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| **Date** | Wednesday, November 11 2015 |
| **Topic** | In the footsteps of Prophet Abraham |
| **Part** | 13 |

Practicing belief in my life is distinct from the solicitude of transactions (*muamalaat*).  Example: how to fast, pray, make ablution, and other rituals have already been established. We first need to work on establishing the fundamentals of belief system within ourselves.  Quran may be studied for deriving juridical matters i.e. law which is called “*Ijtihad*” or “*fiqh*” in order to derive rulings. The same can be done out of *hadiths* where one has to thoroughly study the historical context of the narration and relate it to the present society.  This is such a difficult and exhaustive task that at the present no one seems qualified to be able to calibrate rulings befitting our conditions.  However, some people consider Qur’an and Hadiths to be a source of issuing of *fatwas* only, a rather superficial approach to the Scriptures. The other alternative way to study the Quran and *hadith* is to establish the personal practical belief in our lives the result of which will provide meaning for the rituals.

As far as one’s belief is concerned, the teachings from the Quran and *hadiths* should mainly be used to apply to our practice in our lives.  Therefore, *fatwa* becomes irrelevant or forms only to one’s conditions when the practical side of belief has not been established within the individual. At the societal level: *Would any society be willing to submit to the “sharia”, laws of the Creator of the universe?* Those individuals who have not digested the belief teachings of the Scripture will be unwilling to submit to such laws derived from scriptures, particularly when it reigns over their personal practical lives, and would rather prefer to get *“sharia”*adjusted according to their conditions.

We have to understand that the Prophets were not scholars or sages of their times.  As far as the nature of the revelation, (which is God’s teaching), is concerned it is universal, which means that it should not be interpreted, evaluated and understood within the Quran’s time of revelation and the practice of the Prophet under certain conditions.

Similar to the Quranic message, hadiths (narrations of the Prophets) need to be universalized as well.  Example: if a hadith mentions about a certain practice of the Prophet, we need to study it by eliminating the time space conditions.  This means that I have to look at the sources (Quran and hadiths) and try to understand the universal teachings in them, and only then apply them to my conditions right now i.e. extract the universal message out of the scripture and hadith and put it into practice in my time and space context:

1. *What does the message mean to me?*
2. *What is my Creator saying to me?*
3. *How can I evaluate the Prophet’s behavior within my conditions?*
4. *How can I live in this world as a believer while believing in the hereafter?*

That is the only way I can develop a worldview i.e. live according to my belief, my values, moral codes for myself.



***And Abraham said: “You have chosen to worship idols instead of God for no other reason than to have the love between you is only in the life of this world but then on Resurrection Day, you shall disown one another and curse one another for the goal of you all will be the fire and you will have none to succor you.”  Ankabut (29):25***

1. ***Resurrection Day-***
* I have to experience “resurrection” right now.
* If I think that “resurrection day is not applicable to me right now, the value of revelation loses its universality as the message is not applicable to me right now.
* *Can I know the truth before death?*
* I observe resurrection at every moment, **the transient nature of everything around me makes me realize the existence of an Eternal reality.**

When I am face to face with my consciousness, deep down I am given the ability to understand my reality.  In other words, reconsidering a situation where I realize that I was wrong in my perception and understanding is facing my reality.  In my practical life, I am given the ability to experience this otherwise I would not have any idea of the day where the truth will be apparent to me.  My capacity allows me to experience resurrection, get a taste of it; otherwise I would not be responsible to believe in the resurrection day. I just need to be more conscious when interacting with my inner self. If it was impossible for me to perceive, to experience and to understand something, then I would not be responsible for it.

1. ***Nature of “fire”-***
* Synonymous to hell that no sane human would desire
* It consumes everything but it itself is not consumed.
* Fire turns the things to nothing of itself.  Example: Paper burns and turns into carbon, which is not paper anymore.
* The “goal of you all will be fire” means that I will end up with becoming nothing of my humanity.  Example: When I interpret and say that this universe exists by itself, that understanding is a lie content of which does not exist. This false understanding burns my humanity away.  Therefore, lie is false and only the opposite of false which truly exists.
* When I realize my content of lie, it burns i.e. does not have any reality.  Example: the building has six stories and I say it has 10 stories.  The 4 stories that I am lying about does not exist.
* The Quran says that the truth becomes apparent in the hereafter and the deniers end up in fire.  *But how can I confirm it here and now?*
* I can confirm this news in this universe, I can experience it but alas, I may deny it.  **When the Quran mentions “deniers”, it means when I do not use my human qualities to understand the truth.**  That is why the Quran says that: “I am speaking to you as a guide so use me as a guide and investigate by using your human qualities; you will realize and confirm me”.

