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| **Date** | Wednesday, February 10, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Chapter Fatiha |
| **Part** | 5 |

**Recap:**  Depending on my understanding of worship, I can enlarge my capacity of acknowledgment of my Creator to “we”, which includes all created beings. That is from *“You alone* ***I*** *worship”* to “*You alone* ***we*** *worship*”. Example**:** the air molecule is in need to be created as much as I am in need to be given existence. If I place myself at the center of the universe and realize that everything in the universe is in need of help then that is the only way our acknowledgment can take the desired plurality form.

***What is “help”?*** Sandra needs to lift a heavy box and she asks Omar to help her lift it up. Omar gladly helps her. That is how we generally understand what help is. However, when it comes to the purpose of my existence, what kind of help am I seeking from the One that gives me existence? The answer to that really depends on my understanding of worship which in turn depends on my perception of existence.

Existence of countless qualities is manifested in creation. Each quality is dependent on a Conscious Will other than itself. Each molecule is dependent on a Source that keeps the whole universe intact. Even a small pebble is in need to be given existence and I cannot attribute the qualities reflected in it to itself nor anything else in the universe.

Every single quality of anything exists at its specific moment, space-time. The whole universe is in need of existence, the qualities that I perceive need to be given existence. This awareness needs to be included in my comprehension of existence. **That is the definition of a Caliph**. I, as a conscious human being, am the representative of my Creator. I need to develop my capacity of worship in a way that it encompasses the worship of the whole universe. That potentiality is in every human being; I just need to use myself effectively to be a representative of the Source of my existence.

Analogy: In a town there are always a few representatives/spokesperson that represent the inhabitants of that town. These representatives present the needs on behalf of all the habitants to the Mayor of that town.

* Similarly, when I present my petition to the One that gives me existence, I represent other created beings as much as I am aware of their worships.
* Worship means acknowledgment, which is awareness from my side on how I view the other created beings.
* Example: Air molecules cannot do anything arbitrarily but follow the command of their Creator. Does a drop of water move as it wants? They have to obey the order set for them by the Conscious Will.
* Understanding and experiencing this leads me to conclude the existence of a Conscious Will which constitutes my belief.
* Since **Belief is my personal conclusion, I can only ask for help from the Conscious Will by expressing what I am aware that I am in need of, together with other beings in my “town” the universe. I am their “spokesperson.”**

The following verse is a continuation of our study of *Surah Fatiha*. It is as if the Speaker is answering that which every conscious human being asks for.



***“Guide us to the straight path.” (1):5***

* *What is the straight way?*

Straight way is a line from point A to point B without any deviation to another point.

* A= where you are at in your current understanding/world view.
* B= where you want to be.
* Any other points in between= deviation. The line between A and B must be “the straight line” with no deviation.
* Coming up with my own conclusion under the light of that which gives/makes me feel convinced in my belief.
* What am I convinced about?
* This requires an internal reflection. Example: when I get hungry, the need to eat food is within. I do not need to read a text instructing me to eat. My given senses tell me to go and eat. I need to reflect where all those senses (hunger, looking for food, eating, etc.) come from. I cannot attribute those senses to myself or the matter/particles themselves. Deviation would be attributing the qualities as belonging to the matter itself or being heedless to these senses which I cannot accept as a conscious person.
* My actions have to be the result of my belief and not the other way around which would make them external. Another example is the prescribed prayers; they need to be performed as a response to feeling the need to express gratitude or acknowledgment. Similarly, fasting needs to be substantiated from within. Otherwise, actions become burdensome and religion is reduced to a set of Commandments.
* Without belief, action becomes external.
* We ought to work on internalizing our actions (i.e. actions come as a result of belief) as the Quran elucidates ***(walladheena amanou wa amilussalihat): “Those who believe and act according to their belief (do good action)”***.
* Actions performed as a result of obeying a law is not belief. Regardless of whether the law exists or not, I should experience within myself that I need to perform such an action because I feel it within me. Example: I do not need the Mayor’s office to tell me that I need to keep the town clean. If I keep the town clean just because there is a law, this is not what the Scripture means by “good actions.” Doing something because the law requires is a secular activity, nothing to do with “worship.”
* Only after feeling the need to be guided do I ask: **I need guidance in a straight way!**

**Worship must include my awareness of the existence and position of both points in space time**: I have to feel that I have to move from A to B in order to fulfill the purpose of my existence. I have to develop my human capacities in a way that I feel satisfied in my existence. Along with experiencing the universe, whatever conclusions I derive from scriptures should be satisfactory to my being. That is, only when I am satisfied, I can conclude that my Creator must be satisfied because It created me for seeking satisfaction in my existence.

* Analogy: A software engineer feels happy when his program functions the way he wants it to. If the computer program had consciousness, after a successful execution, it would be pleased and so would the engineer.
* Similarly, in my satisfaction, I need to link it to the One that gives me satisfaction. I cannot skip point A and talk about point B.
* I need to question all my feelings: I have, for example, a sense of freedom and I understand that it needs to be created. Now I can ask: “Why did It create me with a sense of pleasure in experiencing freedom?”
* Quran speaks to human freewill (consciousness).
* Through awareness/ my consciousness of the Source, I feel satisfied.
* I need to make use of all my human faculties that are given to me, make use of them and be Merry in my existence!
* That is why I am given existence with endless capacities.

