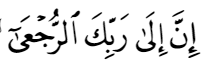
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| **Date** | Wednesday, July 20, 2016 |
| **Topic** | Chapter Iqra (Read) |
| **Part** | 4 |



***“However, the return (including things) is to your Lord” Iqra (96):8***

The Speaker in the scripture presents us with a suggestion. I read it and see what it has to say. I ask:

1. Who is speaking?

* It answers me: “Your Lord is speaking”.
* I say: “Do I have a Lord?”

1. Who is my Lord?

* The One that sustains me.
* I ask: Am I being sustained?

I ought to establish the answer to the following:

* ***Who gave me my existence?***

But first, I need to be aware that I am given existence. What does it mean to exist? It means reading creation and finding out what it refers to. Example: I woke up this morning. How did my eyes open up? Did I open them by myself? What caused them to open? How are my eyes blinking? Who is sustaining me throughout night and day? It seems that a Conscious Source is giving me life. When I realize that I am given life, then I can start searching for the meaning of existence.

***What does it mean to exist?*** Existence is the highest level of awareness that you are given life and that you are aware of how you conclude that you are given life. Example: I am working on a project and I am aware that the ability to produce results or just simply type an email is not my doing. I am just using my given abilities and putting it into practice i.e. exercising freewill. While exercising my freewill, if I am aware that I am simply exercising my given freewill and that I am utilizing my human qualities to be aware of that, then I am becoming aware of my existence.

1. *What things am I given?*

* I buy most of my things.
* What things is the Speaker referring to?
* My abilities and human qualities.

Example: Power of sight is given. Everything is given to me by the Lord of the universe. As we established in chapter Fatiha, if someone cannot be the Lord of the universe, then it cannot be the Lord of anything.

1. *What am I expected to return?*

* Something that is given to me.
* What is given to me?
* As per #3, things are given to me. That is, human qualities are given to me.

***Now, the biggest question is how do I return all that is given to me?***

Analogy: You receive a package and it has the sender’s name on it. You open the package and get happy with what it contains. Since you know the sender, you send him a thank you note.

Similarly, the universe is full of messages from your Lord. At every moment, your Lord keeps introducing Itself to you through objects/events/human qualities. Hence, to answer the question of what is expected of me, I need to send a thank you note to the sender. **This thank you from my side is acknowledgment.**  I acknowledge that all that I am given (human qualities, emotions and feelings) are from my Lord and I want to hug It. If I think that intelligence is my property, or accidentally I happened to be an intelligent person, then I can never acknowledge the One that gives this property to me.

* Only when I realize that something is given to me, will I feel the need to acknowledge It.
* By acknowledging what is given, I return It.
* Example: I use wisdom in order to practice relationship with this universe. Wisdom is given to me by my Creator, I am asking and It is creating. This wisdom is Its property, not mine.

Since I cannot find the Lord within the physical conditions of this universe, I can express my joy through prayers/worship. **There are different ways to express gratitude (verbal and physical). When you acknowledge the Source of your existence, your Lord, you are in a worshipful relationship with your Lord. (see figure on page 3). This relationship is personal to you, it is a personal feeling, conviction and satisfaction that you have a Lord who loves you and takes care of you. That is belief.**

* Awareness => Belief + Worship

When I am in awareness, I am returning a genuine thank you note to the One that creates me. What I am returning can only be possible as much as I am aware of who my Lord is. **My capacity of returning expands as much as I am aware of who my Lord is.**  I am sure that nothing else can be the sender of what I receive except my Lord (***lailaha*** ***illallah***).

Question: *How do I tie this in with the afterlife?*

We are in the school of the universe training and studying. While in a school, I develop certain skills. When I graduate, I graduate as I am. I can still graduate without learning anything. The more I learn who my Lord is, the more I train my human senses i.e. I know who I am and what I am doing in this universe.

Death is the real essence i.e. soul is taken away from the body which is used as a tool or a vehicle to let the soul operate in the conditions of this type of creation on earth. As I graduate from here (when soul is taken out of here), I will carry myself as the student I trained to be. I will be resurrected as I die from here (i.e. as I lived). That is, as much as I realize who my Lord is for myself that much I will confront in the afterlife (i.e. my soul will be skilled from the training here).

Quranic definition of hereafter is as follows: **Exactly as you realize who your Lord is in this world, that much you will be aware of your Lord.** It is better to hurry to introduce who my Lord is to my spirit. Not to be lazy! Pay attention to existence! Who is giving it to me?

That is why we need to be aware of what we experience here. Example: when I help someone, I need to be aware that I am reflecting the Creator’s quality through exercising freewill. If I say it is my help, then there is no Lord in my life. Helping someone is an opportunity to exercise that my Creator is the Helper ***(“aseer”)*** and I prefer to choose helping to acknowledge It. That is how I return “all things” back to It. Expand this acknowledgment by reflecting on how the animals are fed in the wild? It seems that Mercy and Generosity is engrained everywhere in this universe. As a result, I will conclude that my Lord is the One that is the All-Helper, All-Generous One…

* I need to practice everything in the name of its Creator.

Everything is given to me to know the qualities of the Giver. Going back to the power of sight, I am here to experience It through using my power of sight. I need to experience that the power of sight is not given to me by anything but the Creator of the universe. I need to return it back to It with this awareness of existence. Example: You are feeding me, you are entertaining me, you are teaching me…

Finally, I am here to understand who my Lord is and return package back to him through acknowledgment which requires awareness of existence. My main concern should be: *Has my Lord received the returning, i.e. am I establishing relationship between me and my Creator?*