If I cannot confirm this news right now, *why does the Creator (through Quran, and the book of the universe) speak to me then?* If the scripture is taken to speak to certain people in history, the message cannot be universal, which would contradict its nature. Therefore, we cannot reduce the Quran to the stratagems of an old wise man. The Creator did not speak to some people 1400 years ago that now I am left with having to hear the narration and interpret it to benefit from it. Every news that I receive from creation is for me to confirm right now, given that it is a guide for me from my Creator. Through reducing the Scripture to be a source of “*fiqh*”, we may kill the universality of the revelation.  **Universality means that my Creator is speaking to me now.**

Similarly, in the practices of the Prophet (*sunnah*), if I do not see the universality of the message, I reduce the prophetic message to its historical context.

* With this understanding, I can comfortably sit and say (*taheyya* while praying) i.e. “Peace be upon you O Prophet.” Although, the Prophet is not with me, his message is ever present in my existence because I am benefitting from it here and now.
* Some people reject *taheyya* because their understanding of the Prophet is only reduced to a historical man with the belief that his message is to be imitated in forms only.
* *When I say salaams (peace be upon you) to the Prophet, I am acknowledging the universality of his message.*
* Analogy: Two centuries ago, Thomas Jefferson drafted the constitution and people approved it. Today, when someone sues me at the court, I defend/save myself according to the principles of the constitution set by Jefferson. Here and now, I am benefiting from the principles of the constitution.

Similarly, the Prophetic teaching teaches me certain principles i.e. this universe is created by an Absolute being called God and everything (message carriers called “angels”) brings news from Him to me.

* That is why the message needs to be brought into my practical life and I should be able to conclude that:
1. Everything I deduce from existence which makes sense to me, brings news about its Maker.
2. An angel through the act of creation brings news to me right now.
3. This Maker speaks to me right now, that is belief in the Book (Revelation.)
4. The instructor of this message, Prophet, is demonstrating the practical side of it to me right now.
5. Finally, I if I see the correspondence between what the Prophet teaches and the news I get from the creation, I will be happy with what Muhammad brought into my life.
* I need to feel the presence of the universality of the message of the Prophet, a rather challenging task.
* Sunnah cannot be imitated; consciousness of the message needs to be felt.
* I have to see the Prophet as the one who practices the Quran, which is the word of God and is Eternal.
* **Prophet is practicing an Eternal Source and presenting how I should practice the Eternal message as well.**

Most sources made available in the prevalent society do not generalize the universality of the Prophetic message. Such sources are “enemy” to the above mentioned understanding because it requires one to reason. When you reason, you start questioning and you understand what you believe in. When you start questioning, no one can rule you over easily and you free yourself from being enslaved and start seeing alternatives to freely benefit from the Absolute message. Again, the “speech of God” is speaking to me right now which resonates with my current conditions. When I read about Abraham or other Prophets, I am Abraham, Noah, and Moses…

1. ***What is God?***
* The One who Originates creation (Believing in the necessity of the existence of such a One is called, *fatih*). It means that at every moment, the universe is given original existence.
* The Originator of the universe is the Creator giving existence to the universe right now (including myself).
* Analogy: An artist paints two paintings very similar to each other. In principle, they can never be the same and one painting does not have the ability to give existence to the other painting. Similarly, every day is a new creation. Yesterday’s existence is not the cause of today’s existence.
* If I take today’s existence as a continuation of yesterday’s existence, then my perception of God becomes redundant. I am imagining some notion of God which does not make much sense.
* Absolute cannot be subject to the conditions of this universe.
1. ***What are idols?***
* Anything other than God i.e. attributing any quality in this universe to anything other than the Creator of the universe.
* Example: sun gives the fruit its bright color. Here, I attribute the quality of Creatorship of the color to the sunlight. The sun becomes my idol.
* Thinking that matter is giving me benefits or causing the results, then matter becomes my idol.
* Love of this world makes me forget about questioning the Source, Originator.
* Question: *What is the Source of any quality of the matter? How does it come into existence?*
* When I do not question the source of existence of matter, I am left with getting stuck in a causal chain. Again, question: *Can particle x give existence to particle y?*