Going back to the straight line example (above), point A is my human self (i.e. my capacity). My perception of the existence of point B must be realized by myself. Point B is not imaginary but unlike point A, it exists on a non-physical plane or field. The universe (physical plane) is created for me to disclose to me (i.e. my given human faculties) the existence of its Creator. Anything that makes me realize who my Lord is, I am foreseeing point B. Example: Gazing at a beautiful night fall, I wonder about the Maker of the stars, the moon and the sky. **I conclude that its Maker is in fact my Maker. The Maker of this beautiful order (night fall) is my Maker.**

* In my existence, I have to make my objective the following:
* Get to know, get to be aware or get to be conscious of my Creator.
* That is how I transform from “I worship” to “We worship” because my Creator is the Creator of everything with no exception.

Some schools of thought say: “Unite with the whole universe”. As a starting point, it is a correct doctrine. Now, let us give it meaning with the light of what we have been discussing. It means act with the whole order of the universe and make it your own property, i.e. come to your own personal conclusion by attaching yourself to the Source of existence of the universe/order of the universe. Be aware that the property does not belong to you but is a mere reflection of the Will of its Creator.

* Nothing comes into existence at its own will (***lailaha***) + there must be a Conscious Will giving existence to everything (***illallah***) = point B.
* In my conclusion lies the awareness that the qualities of every event/object connects to the Creator of the whole universe (including my feelings).
* ***Sirat-al-Mustaqeem***= straight way= everything must take me to the Source of its existence.

***How to exercise my consciousness of my needs?***

Every object/event is an opportunity to reach point B. We all have the capacity to do so! Example: I go to a store and buy fruits. In my consciousness, I am aware that fruits are given existence to be consumed. Conscious beings such as you and I should realize the purpose and Source of its existence. We use it (eat and enjoy it) in a way with consciousness of the Creator. Bismillah= I pledge to do everything in Its Name.

Acknowledging my Creator is declaring freedom or getting out of slavery (uncontrolled egoistic desires). Nothing in the universe has power over me. My job🡪money did not lead me to the satisfaction from eating the fruit. If I use my human capacity and am aware that the fruit, the pleasure of eating is a manifestation of its Creator then that leads to point B, that is the straight path or worship.

I am always in direct connection with the Creator. When I breathe air, I use my given capacity to understand that it is a mercy by its Creator to benefit me. Through that benefit, I understand that air is reminding me that its Creator is the Nourisher, Merciful… Thus, I ask the Creator to make everything as a means to acknowledge It. Without this conclusion, I would be wasting my human qualities. Example: if I think my family trip was boring, I just wasted my human qualities because I did not reach point B. In the creation of the trip, there is a message for me to exercise my conclusion by getting in touch with It: “The Creator of this trip is revealing its qualities to me and I acknowledge it.” That is the straight path which makes life worth living. Otherwise, I maybe living as an animate being in this planet.

We ought to train ourselves to be in this constant state of acknowledgment through acknowledging and reminding ourselves the purpose of our existence and reaching satisfaction within the self through interacting with the universe.

* What is “zikr”?
* Practicing the above mentioned acknowledgment is “zikr”.
* Through my interaction with the universe, I am in contact with endless creations and qualities that demonstrate Power and Knowledge of their Creator.
* I just have to be conscious of It. When I remember It, that is “zikr”.
* Zikr is a personal experience, going from A to B.
* My connection with the rest of the universe and reaching their Source of Origin who is the Originator of my existence and everything else…
* I am in need of this consciousness otherwise I will not be living as a Caliph, representative of the Creator in this universe.

There is wisdom in the transient nature of this universe where everything points to its Absolute Source of existence. We have to use this universe as a means to get in touch with the Absolute Source otherwise we will struggle aimlessly (i.e. lose everything, die and rot). However, if you use every event to acknowledge the Source, you get in touch with your own self which is the way to fulfill the purpose of your existence. Thus, “guide us to the straight path” is at the core of one’s awareness.



***“The way of those upon whom you have bestowed your Grace, not those whom you have condemned or those who have gone astray” Fatiha (1):6***

* I have to feel the grace (***ni’ma***) within my own existence.
* It is said that the Messengers were rightly guided people or that they represented the connection between their being and their Creator’s being in a perfect way.
* I have to feel this connection within myself so that I may align myself with all the rightly guided ones.
* I need to feel the security of belonging to the Lord of the universe right now, not only after I die.
* My belief needs to be practiced and confirmed respectively right now in my existence.
* I exist because of It, I am sure of It and I must return back to It.

**Astray**= when I start at point A in my conclusions of events/objects and then deviate from the line connecting to B, thus the line is not straight anymore.

* Example: Cow is created by God and produces milk. WRONG!
* Cow is now given existence while the milk is coming from its breasts. CORRECT! Existence of cow and the production of milk is not a two-step creation. They all are given existence at once. They are not two separate events.
* Be careful not to fall into causal chain of events!!!

**Condemned**= when I am aware of point A but not using myself to start or even start at point A and just give up and ignore everything!

* Example: My fiancée died and my life is over. WRONG!
* There is a message in the death of the fiancée. I am still given existence. CORRECT!
* Rejecting reality is denial which is ignoring everything!!!

In conclusion, **if I do not live with the awareness that everything belongs to its Creator, I deprive myself of Its Grace.** That condition is “***maghdoob***” (comdemned.) Not practicing my qualities, not having awareness of the Source of my being give rise to problems such as depression, anxiety and jealousy…etc. Contrary to certain perceptions, God is never angry with you, you are angry with yourself. Life is not horrible, you are making it horrible. Example: If you cut your hand with a knife, you hurt yourself. The hurting feeling is created by God to help you not to do it. So, STOP hurting yourself!!! Everything is a call for us to attach our being along with the rest of the universe to its Absolute Source. Failure in not responding to this call is the source of feeling “condemned” in one’s own self.