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| **Date** | Wednesday, September 9, 2015 |
| **Topic** | In the Footsteps of the Prophet Abraham |
| **Part** | 8 |



***“Then, when the night overshadowed him with its darkness, he beheld a star, [and] he exclaimed, “This is my Lord!” – but when it went down, he said, “I love not the things that go down.”*An’am (6): 76**

Abraham’s story is my story. When I am in a desperate situation and if I happen to see a window of opportunity that can help me satisfy my need, I gladly seize it. However if I take this opportunity to be the source of my satisfaction then that opportunity becomes my Lord. Example: I need money to pay rent. If I think that money is going to help me satisfy my need of getting a shelter, then that is my Lord.

**“Lord” is different from “God”.** “God” is a general term and concept used everywhere whereas “Lord” has a somewhat varied connotation. For example: in Christian theology Jesus is called Lord because he is considered to be the savior. In ancient Egypt, Pharaoh was considered the Lord because he referred to himself as the one taking care of people’s well-being. By definition, **Lord is the One who takes care of our needs.**

In Quranic terminology, Lordship is related to Sustainer of our being, Provider, Nourisher… **In darkness, we need light and so the provider of that need is a Lord.** In the verse, when the star went down, we realize that it does not help us anymore and so it cannot be our Lord. **The verse teaches us that we need to be watchful for anything that cannot sustain our needs permanently.** The star is a created being and itself is in need of a sustainer. Thus the star or any created being cannot be our sustainer; it cannot satisfy our human needs.

* Lord is my sustainer who never leaves me.

I want to satisfy my human qualities. Any source which promises to satisfy me on a temporary basis is not my Lord. That is why Abraham said: “I love not the things that go down”. It means that we have to use our human qualities and expectations to cancel out the impermanent things that seem to be satisfying us. We need to stop being simplistic by just satisfying our physical aspect of creation. Example: When I eat a big bowl of salad, my stomach gets full. *Can a bowl of salad satisfy my human expectations*? Yes, only when I take the salad as a gift from the provider. The salad itself cannot be the source of satisfaction but the creator of the salad who presents it to me, fulfills my satisfaction and is thus my Lord. **We need to come to an understanding that satisfies both our human and non-human/physical aspect.**

The impermanent things that we have been introduced to in this universe, we want them forever. We desire to be young, healthy, wealthy… **If something is NOT “eternal”, it bothers us.** Even with our existence, we are unstable because we want to live eternally. **We are made to love Eternity.** Let us be realistic to our innate human capacity that desires “eternity”.

* Apart from Eternity nothing satisfies human capacity. Human Beings desire everything to be eternal and perfect.

***We desire Eternity and so we search for it: Who can fulfill this need?***

My Lord can only be the One which satisfies my eternal needs otherwise I, as a human being cannot accept Him as Lord. As a believer, I accept that “God” is the Creator of the universe but what does it have to do with me in my practical life? In and of itself, believing in **God, the Creator** does not help connect myself to Him as far as my human expectations are concerned in my daily life. **I am in need of a** **Lord, the Sustainer**.

* When the idea of a Creator is brought into every aspect of my practical life, only then can I start developing a relationship of this Creator within myself.
* I am a human being and I desire an Eternal guarantee of my needs.

This belief process is not a onetime occurrence. Belief in the existence of God is necessary to start this process. Any conclusion driven from a general view of the universe is a starting point for us to expand on in terms of going through the belief process. From there, we need to get into the details of any matter to establish a personal connection with the Lord, the attribute of God who sustains, cares provides etc.

* Analogy: When we drive a car, we start the engine. Without starting the engine we cannot even start to drive. But without driving the car, the starting the engine does not take me to anywhere. Then we drive to where we want to go. If we do not drive then we are not going anywhere. The journey is the process to see the Lordship.
* Similarly, we cannot stop in our journey with the conclusion that we derived about the universe, which is, “This universe must have been created and the One who created is God. Therefore, I believe in God.” The process needs now to “drive the car in order to reach a destination.” That is, we need to get to know who this Creator God is. Investigation into the universe must continue and the Creator, Provider, Sustainer, Nourisher, Loving, Caring etc. God needs to be recognized. To get to know God as the LORD means this.
* We also need to apply this recognition of God the Lord to our practical life and internalize it within ourselves.
* We need to question whether the source we are trusting can satisfy our Eternal expectations.
* My existence must be Eternal. **I need to look for who my Lord is.** My Lord is the One who satisfies my needs. ***Allahu rabulalameen***: **God the Lord of the Worlds**.

