationship with the people because he had truly internalized the Quran’s message for himself. He was just sharing his understandings with others, not providing a commentary. However, people asked him practical questions and based on their capacity level, he responded accordingly. His actions were the results of his own understandings. In his relationships, we see that he was not an imposing ruler. He was just relaying the Quran and practicing it himself. **His primary purpose was to deliver an internal training and not one rooted in the physicality of things.**

**I have to encourage myself and establish a personal communication with the Lord:** “If you are telling me in your Speech (the Qur’an) that harm has afflicted me and I am not aware of it, then I have to try my best to realize this harm. Harm is everywhere and it is related to the purpose of my being here, my being created in this world. That is the purpose of the Quran, to teach me my reality”.

***What do I understand from shifa (healing)?***

We are told that the Quran is a ‘*shifa’ (healing)*. However, we need to understand healing with respect to the teachings of the Quran i.e. **it teaches me how to get out of this agony** as far as my human responsibility is concerned. It is not about receiving a ‘cure’ for my physical illness but rather, I should read it with respect to addressing my human qualities. Listen to the Quran to feed your humanity not the physical body.

* ***Shifa*= solving the problem within the context of the definition of the Quran**. It is a healing to my humanity.

I need to solve my existential problems. Everything seems mysterious here. I want to understand what existing in this world means. The Quran is a guidance to discover this mystery. I am given the quality to wonder. Reflect on the existence of the universe and you are bound to feel imprisoned. **Wanting to see what is beyond the universe is what makes a human being. But there is no way to see it and that is what I want to understand.** Whoever put me here can help me get out of this agony. I can run in different directions but I cannot get out of existence.

* If I follow Job’s way where he solved his problem from within, then I have the ability to solve all my existential problems as well. ***How?***
* **By understanding who this existence belongs to.** **The transformation is only possible if and only if I listen to the Speech of God personally.** It is similar to waking up from a dream. This universe is like a dream and when I wake up from it (i.e. given death), that would be my Eternal life. In this dream, I need to cope with my feelings of being imprisoned because I know that when I die, I will wake up to a new life.

***What is sin?***

Sinning must be understood in terms of solving existential problems. Contrary to conventional understanding, it has little to do with material or physical sins that we commit (stealing, lying, adultery...) which are the results of our more fundamental weaknesses in our conviction.

* Sinning has to be understood with respect to the state of our hearts, our awareness.

When we are faced with doubts (doubts as, for instance, in existence of God) in our heart and minds, instead of addressing them, we merely cover them up.Each ‘cover up’ leads to further misguidance**.** ‘Don’t doubt about God’ we are told but if we do not question and reach firm conclusions, we set ourselves for deeper doubt***. Without questioning and studying the Speech of the Creator, how can I conclude that there is no doubt about It?***

Our sad reality is such that we have occupied ourselves with worldly expectations. INSTEAD, I should be asking: ***How can I entertain my existence as a human being?* *How can I satisfy my human expectations which go into eternity?* I have the ability to experience the happiness of Paradise while I am here in the universe. I just need to study!**

Oft-heard: ‘It is raining’ versus Quran’s speech: ‘We sent the rain’

* In our daily expressions and conversations, we need to train ourselves to see and connect with the Creator of the universe.

What am I doing with my endless human capacities and human concerns?

* I find that plenty of my capacities are left unused
* I usually do not address the questions posed by my humanity. I leave them unsettled and rust in the back of my head
* Religion is meant to provide us a way to connect all of our human senses to It at every moment in all of our actions, and thus reach serenity in our existence.
* **Sin= not being aware of my human qualities, thus wasting my true human value.**

***How can I satisfy my desire for an Eternal life right now?***

I want Eternity and religion educates me to utilize my human side and attach my being to Its existence. I have to satisfy myself for eternity right now. In this world, we have to satisfy our desire for eternity by relating our desires to their Source. **We have to prepare our human senses for eternity**. If we do not prepare ourselves (our senses here), then we will not be ready for graduation (death). Analogy: A medical student registers with classes but never does his assignments, he does not learn anything. After graduation, he opens up his own practice but does not know how to practice because he never educated himself while in school.

* Similarly, if I never educate myself and trained my potentialities here, I do not know what I am going to face with after I die.
* As much as I have trained myself here, that much I can educate myself and take with me in the Eternal life.

**Experiencing eternal happiness is practicing belief while I am living in this world. This is the missing dimension of my life.** Problem is: what do we understand by “practice” of belief? **Practicing of belief means to keep my existence (human senses) as directly connected with the consciousness of God and learn how to live with it. That is practice.** Example: Prayer is my physical practice; giving to charity is a physical practice which should be prompted as a result of my awareness of the source of existence.

* ***What is expected from giving charity i.e. while giving charity what do you feel?***
* Common response: I feel relaxed after helping someone. ***Good BUT where is God in your life?***
* **My sense is given to me in order to experience who my Lord is.**
* ***Have I experienced who my Lord is?* That is practice.**
* Similarly, we may pray but we never practice our belief (*imaan*). We may not know that belief in God must be practiced within our humanity not only the physical body.
* **After my humanity practices belief, my body goes along with it. My Creator of this sense has given this sense to me as a trust and wants me to use the sense in order to understand who my Lord is. Experiencing this is what practice is.**

**If I educate my human side which substantiates my external activities, then I get to know the Source of my existence. That will make me feel absolutely sure not to miss my prayers for example because my humanity, my existence is based on It.**  **My prayer needs to be meaningful and satisfactory just like an empty cup (the physical form) that I have to fill in (my awareness). I have to work on filling the cup.** While I am praying, I have to listen to the Quran so that I may experience eternal happiness. The phrase ‘***amal-ul-salih’*** (good deeds) has mostly been reduced to “physical terms” only.

* While we have to do ‘good deeds’ physically, I have to perform deeds for my inner humanity, to acknowledge the source of my senses and actions
* Practice of belief is what is essential and what should underlay our physical actions.

Analogy: Grandmother told me that she loves me. I cannot narrate the sense of love of my grandmother for me. I can only narrate what has been conveyed to me verbally. I will not be able to express completely what that feeling means to me. Similarly, I have to be aware that in hadith narrations, I only read what has been narrated in physical terms; the narrator is not able to describe what the prophet was feeling inside when he (pbuh) made those statements.

Finally, once we recognize that we have a missing dimension in our understanding of religion, we need to follow this methodology in reading the Quran as a **Source of belief training guide (practice)**. How much God consciousness have I practiced today?