Abraham is honest to his human self, teaching me to watch out and not to worship idols. **Usually, one falls into the love of this world and does not want to be concerned with the meaning that this world refers to which is Absolute.** Absolute goes beyond this world, for Absolute is the Source of existence of this world. In this exemplary narration of the Qur’an, Abraham’s teaching reminds me to look for the source, the Absolute being, the Originator of this world.

* Example: I start eating food. My consciousness reminds me to question where it is coming from. This Abrahamic side of mine reminds me to pay attention to the reality. i.e. Question the Source of existence of the food.
* **Resurrection day is when I am face to face with my consciousness.** **I realize that I did something wrong by ignoring the Originator of the food. When I understand that the food I ate had a Source, it is my Resurrection day.**

Praying rituals at night is easier than thinking about the reality of one’s existence even for a couple of minutes. It is hard to question about one’s existence. The resurrection day happens at that moment when every truth becomes apparent to you and you question who you are. ***How come I exist? What does it mean to exist?* These are the first steps which we miss** as we start jumping into practicing rituals, transactions or unconsciously following a certain culture or the footsteps of forefathers.

* Abraham is helping me set the stage to challenge the inherited, imitative belief.
* Religion cannot be inherited; it is the result of conscious awareness of oneself.
* Without belief, my actions are empty; there is no spirit in it.
* Be honest to your own self i.e. your reality.

***How does facing my reality help me experience resurrection day?***

I have the capacity to question within myself the source of my existence. I am free to deny such an opportunity. For example, I can choose to close my eyes and say that the world is dark. *Is the world dark?* No, I am closing my eyes and I am aware of it. **Therefore to experience my reality, I need to question myself: *What am I doing?* *Is this really true?* *Have I been doing wrong?***

* Analogy: A friend and I go to a banquet. We enjoy the food. Only after coming back do I realize that the food was deliberately prepared for me and I was deliberately invited there. *Who prepared that order for me? What message does it carry?* I should be concerned with its Source and at least acknowledge its favor to me. The ability to say thank you is within me.
* Similarly, when I realize that what I did at that moment was wrong, I am faced with my reality.
* When I listen to myself, I understand what I was doing was against my humanity. **That is why the Quran says that on the day of resurrection you will run away from each other as you will come to realize yourself, your own reality.**
* **Now I realize that I was agreeing with my friend blindly without paying heed to my own self. I must be honest with myself. I must be consistent within my own being by myself.**

Again, everyone is qualified to be able to confirm the reality of the day of resurrection and experience it. If experiencing it personally was not a possibility then I cannot be held responsible for it and the statement of resurrection in the scripture would be meaningless. However I am able to experience it every day. **That is why I am expected to confirm the Quran:** **“this book is telling me my reality and guiding me to use my humanity to understand what I have been doing either right or wrong. I am able to realize it within myself, my conscience tells me.**

* That is how I communicate with the speech of my Creator and confirm the speech of the Creator: “Yes, on the day of resurrection I experienced this”.
* That is how my Abrahamic side speaks to me.

Finally, nothing will support you or come to your assistance. Example: My consciousness says something but my friend consoles me and may say something else. My conscious says that I have chosen the wrong path. **Nothing can help me except the Provider of that consciousness.** Stars, galaxies and other created beings (including family, friends and relatives) cannot save me from the realization using my own consciousness as they themselves have no consciousness. That is why people keep themselves busy with other things (gossip, alcohol, work…) in order to suppress their reality.

* The destination or end of my action will be the “fire” when I realize that I have been following this world (by turning the world into an idol), not the Creator of this world, not the Owner of my life but my expectations myself.

In summary, my humanity always yearns for Eternal Happiness. My reality makes me aware that idols cannot provide Eternal Happiness, only the Creator can. I am given consciousness to realize my reality and when I use it that is resurrection day for me.