From Creator, we need to transition to Lordship. A bowl of food can help us find our Lord when we realize that He is the One who is satisfying my needs. The food is created. Anything which does not have Absolute qualities cannot bring into existence anything else which does not exist. In order to be the Creator of anything, the Creator must be Absolute.

* **Absolute=** infinite= we cannot put a limit or size to it and, therefore, we cannot define its Essence.

Every moment is given a new existence and qualities. A water molecule comes into existence out of nothing. *Can one tiny particle of atom keep the solar system intact?* No. The One who brings the things into existence is Absolute. **Just one bowl of food is the sign of His qualities**: **the one who gave me the sense of hunger gave it to me as a gift to introduce Himself to me; nothing in this universe can be responsible for the existence of this bowl of food apart from the One Who gives existence to each and every particle of this food; I say that my Creator Lord is the One Who holds sway of the whole existence. That means He is the Absolute Lord**.

* If I realize that the Creator of the universe is the One who provides me with food that is my Lord.
* Only the One who creates my hunger and my need for food must be Absolute because nothing in this universe has the quality to bring anything into existence; whereas they themselves are in need of being given existence.
* We need to bring this belief into practice i.e. my ability to walk, write, breath…everything is a present from my Lord.
* Human beings only love the One that satisfies their human needs. That is, Lord. We love our Lord. Through the Lordship that touches us; thus, our sense of love gets induced. That is why after recognizing that the Creator of the universe is God, we have to continue investigating into the world He created to see that this Creator God is our Lord, who takes care of our needs.

**Hadith:** Someone came to the Prophet saying that: “I have done something wrong. What should I do?” On this occasion (i.e. *asbab ul nuzul* mostly referred to as the occasion of revelation), a verse was revealed explaining that God forgives the sinners so long as they repent. The man was relieved and went on saying: “Is this verse revealed for me only?” The Prophet replied: “It is for anyone in your situation.”

* Lesson: The verses in the Qur’an in particular, the scriptures in general, are not restricted to certain situations only. Similar to the sayings of the Prophets, the message in the hadith speaks universally and is applicable to anyone. Therefore, we should not reduce their meanings as applicable to specific situations only and thus get lost in the “occasions” of revelations.

From history, we learn that people come to power and go; powerful empires come to an end. Eventually we will die as well, our company may go bankrupt, our loved ones will leave us… When things die our human qualities realize that the things are NOT eternal. So you look for an eternal source, the Lord*:*

* *Who can I take refuge with then? What are we looking for in this world? What are we doing?*

*Who can be our Lord?* Let’s bring the Creator God into our practical life at every moment without reducing it to rituals only:

* My Lord is the One who fed me today, who gives me the opportunity to breathe; cleanses cells in my body….
* The One who creates the universe is the one who created that bowl of food.

With this understanding, we should benefit from anything which appears as a source of hope to us BUT never admit it as our Lord. Use our human qualities to question the legitimacy of anything claiming to be satisfying our needs. Example: You are looking for a job, a desperate situation indeed. You get a call from a recruiter, an opportunity. *What kind of attitude should you have?*

* Opportunity is provided to me but in and of itself it cannot be my Lord because it is not eternal and absolute.
* The One who provides the opportunity deserves to be declared as the Lord not the object itself.

We should prepare hard to get the job BUT never think that it can replace the Lord. We usually fall into this trap. Nothing can replace our Lord. Keep questioning: the universe is provided for me by whom?

* Again, anything that is not Eternal cannot be our Lord. Use your human qualities to know what can be your Lord.

Every moment that you interact with the things that seem to be satisfying your needs, ASK: ***Can this be my Lord?*** **We are training here and we are responsible for our life right now**. This universe has been given existence definitely by something, it has a Creator. Unfortunately, in our daily lives, this Creator has no function except through religious rituals. **We have to work on making “God the Creator” real in our practical daily life by bringing this Creator into my practical life, as my Lord.** We have to remind each other and share this reality.

Even the message in this verse right now must be given to me by the One who knows me, who is teaching/guiding me. When the revelation says “I am a guide for you,” I must investigate that if I really need a guide for my human quests and, if I see that the answer I get through the Scripture is satisfactory, only then can I say: “yes you are the One who guides me”. **That is the confirmation of revelation.** If we feel comfortable that this verse is deciphering our reality (i.e. what we really need in order to be guided), then we are confirming.